

Reconceptualising Strategic Culture as a Focal Point: The Impact of Strategic Culture on a Nation's Grand Strategy

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Abstract:

This thesis proposes to remedy some of the theoretical lacunae surrounding the topic of strategic culture by reconceptualising it in a way that is compatible with existing expected utility models of executive choice.

Current theorising regarding strategic culture has been paralysed by an ongoing debate between the first and third generations of strategic culture theorists and by the persistent inability of scholars to provide a predictive framework based on the concept - meaning that it is unable to operate as anything other than a residual variable.

The hypothesis of this thesis is that conceptualising strategic culture using Thomas Schelling's concept of a focal point permits us to sidestep some of the theoretical debates that have divided rationalists and theorists of strategic culture by allowing culture to be grafted on to a rational actor model of executive choice in a way that is progressive rather than degenerative.

In order to test this theory, the thesis develops and subsequently tests the idea of a liberal strategic culture, utilising both the congruence method and within case process tracing to demonstrate the external validity of the theory being developed. The cases chosen span American administrations from the Cold War to the contemporary era and demonstrate the utility of a re conceptualised model of strategic culture across a range of geopolitical and domestic contexts.

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Chapter I

Theory of Strategic Culture - Reconceptualising Strategic Culture

Bernard Brodie's proclamation that good strategy “presumes good anthropology and good sociology” (Brodie, 1960, 128) has served as something of a rallying cry for a veritable cottage industry of scholars in international relations and security studies who declare that dominant rational actor models in strategic studies utterly ignore the concept of “strategic culture”. Yet, in large measure, the malaise of strategic culture as a paradigm remains self-inflicted as the concept is heavily under-theorised. The failure to frame the interaction of culture with other factors such as the material strength of a nation, has resulted in strategic culture being viewed less as a predictive tool than as a cautionary device that might alert theorists and practitioners to the limits of rationality.

Furthermore, the study of strategic culture has been paralysed by an ongoing debate between what A.I Johnston dubs the three generations of strategic cultural thought. While scholars of the first-generation regard culture as a context within which strategic choice occurs, theorists of the third generation (including Johnston himself) perceive culture as an independent variable which might allow for the theory to be falsified within the framework of a positivist epistemology.

In my view, both schools contain severe shortcomings. Consequently, the first part of this chapter will establish the limitations of existing theories of strategic culture. The central finding of this segment is that existing theories of strategic culture are either unfalsifiable or highly overdetermined. Crucially, the ontological assumptions of both theories render them incompatible with rational actor models - a decisive shortcoming, because the work does not add cumulatively to existing literature and because both schools concede that strategic culture does interact with rationality to produce outcomes. Accordingly, the research problem that forms the centrepiece of this thesis is to formulate a concept of strategic culture consistent with rational actor models of strategic choice.

The second part of this chapter will outline my formulation of strategic culture. Borrowing from the theory of cultural action developed by A. Swidler, I define culture as a body of beliefs, institutions and practices which comprise a means of control and communication within a security community comprised of rational actors. This framework is consistent with the assumptions of rational actor theorist T. Schelling who affirms that within the context of a bargaining game between two rational actors at the domestic level, culture sets the focal points that allow interdependent actors to coordinate a solution to the game. Unlike existing works, my ontological assumptions are firmly situated within the rational actor framework and conceptualise culture as an intervening variable. Using the impact of strategic culture upon a nation's grand strategy as my central topic, I identify two research objectives:

- 1) To demonstrate that strategic culture can be formulated as a series of focal principles utilized by rational actors within the context of domestic bargaining over the contours of grand strategy.
- 2) To develop and test a predictive model that integrates my theory of strategic culture as a focal point with existing rational actor models which posit how states' executives formulate grand strategy in response to combinations of systemic pressure and domestic partisan preference.

The second objective serves two purposes. First, the success of the predictive model derived from my conception of strategic culture serves as what A. Bennett and A. George dub a proxy hypothesis – a derivative hypothesis, which, if confirmed, would then corroborate a primary hypothesis validating my inference of strategic culture functioning as a focal point (Bennett, George, 2005, 18). Secondly, it demonstrates the utility of this conceptualisation in the integration of strategic culture with existing models of strategic choice to increase their predictive capacity.

The third segment of this chapter will lay out my conception of grand strategy. Following this, the chapter will outline my predictive framework and identify the methodology that might be used to study and falsify my hypothesis.

Existing Literature

Existing literature on the impact of strategic culture upon grand strategic choice is largely centred around the debate between the first and third generations of strategic cultural thought¹. The third generation of strategic cultural theorists, represented by A.I Johnston, assesses culture as an independent variable consisting of a “system of symbols” which comprise two sets of assumptions – that is:

- i) a first set about international order, the nature of adversaries and the use of force and
- ii) a second set regarding the efficacy of various strategic tools (Johnston,1996,218).

Examining Chinese strategic behaviour from the Ming to Maoist eras, Johnston is able to treat strategic culture as an independent variable which can be correlated with a country’s patterns of strategic behaviour (Johnston,1994,19-35). A number of flaws exist with this theoretical framework, however. Primarily, in order to treat strategic culture as an independent variable, Johnston is forced to formulate culture as static and change resistant, despite the enormous vicissitudes of Chinese history. The treatment of agents as passive subjects of culture poses a second problem for Johnston’s theory. Cultural anthropologists like C. Geertz stress an interaction between culture and human agency - with humans utilising specific symbols and meanings from their cultural repertoire - making this conception untenable (Geertz,1977,40-90).

The third generation’s separation of culture from practice has also been critiqued by C. Gray and L. Sondhaus as an unsubstantiated separation within modern sociology (Gray,1999,180)

¹ The second generation, articulated by scholars such as Bradley Klein, views culture as a rhetorical tool rather than a driver of action and, as such, is not very different from a purely material school in its view of cultures role- leading it to be largely discounted in theoretical discussions regarding strategic culture

(Sondhaus,2006,20). Furthermore, the third generation's formulation of culture as an independent variable has a reifying effect, making it difficult to examine the way in which culture interacts with other variables such as systemic polarity. Given that Johnston concedes the importance of these variables, this represents a serious setback for his theory, rendering the impact of culture highly overdetermined. Nor, as Johnston argues, can an appeal to bounded rationality salvage his theory (insofar as H. Simon's "heuristics" are seen to operate in crises and not systematically over long periods) (Jones,1999,300).

Furthermore, the conception of culture as a set of positive prescriptions for action makes it difficult to account for anomalous behaviour. Johnston's efforts to circumvent the issue by positing the existence of multiple subcultures merely obfuscates it; a potentially endless gamut of subcultures (often producing contradictory policy prescriptions) might actually enable culturally unimpeded choices. Johnston's findings suggest that each of China's subcultures (a passive Confucian-Mencian subculture and an offensive parabellum paradigm) became dominant in accordance with the changing imperatives of China's geopolitical security. The outcome was a state that acted largely in accordance with neorealism's predictions, leading J. Mearsheimer to contend that ideational factors are epiphenomenal - as the choice of ideology reflects the balance of systemic power (Mearsheimer,1994,30). While dissenting with Mearsheimer's definition culture as epiphenomenal, I agree that the formulation of culture as a causal variable, independent of structural factors, is untenable.

This stated, I detect serious flaws with the first generation of strategic cultural thought. For the originators of this school, including J. Snyder and C. Gray, culture comprises both ideas and practices (Snyder,1977,5,11) and that contextually, culture and strategic behaviour are inseparable. In Gray's words, culture lends strategic actions their meaning (Gray,1999,185). Therefore, Gray and Snyder write that culture cannot be conceptualised as a variable but instead, serves as a context within which the strategic actions of individual security communities might be interpreted. However, Johnston notes that Gray's assertion that culture "lends meaning" to strategic action, tacitly admits that the two are, in fact, separable with perceptible impact on each other. (Johnston,1999,520-521).

Again, the formulation of strategic culture as a context, renders the concept of strategic culture unfalsifiable, insofar as any change in strategic behaviour implies a concomitant change in strategic culture - making it impossible to separate a nation's strategic culture from its chosen strategy.

In order to reconcile the two schools of thinking on strategic culture, I. Neumann and H. Heikka propose a subdivision of culture into discourse and practice. This formulation sees strategic culture as an emergent property produced by a dialectic between grand strategy (a state's discourse regarding its thresholds for the use of force) and concrete practices such as operational doctrine and arms procurement (Neumann, Heikka, 2005, 10-15).

However, this disquisition does not escape the definition of culture as an epiphenomenon. If, as Neumann and Heikka contend, culture is the product of discourses and practices which collectively comprise the entirety of strategy, then culture seems little more than a shorthand for strategy itself. Significantly, the definition of grand strategy as a discourse conflicts with the vast bulk of literature which envisions grand strategy as a set of enacted policies (Christensen, 1996, 30) (Narizny, 2007, 28).

Finally, F. Morgan disputes the first generation's leveraging of practice to encompass all. While conceding Gray's point that culture includes practice, Morgan believes that although some practices are constitutive of culture, this does not, by extension, imply that every practice associated with a specific culture is part of the culture itself. Strategic culture may indeed encompass every practice and idea leading to a security community's *formulation* of strategy but once formulated, a strategy(output) is independent of the system which formulated it and by extension, its strategic culture (Morgan, 2003, 28).

Defining Strategic Culture

In my definition of strategic culture and its role in the formulation of strategy, strategic culture comprises a system of institutions, beliefs and practices that intervene between international system and strategic output. Following C. Lorde, I perceive strategic culture as

an emergent variable produced by a nation's geographical location, institutions and historical experiences.

However, as an emergent variable, culture arguably has a demonstrable causal impact independent of its sources (Lord, 1985, 270). Although culture is not conceptually immune to change, I adopt D. Avant's "punctuated equilibrium" model, wherein the emergence of a strategic cultural paradigm is followed by periodic paradigm shifts in strategic culture due to the cumulative effect of actors' adaptation to anomalous experiences, with culture remaining static over a relatively long intervening period (Avant, 2000, 29). While this theory is exogenous to this thesis, it underlies my treatment of culture as being simultaneously the product of, and separable from, factors such as geography and historical experience.

My central theoretical innovation, however, is an exposition of how strategic culture functions as an intervening variable. Unlike previous studies, this is situated firmly within a rationalist framework reflecting the sociological theory of A. Swidler, who defines culture as a toolkit of strategies for action where culture serves a regulative role within a social system, providing rational actors with a series of effective and contextual strategic beliefs and choices within the stated system. Critically, the instrumentalization of culture by these actors does not presuppose belief on their part (Swidler, 2007, 275-280).

This narration of culture is not incompatible with rational actor theorist T. Schelling's theory of the process of bargaining centred around focal points which determine the equilibria of a game. When interdependent actors bargain, they are incentivised to adhere to these focal points because backsliding presupposes competition and increased transaction costs. For example, two actors in an economic transaction "signpost" the execution of the transaction (say, by verbal assurance), whereby most actors will adhere to these signposts - not due to belief but to achieve coordination at the lowest possible cost. The signposts will, in all likelihood, be culturally determined as Schelling notes, but this does not compromise the rationality assumption.

I argue that domestic bargaining between political actors on the correct course of a state's strategy contains culturally determined focal points. For example, recent analyses of Imperial Japan's strategic thinking during World War II, provide full expositions of the ways in which vested interests led military elites to expound the virtues of an aggressive foreign policy and

minimise the risks entailed (Snyder,1991,145) (Barnhart,1987,140). Despite these elites' immense power, however, compliance from a ruling clique including the ambivalent Prime Minister Konoe and the pessimistic Admiral N. Ogami was imperative – and achieved by invoking the humiliation caused by any withdrawal from colonial expansion, which, the hawks urged, “would reduce Japan to being a third rate power.” As one observer remarked, “no one wanted to be the first to argue with that.” Demonstrably, cultural assumptions referencing national humiliation created a “focal point” to which self-interested military elites were able to argue more effectively than their opponents, rendering one policy equilibrium salient. Thus, culture as a repertoire of focal points serves as an intervening variable between the international system and rational elites attempting to influence executive choice (Morgan,2003,120).

The use of culture as a “focal point” largely builds on T. Schelling's work on games of either pure coordination or bargaining under limited communication. Essentially represented as a game pertaining to the division of a sum of money, actors coordinate with one another in a mixed game, whereby both desire a solution but have different desired outcomes. Typically, Schelling recorded, actors within these games converged upon some culturally conditioned notion of what was “fair” in order to reduce transaction costs (Ayson,2004,172).

Going forward, I posit three causal pathways by which strategic cultural focal points might affect a nation's grand strategic policies. The first of these is top down pressure, by which executives have an incentive to select policies which will serve as a rallying point for the coalitions that they lead and place opposing coalitions in a position whereby opposing a selected choice involves the violation of a culturally conditioned norm. This involves two of Schelling's conditions for coordination.

Firstly, in the “pure coordination” game between the executive and disparate members of its coalition such as sectional interests, bureaucratic actors and other players, a culturally conditioned “focal point”, coordinates activities in the absence of extensive communication. Different members of the executive coalition know exactly how to argue in favour of certain policies to their constituencies, in the form of appeals to entrenched traditions and beliefs. Expectedly, the expectations of actors within an executive coalition converge upon certain

strategic options. Schelling illustrates this point with a hypothetical experiment whereby two actors who have no knowledge of each other whereabouts, attempt to find one another in New York City. Predictably, the actors converge upon the Grand Central station, because the station serves as a “conventional” meeting point - leading each actor to expect the other to be found there (Schelling,1957,19-30).

Leaders are similarly incentivised to select a policy choice that serves as a “natural” rallying point for the executive coalition. For example, within the context of the U.S.’ Cold War grand strategy, a predilection for “perimeter defence” coupled with an ideological understanding of the conflict between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. embodied in both the Truman doctrine and NSC-68 served, as D. Acheson put it, to “bludgeon the minds of top government” into accepting Truman’s approach to containment (Snyder,1991,260). In effect, the use of widely held universalistic assumptions and an entrenched notion that the international system favours bandwagoning (and concomitantly, that the loss of any point on the defence perimeter represented a prelude to further setbacks) allowed supporters of the administration - in the bureaucracy, legislative and at the grassroots level of lobbies and the press - a rallying point (Jervis, Snyder,1991,200), without suggestion that all parties bought into the stated ideology. Keynesian economist Keyserling and securocrat P. Nitze supported (or propounded) this all-encompassing vision of containment for different and often particularistic reasons (McCormick, 2010,50). The existence of strategic conventions served a communicative role providing the “focal equilibria” around which the executive expected its domestic partners to broadly converge.

The second pathway that this paper advocates for the functioning of focal points is lateral pressure - referring to an inverted variant of the top down pressure previously discussed, whereby culturally conditioned “focal points” serve as a coordinating mechanism for the government’s (or dominant faction’s) main opposition. As an illustration, Senator R. Taft and then Republican candidate Eisenhower appealed to the U.S.’ tradition of limited liability to oppose the Truman administration (McDougall,1997,50). On other issues, however, opponents such as the “Asia First” school appealed to the administration's

own postulations on perimeter defence to pose the exclusion of Taiwan within the U.S. defence perimeter (Duffy,1997,48).

Any effort aimed at proactive coordination between the state or dominant faction and its opponents, references pre-held strategic beliefs; the state and opposition are more likely to coordinate on a given policy choice if one party succeeds in framing its arguments within the terms of a strategic cultural focal point. In explaining this phenomenon, Schelling counts the obvious transaction costs for conflicting political parties; both parties in a mixed coordination game are more likely to seek advancement when they expect little opposition from the other. Existing notions of propriety serve to create shared expectations of political opposition when these bounds are transgressed. This does not imply that each actor necessarily believes in the notions - merely that actors choose to operate within a framework created by strategic culture in order to reduce the likelihood of friction and transaction costs (Schelling,1958,15). Simply expressed, domestic opposition is foreseeable when a pretext exists and is silenced when denied this pretext - perfectly exemplified in the Bush administration's decision to invade Iraq which was a decision framed by traditional concepts of perimeter defence and a universalistic internationalist grand strategy, rendering the Democratic opposition inert precisely because arguments against this grand strategy would have exceeded the bounds of the American strategic tradition (Trubowitz,2011,110) (Renshon,2007,271).

The final pathway proposed herein is a bottom up variant of the focal point theory, whereby functional agencies frame their preferred strategies within strategic traditions in order to increase their likelihood of succeeding in interagency feuds. In inter-service discussions between the American army and Strategic Air Command on their favoured, self-interested doctrines of massive retaliation and flexible response, each service framed its arguments within what C. Dueck dubs America's tradition of "limited liability" (Dueck,2006,30). Each service argued that the other's favoured doctrine was a recipe for overreach. When the SAC extolled the economic value of a cost-effective doctrine of massive retaliation, the army concluded that this doctrine would force the U.S. to fight wars of an unlimited scope and scale when the possibility for a more judicious application of force existed (Kessler,2010,18). Specialised agencies provide the executive with a menu of

choices delineated by strategic culture.

This model of strategic culture is compatible with rational actor-based models of executive choice, as clearly charted by Trubowitz (2011). While systemic pressures and domestic politics necessitate broad strategic orientations (such as expansionism or balancing), these factors act as constraints upon an executive's strategic options and not as the determinants of a specific strategy *per se*.

To illustrate - the combination of systemic constraints and domestic cross pressures within the U.S. at the turn of the millennium rationalises the Bush administration's reasons for an assertive grand strategy, but fails to explain the decision to frame the strategic challenge in terms of a Manichean "axis of evil" - alienating initially cooperative nations such as Iran and Syria, who could have been dealt with sequentially after strategic objectives in Iraq and Afghanistan had been achieved. Or, indeed, the operational decision to pursue this strategy in Iraq with a relatively small force of 150,000 men as opposed to the 400,000 troops that analysts suggest would have been required to achieve strategic objectives in the region (Heradsveit, 2007, 422-430) (Mahnken, 2006, 12). Strategic cultural factors of limited liability and universalism were manifestly at play.

At this point in the thesis, the specific types of actors involved in the coalitions we describe, bear further elaboration. Political coalitions effectively amount to policy networks involving actors acting in an institutional capacity, as individual policy entrepreneurs and as legislators among other things. In any given coalition, the balance between various elements of a coalition may vary. Nonetheless, I argue, the ability to coagulate around a focal point is what makes the coordination of a coalition possible. For the purpose of the thesis the chief executive is taken to be the principle agent. This may sometimes jar with cases of a weak chief executive but, given the role of the executive as a final gatekeeper on policy I take this as an analytical jumping off point. The executive is the most central node in the network that comprises his coalition. As such, the thesis follows scholars such as Narizny (2007) in viewing the executive as being an interest aggregator for his coalition but, unlike Narizny I do not assume that this process is linear or that it can be viewed in isolation. Rather, the need for a

framework to secure coalitional cohesion (because even the most skilled interest aggregators cannot please the whole of their coalition) to outflank opponents and to weigh competing bottom up policy initiatives requires a shared conception of a legitimate policy- a focal point without which intra coalitional competition and bargaining is not possible.

Evidently, strategic culture further narrows the list of strategic and operational choices left open to the executive by systemic and domestic cross pressures. By integrating strategic culture with these other variables, I wish to improve the predictive capacity of existing rational actor models without relaxing their core assumptions.

Grand Strategy

In the operationalising of grand strategy as a concept, I must deal with three issues. The first pertains to the proper scope of grand strategy. The central debate at the heart of the study of grand strategy is between the “war paradigm” and “peace paradigm.” Supporters of the war paradigm H. Strachan (2005) and J. Mearsheimer (2001) hold that the inclusion of tools such as financial suasion and political pressure within the ambit of grand strategy, renders the term all-encompassing and by extension, analytically hollow. Strachan decries the all-encompassing definition of strategy as one that renders the concepts of strategy and policy inextricable from one another (Strachan,2005,45). Both authors suggest that the study of grand strategy be restricted to the analysis of the state’s use of force.

Arguably, this approach renders the concept of strategy synonymous with military doctrine and ignores the vital role that economic and political statecraft play in effecting strategic outcomes. To lend the parsimony which the war paradigm craves (without eschewing the study of means such as economic statecraft), grand strategy may be perceived as constructing the tools of a state's economic, military and political means within a zero-sum game, with one or several potentially or actively militarily hostile international actors. The condition that strategy must involve potential or actual military hostility circumvents the trap of accusations that anything can be “securitised” - without abandoning the study of non-military means (Kitchen,2010,120).

The second question deals with the definition of strategy as either a discourse or a practice. As per A. Beuffre's theory (1985,55), strategy is a nation's "philosophical framework" for thinking about war - a view problematised by R. Castex (1994,28-30) who enunciates strategy as both a roadmap of perception on specific issues and a set of prescriptions that are translated into action. In Clausewitzian terms, strategy is usually conceived as a praxis - encompassing both modes of thought and concrete actions (Clausewitz.II.130) (Jomini,180). I will follow Castex's conception of strategy. The question ensues: Must grand strategy be treated as a deliberate or an emergent phenomenon? This thesis effectively frames the debate over scrutinising a nation's strategy in terms of what K. Narizny refers to as either its "intended plan of action" or its "realised strategy" - representing an adaptation of a nation's preferred actions to the vicissitudes of real-world competition with one or several reacting opponents (Narizny,2007,20).

Although dealing solely with intended strategies leaves the door open to objections that grand strategy amounts to little more than an idealised version of a nation's strategic preferences with little resemblance to its actions in practice, projecting grand strategy as the sum of a nation's decisions invites B. Isaac's critique that the concept merely amounts to the ex post facto imposition of order upon actors' decisions (Isaac,1993,57).

Nevertheless, I argue that a reasonable case can be made for the treatment of grand strategy as emergent rather than intended – since, fundamentally, this definition satisfies J. Gerring's criterion of resonance (Gerring,2012,359). E. Luttwak and J. Gaddis - central figures in the academics of grand strategy - have long proposed that leaders' actions are guided by and by extension, subsumed within, broader grand, if sometimes subconscious, assumptions and strategies (Luttwak,1987,200)(Gaddis,1985,40).

Clearly, it is apposite to treat grand strategy as being observable in what H. Mintzberg dubs a "pattern in a stream of decisions" encompassing both explicitly stated doctrines and action in practice (Mintzberg,1978,935-940).

Moving on from these controversies, I will now turn to the definition of analytical levels used to study grand strategy. As E. Luttwak observes, grand strategy is “the product of strategic interaction at every level of strategy” (Luttwak,1987,150). Delineating the point at which grand strategy ends and lower levels of strategy begin, can be problematic. In B. Posen's opinion, the “ends ways means” chain comprising grand strategy must contain aspects of policy such as military doctrine as components of grand strategy, affording information on the “ways” in which specific means are to be used (Posen,1986,18-20).

Inferentially, grand strategy could encompass every action taken by the state down to the tactical level, making it imperative to assess where to “cut the chain”. I submit that a great deal of the confusion is eliminated when what I regard as an artificial distinction between the strategic and operational levels of strategy, is removed. To echo A. Echevarria, the existence of an operational level of war is demonstrably, a relatively recent product of A.Svechin's thinking. The previous subdivision between strategy (anything planned around general principles) and tactics (anything delegated to figures of authority operating beneath theatre level - effectively, ad hoc decisions subordinate to, but not directly controlled by political strategy) enables a trimmer separation of strategic and non-strategic issues (Echevarria,1994,28). This renders the operational level a subcomponent of grand strategy.

Having outlined my theoretical framework for the implications of strategic cultures' impact on grand strategy, the next portion of this chapter will articulate the predictive model used both to falsify my theory and demonstrate its utility as a progressive addition to existing research paradigms.

Operationalizing Culture as a Focal Point - The Cultures of Anarchy

This section will achieve three objectives:

- 1) Forming concrete hypotheses on the possible policy outcomes achievable within the constraints of individual strategic cultural focal points

- 2) Collating the identified policies into broader grand strategic paradigms that, if my theory regarding the constraining effect of strategic culture is robust, represent the full set of potentially salient strategic choices.
- 3) Create a testable, predictive framework demonstrating how rational considerations of systemic and domestic cross pressures, coupled with a desire to operate within a strategic cultural consensus, leads policymakers to select certain grand strategies

To initiate the study, I first ascertain which strategic cultures are being studied. Characteristically, strategic cultures are treated as idiosyncratic to the nations from which they originate (Shu, 1992, 12). This ontological premise, however, voids the assumption of isomorphism inherent within any effort to situate strategic culture within a rationalist framework. Instead, I utilize I. Arreguin-Toft's notion of multiple simultaneously occurring isomorphisms, whereby it is established that nations do emulate successful strategic practices, but only of those nations which mirror their own conditions (Arreguin-Toft, 2001, 96-102).

For example, the cognate identities of the United States and Great Britain as maritime powers and liberal democracies, encouraged emulation within this dyad precisely because American policymakers from Alexander Hamilton to George Kennan typically viewed Britain as a country geographically, economically and politically analogous to America that had attained long term strategic successes. Accordingly, a liberal strategic culture (epitomized by cheap strategies such as offshore balancing) developed, into which this dyad and similar nations were socialised (Friedberg, 2000, 35) (Lee, 1995, 100). Therefore, while substituting the existing notion of a myriad unique strategic cultures, I advance the existence of three overarching strategic cultures - a liberal strategic culture and offensive and defensive realist strategic cultures.

Thinkers like A. George and R. Smoke prescribe the selection of individual subcategories of the phenomenon for scrutiny as an optimal means of studying a broad phenomenon (George, Smoke, 1974, 50). In accordance, I have selected one of the three identified archetypes (the liberal strategic culture) as the basis of my study. Although in consonance with the neorealist proposition that states act within an anarchic international system wherein self-help represents the surest possible means of ensuring survival, I contend that states possess

differing paradigms on the specific nature of the security dilemma, as well as optimal responses to it. Emphatically, however, this does not obviate the centrality of competition assumed by neorealism. The study of conflict in game theory has long discerned that the ubiquitously competitive nature of a game accords with the understanding that two actors might frame the game in different ways and thus seek to maximize their utility by seeking different equilibria (Kydd,2005,28).

To reiterate, these conceptions must be meticulously filtered through the prism of domestic interests in order to suit possibly conflicting requirements of sectoral interests. Thus, a liberal strategic culture within the United States at the turn of the century could be appropriated by eastern industrial elites to favour a vast naval build up to expand and protect American trade but deployed by opposing factions to argue for a policy of isolation. Crucially, both parties framed their arguments within the centrality of trade (a classically Hamiltonian notion) as a focal point (Trubowitz,1999,110).

In the following sections I will draw out the strategic cultural understandings of several key issues and create a series of predictions on how these culturally conditioned consensuses might manifest themselves as policy prescriptions.

The core issues examined are:

- 1) The state's metastrategy. This term, coined by A. Vinci, refers to a state's conception of what constitutes power within the international system (Vinci,2010,200). As C. Chich-Tung writes, a state's grand strategy can be accurately described as its program for the manufacture of power (Chich-Tung,2011,18). Power, not being endowed with a ubiquitous definition, has variously been defined as relational (Aron,2003,100) or absolute (Waltz,1979,48), rooted in ethical financial and military strength (Fuller,1919,180-200) or purely military (On War.VII.2)(Iggers,1968,32). In Vinci's perception, if strategy is conceived as analogous to an actor's moves within a game, metastrategy constitutes an actor's understanding of which game is being played and what constitutes winning. I propose that while nations seek

to “manufacture power” for self-help as realists correctly assess, different strategic cultures offer distinct perceptions of what constitutes power.

- 2) The concept of security. J. Taliaferro writes that states may view security as being either relative or absolute (Taliaferro,2000,138). Essentially, if metastrategy amounts to a state's conception of what constitutes power, the state's concept of security refers to its understanding of how much power should be sought and the thresholds of threat which, when crossed, necessitate its use.
- 3) The role of the various instruments of power, not least of all, force. This refers to what T. Traverton refers to as a state's concept of operations (CONOPS) – namely, the concept that guides the ends for which a specific instrument is utilized, the scope (both temporal and material) of the operations involving an instrument and the ways in which an instrument of power is used (Bennett, Traverton,1999,12).
- 4) The role of society in facilitating the state's grand strategy. My thesis holds that each highlighted strategic cultural archetype ascribes to a different set of beliefs on the extent to which the state can make extractive economic demands and restrictive social and legal demands of society at large in the pursuit of strategic objectives. Effectively, my argument defines where a nation stands in relation to Leopold Ranke’s injunction on the *primat der aussenpolitik* depends on its strategic culture (Zakaria,1995,144).

The ensuing sections will lay out the basis for my tripartite typology of strategic culture, identify the core tenets of the liberal strategic cultural archetype and outline the predictive model which will be further developed.

Towards a Typology of Strategic Culture

Building on work done by figures such as A. Grief (2006) and Acemogolu and Johnson, I maintain that culture is a set of conventions about the distribution of public goods that, once achieved becomes self-reinforcing precisely because deviation from it becomes inefficient. To be sure, such conventions are subject to exogenous shocks that alter the nature of a state's ruling coalition fundamentally, but this form of punctuated equilibrium is typically characterised by long periods of stability. If grand strategy is a distributional bargain, it becomes necessary to identify the key coalitions fighting over its contours and their interests.

Moreover, it becomes necessary to specify how specific conventions dictating the rules of the road, develop.

Following Kevin Narizny (2005) I identify three core coalitions in a state- domestic interests, trading interests and military colonial groups. Each group has an incentive in propound different policies based on differing interests. Military interests tend to propound doctrines of strategic preponderance but are inclined to believe that force should be utilized sparingly and decisively. By contrast, domestic interests are likely to be largely isolationist in their outlook. Finally, trade interests tend to favour any strategy (be it preponderance or legalism) that can avoid volatility.

The three interest groups are also likely to favour very different force structures based on their views of the role of the state. Trade interests are likely to favour small capital-intensive forces as a means of limiting fiscal extraction and the extraction of manpower from productive pursuits. Indeed, it has been noted by scholars since Machiavelli that mercantile states tend to place faith in deploying capital (in Machiavelli's day through the purchase of mercenaries) rather than their own citizens. By contrast, both domestic and military interests are likely to pursue larger forces - the former for territorial homeland defence and the latter for organizational reasons.

Utilising Alexander Gershenkeron's tripartite model of classifying states as early, late and late developers, I argue that the coalition (and by extension the preference set) that becomes dominant in a state depends on its stage of development.

Early developers are dominated by mercantile interests and the preference sets of these interests become focal principles to which other coalitions, even when in power, must adhere. Late developers, often states unified by a cartelized relationship between extractive industries and militaries, have an offensive realist strategic culture that reflects this fact. Late-Late developers, which often are autarkic and highly centralized states tend to have a defensive realist culture reflecting the overwhelmingly domestic interest-oriented nature of

these states which combine weakness with a centralized, domestically oriented elite focused heavily on state survival.

Crucially, this is not necessarily a repetition of the arguments of scholars such as Snyder (1991) about coalitions. A coalition built on domestic interests may take power in an early developer (as Nixon's combination of Southern and Midwestern states did in the U.S.) but it will still have to adhere to the focal principles of the dominant culture. Culture, then, if my model holds, is not a superfluous variable. As such, I argue that a "bargain" is struck on a specific understanding of strategy by self-interested coalitions as a result of myriad factors (of which I have listed a few) and that, by virtue of repeated iteration, this bargain becomes self-reinforcing. Every time it is adhered to, it becomes useful to adhere to again at time $T+1$ even at the risk of incurring some costs in terms of choosing suboptimal policy outcomes. Essentially, this follows Avner Grief (2006) argument regarding the ways in which states adhere to economic norms - the added transaction costs of switching to and negotiating a new set of norms and institutions outweighs the benefits of a more optimal choice. As such, one should expect leaders to avoid adhering to their strategic culture when the geopolitical or domestic costs are catastrophic to them but, within the remit of what is left possible by these twin engines of grand strategy, to choose the policy equilibrium that best accords with their strategic culture even if it is suboptimal. The outcome, then, is somewhat akin to the monetary mechanism of a "snake in the tunnel"- ensuring that leaders when viewed in conjunction across a period of time make decisions within a circumscribed policy space that is smaller than the universe of options left available to them.

More importantly, this model's predictions differ from Snyder's in key ways. As will be more fully articulated, while Snyder predicts periods of overexpansion followed by retrenchment in liberal democracies, my model contends that periods of overextension are typically followed by a retraction of grand strategic means but not ends - in other words hollow expansion. As such, should this model prove correct, early developers should be even more vulnerable to grand strategic overstretch than other types of state.

Liberal Strategic Culture

This section will articulate some of the guiding principles of a liberal strategic culture in the analytical areas outlined above. As previously underscored, while each of these principles amounts to a focal point, it does not produce any specific policy outcome per se. Rather, a focal point serves to highlight the possible equilibria (in this case, policy choices) to which a policymaker might successfully argue. The specific equilibrium and the set of choices from which it is selected, is shaped by systemic pressure and domestic partisan preference. Each focal point identified here will produce multiple policy equilibria, each of which becomes salient under different conditions. Thus, for example, the focal point of absolute security could manifest itself in doctrines of pre-emption and perimeter defence - insofar as, while the principle obliges a state to seek maximalist grand strategic ends, the most expansive end available to the state is determined by systemic circumstances.

At the level of the state's metastrategy, a liberal strategic culture's organizing principle is best captured by S. Strange's concept of "structural power" - the centrality of the state to the financial structure of the international political economy and the rule-making bodies of the international system (Strange, 1987, 551-560). As K. Narizny (2007) writes, commercial states have an embedded interest in both stability and access to markets and upholding a system or rules is central to this aim.

A corollary to this is what C. Layne (1994, 45) dubs a "systems view" of security – namely, that central and peripheral interests are indivisible because defence of a concept of order supersedes the defence of particular interests. Importantly, I am not arguing that liberal states are Kantian idealists eschewing the use of force; rather that force, along with the other instruments of statecraft are geared, within the liberal conception, to producing structural power.

It is to be noted that Liddell-Hart definitively pronounced that centrality in a rules-based legal order is instrumental, whilst examining Britain's success in maintaining its centrality within international trade and finance, coupled with the codification of various collective security

systems that formalized a balance of power favouring itself (Liddell-Hart,1991,45). In Liddell Hart's view, being the rule maker was, in fact, the epitome of realpolitik.

Nor was this an isolated position. The strong conviction that a nation's economic and political centrality is as imperative to grand strategy as its material capacity, marks the works of liberal strategic thinkers from George Kennan to Henry Luce and Paul Nitze (White,1996,108-115). While illiberal states may prioritize what J. Nye dubs "soft power" as well, it is my contention that explicit reliance on institutional (or quasi institutional) legitimation as an ordering principle for grand strategy is a product of the legalistic reasoning that liberal elites are forced to adhere to (in order to secure domestic buy in). As C. Dueck notes, the emphasis on the idea of being the representative of an "international community" is deeply rooted in classical liberal thought, emerging in the views of figures such as J.S Mill, among others.

Certainly, this does not imply that illiberal powers might not value the "second face" image of power; it merely stresses that this factor does not play a central role in their formulation of strategy (Recchia,2009,18) (Dueck,2006,24). Diplomatic cover is viewed as a welcome but not essential tool of grand strategy. S. Krasner highlights the crucial qualification: the concept of structural power is subject to prevailing political needs and thus holds true to no singular understanding. A combination of high geopolitical slack and domestic incentives for a unilateralist foreign policy saw the U.S. treat structural power as an outcome to be engendered by the use of material assets while a different configuration of incentives saw previous administrations treat the production of structural power as a positive feedback loop, whereby it's use in lieu of material assets, further entrenched it in the international system (Acharya,2007,276). Nonetheless, each strategic paradigm was built around a consensus on the centrality of structural power.

Consequently, my argument on the nature and constitution of the security dilemma deliberates that a liberal strategic culture conceptualizes security in absolute terms. This stems from two factors. First, a generally accepted nostrum of liberal strategic culture is that the hostility of states defined as non-liberal is implacable and stems from the nature of their internal systems. The assumption that states arrayed against a liberal polity are driven

to offensive strategies by their internal characteristics was shared even by purported realists such as Kennan (Friedberg,2012,30) (Evangelista,1993,195). The basis for defining states as non-liberal may well depend on the geostrategic exigencies of the time; C. Layne points to the way in which the definition of Wilhelmine Germany as a democracy in both elite and public discourse within the U.S. altered as relations between the countries soured (Layne,1994,28-35). Nevertheless, I contend that once liberal states identify a state as hostile, a consensus that the state's behaviour is impelled by its internal constitution becomes dominant to the discourse.

Secondly, pace J. Gaddis, politicians working within a liberal strategic culture are acutely aware of their population's capacity for panic (Gaddis,2005,56). It is this oft-exaggerated lack of faith in the capacity of a liberal society to sustain protracted insecurity without altering its internal constitution that leads politicians working within this strategic paradigm, to seek security in absolute terms (Dunn,1997,32). As Jimmy Carter once declared, "I'm not sure that this country has ever been willing to accept genuine equality. What we define as equality is...superiority" (Dunn,1997,56). Considering this view in conjunction with the liberal states strategic focus on a systems view of international politics, I postulate that politicians within the liberal tradition will abstain from disaggregating central and peripheral interests while seeking to confront a full spectrum of threats. K. O'Reilly believes that while domestic politics do change the way this idea manifests itself, the idea acts as a focal point to which elites argue (O'Reilly,2013,60-61).

In tandem, I submit that liberal strategic cultures have a proclivity for what Liddell-Hart refers to as the limited liability/indirect approach to the use of force - with force defined as the coercive use of both military and non-military tools. Liddell-Hart, convinced of an economic perception of conflict wherein economic costs are crucially minimized for the liberal power and maximized for the opposing power, advocated a policy of economic and political attrition (Liddell-Hart,1991,50).

This is largely at odds with the Clausewitzian dictum that, given the inherent uncertainty and capacity for escalation in war, attempts to rationalize the use of force are chimerical and that

maximal force should be used to achieve a narrowly defined political objective. However, in C. Gaceck's opinion, the desire to limit the costs of involvement could lead to multiple policy prescriptions. Primarily, the "gradualist" school reasons that force should be applied along a spectrum of vertical escalation involving the use of economic and political instruments of state - vitally directed at the economic and political bases of an opponent's power and typically manifesting itself via air raids or blockades (Gaceck,1994,50-110). Conversely, Gaceck points to a more Clausewitzian "All or Nothing" school that advocates the massive application of overwhelming military force to effectively limit liability temporally by ensuring the attainment of a rapid result. However, in my estimation, the distinction between gradualism and the "All or Nothing" approach is a suboptimal means of categorization. I theorize that all approaches taken within the context of a liberal strategic culture are effectively manifestations of the indirect limited liability approach. The central distinction is between an indirect approach at the grand strategic level and the indirect approach at the theatre/operational level (treated as a subcomponent of grand strategy). For example, the "All or Nothing" strategies of the doctrine of massive retaliation as well as the Weinberger doctrine, amounted to a direct use of force at the theatre/low strategic level but were components of indirect strategies at the grand strategic level. They served the purpose of circumventing the possibility of U.S. involvement in a large-scale conventional engagement by posing an unacceptable risk of escalation. Integrated into broader strategies centred around utilizing non-military means like multilateral alliances, "regional policemen" and the threat of political subversion behind the Iron Curtain, they helped carry out containment at a minimal cost.

Obversely, both the gradualist strategy of flexible response and direct strategies such as the Bush doctrine are united by a commitment to an indirect approach at the operational level. The doctrine of flexible response, emphasizing the use of airpower combined with local forces in peripheral conflicts and a limited counterforce policy in Europe, was symptomatic of the indirect approach at the operational level. Similarly, the strategy of manoeuvrism enacted by the second Bush administration sought to utilize light, highly mobile forces to avoid engaging with the bulk of an opponent's forces in pursuit of a rapid victory by decapitation - attempted by Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld's new model army in Afghanistan and Iraq.

These strategies amounted to a direct approach at the grand strategic level – since within both the strategy of flexible response and the pre-emptive Bush doctrine, threats at this level were engaged directly without efforts at conserving force - but was an indirect approach at the operational level. I submit that the appeals to limited liability and indirect approaches represent a manifest focal point leading to the formulation of indirect approaches at either the grand strategic or operational levels. These focal points represent the equilibria to which policymakers gravitate when choosing from the policies made available by the exigencies circumstance.

Finally, I hold as a natural adjunct to this proposition, that liberal strategic cultures typically accord low extractive and regulative power to the state while universally accepting inputs on strategic choice from a considerably broad range of state and societal interests. Undeniably, as P. Trubowitz observes, within the context of American grand strategy, this approach might refer to an inversion of Ranke's dictum - the *primaat der innenpolitik* (Trubowitz,1998,30). A. Friedberg describes its impact on taxation to the extraction of manpower via conscription and state control of strategic industries (Friedberg,2000,50-130).

Therefore, the domestic half of the “strategic synthesis” of grand strategy - which encompasses not just state strategy but policy authorization to appropriate the means to sustain it - is shaped by a consensus on the role of the state which serves as a focal point for negotiations between interested domestic actors (Kennedy,1991,10).

Distilling these principles, I arrive at two focal principles that characterize a liberal strategic culture - absolute security and limited liability. In definitional terms, the distinction between absolute and relative security can be based upon the degree to which a state attempts to control specific, as opposed to general shifts, in the international environment. Absolute security implies a doctrine in which security is conceived of as being independent rather than interdependent - in other words, where the state's capacity to prevent or rollback adverse shifts in the international environment is not predicated on the decisions of other powers.

This is contrasted with relative security which implies mutual insecurity in which actors make strategic decisions based on the assumption of security interdependence. To be clear,

interdependence does not imply cooperation; merely, that actions are predicated on beliefs which assess how other actors will react. Thus, for example, the Metternichian system was based upon relative security inasmuch as it relied in part, on a system of interlocking rivalries to ensure Austria's safety.

By contrast, a doctrine of absolute security has the ultimate aim of either eliminating or neutralizing threats in their entirety. In effect, a doctrine of absolute security assumes as its reference point, a level of security at which prospective adversaries can either be inhibited from acting as strategic actors or eliminated, while prospective allies are tightly bound to a network that constrains their freedom of action. The Monroe doctrine, for example, amounted to a doctrine of absolute security insofar as it aimed at the neutralization of European outposts in the new world, even as Latin American countries were bound into an ever-tighter web of asymmetric security relationships with the U.S. I argue that the insularity that makes weakly extractive liberal polities a possibility, also imbues them with a cultural tendency to view absolute security as a reference point.

The second principle which I articulate - limited liability - is subject to certain definitional issues. What constitutes limited liability is to some degree predicated upon the nature of one's opponent. To elucidate - military campaign against a weak peripheral state involves fewer risks than a campaign with comparable objectives against a great power.

In order to sidestep this issue, I divide actions based on whether they occur at the core or, at the periphery of the international system. With respect to states at the core, coercive actions short of war are defined as limited liability. By contrast, at the periphery, liabilities are more likely to accrue from occupation rather than from the defeat of relatively weak armies per se. Borrowing from Taliaferro (2004) and Bennett (1998), I offer a broader categorization of strategies based on their implied levels of risk and liability in the following sections.

The next chapter will articulate my basis for coding specific strategic choices within the framework of the ideal typical categories described above.

Emphasis will particularly be placed on illustrating the concept of an “indirect approach” to strategy (which forms the centrepiece of the liberal strategic cultures outcomes). Forthwith, I will list the strategic ideal types that constitute focal equilibria within a liberal strategic culture. Building on these propositions, I will now proceed to outline a predictive framework for executive grand strategic choice within the context of a liberal strategic culture.

Security Paradigms Within a Liberal Strategic culture

Strategic cultural focal points within a liberal strategic culture are tabulated below. As previously noted, a focal point does not amount to a policy prescription. Rather, the existence of a strategic cultural focal point has a regulatory impact on policymaking - producing a set of policies that a domestic coalition is most likely to converge on when several strategic choices exist. Within each issue area, I outline a list of possible policies that can be enacted by a politician seeking to appeal to a strategic cultural focal point under different combinations of geopolitical slack and domestic preference. Importantly, each policy expresses an ideal type - with disparate contextual manifestations. I collate the policy outcomes derived from each strategic cultural focal point into sets of grand strategic paradigms, identifying the systemic and domestic conditions which propel the choice of paradigm by a political leader operating within the compulsions of a liberal strategic culture. This predictive framework forms my preliminary hypothesis on the expected behaviour of a nation possessing a liberal strategic culture.

Table 1: Focal Points Within a Liberal Strategic Culture

Issue Area	Focal point	policy outcomes
Metastrategy	Absolute security	Institutionalised primacy- structural power is the end of the nation's grand strategy. This power is created, however, by acting outside the rule based order in order to compel other actors to work within it. Cooperative security- structural power as the end of grand strategy, with central rule making power maintained by working within the institutional order to the extent possible.
Concept of Security	Absolute	Pre-emptive posture- seeking the ability to forestall both central and peripheral threats Perimeter defence i.e. ability to respond to every threat both central and peripheral sought
Use of Force	Limited liability/Indirect Approach	Direct Approach at grand strategic level Direct Approach at the theatre/low strategic level Direct Approach at the strategic level Indirect approach at the theatre/low strategic level

Extractive Power of State	Limited Liability	Low taxation Low levels of manpower extraction Strategy expected to “pay for itself”-burden shifting to allies, private institutions
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Having established the focal points inherent in a liberal strategic culture, I address the issue of operationalizing policy outcomes that inhere in a nation’s strategic culture as coherent grand strategic paradigms. These paradigms, produced by inductively combining those equilibria deemed compatible, represent ideal typical grand strategies, that may manifest themselves differently in specific contexts. I achieve this by utilizing a modified version of B. Posen and A. Ross’ analytical framework for the study of grand strategy to distinguish the relevant categories of strategic action conforming with the policies identified above (Posen, Ross,1996,20).

The concept of grand strategy is divided into two broad components - strategic means and ends. "Ends" is subdivided into external means of strategy (which the state uses to influence its strategic environment) and internal means (which the state uses to produce capabilities that can be used externally). The grand strategic “paradigms” I identify are outlined below:

Table 2- Policy Equilibria in a Liberal Strategic Culture

Grand Strategy	Devolved Hegemony	Primacy	Liberal Interventionism/Hollow expansion	Preclusive Defence
Ends				
Conception of National Interests	Broad –perimeter defence	Broad- pre-emptive posture	Broad-Pre-emptive posture	Broad-Perimeter Defence
Means (external)				
Use of power	Indirect/Limited Liability approach at the grand strategic level Direct strategies at the operational/theatre level	Direct approach at the grand strategic level indirect/limited liability approach at the theatre/operational level	Direct Approach at Grand strategic level indirect/limited liability approach at the theatre/operational levels.	Direct Approach at the Grand Strategic Level indirect/limited liability Approach at the operational/theatre level

Predictive Framework

Having collated the identified policies into paradigms, I am tasked with determining when specific paradigms are operationalized by states. Ergo, I construct a predictive framework to demonstrate that the selection of each paradigm is predicated on two crosscutting variables - geopolitical circumstances and the distributional costs absorbed domestically by the selection of a specific strategy.

Following Trubowitz (2011), this thesis treats the state's executive as a strategic actor which must preserve its vital capacity to retain power by responding to its own domestic coalition preferences, which may be disposed to overall favour either military investment (guns) or civilian expenditure (butter). However, this model differs from Innenpolitik theories insofar as it treats leaders as extremely sensitive to systemic conditions. Leaders, as strategic actors, have excellent reasons to take cognizance of levels of geopolitical security when formulating policy. Failures, when security is scarce, may bring about an executive's removal by either the opposition or its own disaffected coalition. Therefore good domestic reasons exist to take cognizance of systemic circumstances (Trubowitz, 2011, 28). This model treats grand strategy as an outcome engendered by a combination of "geopolitical slack" or the degree of security available to a state and the domestic partisan preference of the dominant coalition which a state's executive leads.

Acknowledging the role of these two variables in shaping executive preference, I submit that an executive must bargain with an opposing coalition, members of its own coalition and specialized agencies in order to realize its preferences. Incontestably, the state's leadership has considerable incentive to best achieve the required level of coordination and to select equilibria that are focal from the full set of options left available by systemic and domestic conditions. It is my contention that each grand strategic highlighted paradigm, along with the strategic equilibria comprising it, is represented within an executive's suite of options under different combinations of systemic and domestic pressure. However, as focal equilibria, these paradigms are more likely to be chosen than others subject to the constraints of geopolitical

and domestic cross pressures. Consequently, while the executive may select a paradigm that best accords with its preferences, it cannot act purely on the basis of these inclinations. To illustrate the argument: a combination of scarce security and partisan impetus from the newly industrial “sunbelt” (which benefited from military expenditure) gave the Reagan administration strong incentives for an assertive strategy which was direct at the grand strategic level (Trubowitz,1998,65). Nonetheless, the actualization of its preferences over Congressional opposition was achieved by asserting that the use of proxies and (in some cases) limited force at the theatre/operational level (an indirect strategy), would limit the liabilities and costs of this more expansive strategic vision. Traditions of limited liability and an effective, indirect approach conclusively set an “upper limit” on the degree to which even an executive with an expansive geopolitical vision could incur commitments and conditioned the ways in which it used force (Scott,1996,50-65). To be sure, it might be argued that the very presence of veto players within a democracy introduces an upper threshold on the liabilities that a leader might assume. However, a simple structural explanation would be indeterminate for several reasons.

Firstly, there appears to be no linear relationship between the number of veto players in a system and its tendency towards pursuing extensive strategic liabilities. For example, as J. Snyder points out, it was the need to logroll multiple important constituencies that led the architects of imperial Japan’s grand strategy to pursue multiple strategic objectives with expansive military means (Snyder,1991,45-50).

Secondly, the literature regarding the structural incentives that the existence of multiple veto players provides to a democracy is somewhat indeterminate. For example, D. Reiter and A. Stam argue that in light of the existence of a broad selectorate, democratic leaders have incentives to eschew all but the most central grand strategic commitments (which allows them to avoid the difficulty that building winning coalitions for war entails), but to expend more upon the attainment of those commitments that they do make - insofar as democratic leaders, to a greater extent than autocrats, have reason to fear deposition in the instance of failure in wartime and thus have an incentive to expend resources in excess of those necessary to secure a victory in order to preclude even the slight risk of failure

(Reiter, Stam, 1998, 56). In effect, then, the institutional literature makes predictions that directly diverge from those of my predictive model.

This paper argues that while these dual factors act as determinants of executive choice, the necessity to select a strategic paradigm recognized within a nation's liberal strategic culture limits the cited options available to policymakers. Executive choice while shaped simultaneously by a rational response to circumstance and an obligation to forge domestic consensus, concedes the restrictions imposed by horizontal, vertical and lateral pressures. My predictive framework determines the ways in which policymakers operating within the constraints of a liberal strategic culture, respond to different constellations of systemic and domestic pressure.

Building on these propositions, I develop a predictive framework to anticipate the choices that the executive of a liberal state will make under different constellations of geopolitical slack and domestic partisan pressure. It would be germane, before doing so however, to more fully articulate the dimensions along which the strategic outcomes outlined below can vary. A concern here is that grand strategies can vary along multiple dimensions including, but not limited to, the propensity for the use of force, the scope of a nation's ambitions, its approach towards domestic resource mobilisation and its diplomatic strategy to name but a few. This produces an almost dizzying array of categories which can be difficult to readily categorise.

This thesis is primarily concerned with the relationship between a nation's commitments (its grand strategic ends) and the means it utilizes to achieve them. The hypothesis being proven, namely that liberal polities seek absolute security with limited and often insufficient means is conducive to a categorization of grand strategies along these lines. To this end, the means that a state uses are categorized not in terms of whether they are coercive or noncoercive, but rather whether they involve substantial or limited strategic liability.

I have tabulated a list of grand strategic objectives that a state can seek below, along with the means that can be utilized to achieve them and then outlined the labels that I attach to each strategic pathway.

The first criterion by which grand strategies can be categorised is ambition - specifically whether a state intends to expand its influence, retain what it already possesses or manage a diminution in its influence. The means by which these disparate ends can be achieved, however, vary greatly in their levels of risk and state extraction. By way of an example, Iran has created a sphere of influence in the Middle East through a relatively cheap strategy of political subversion. By the same token, strategists with modest ends might utilize expensive means to achieve them. For example, Dale Copeland (2000) notes that Wilhelmine Germany sought the relatively modest goal of retaining its power position in Europe through a risky and expensive strategy of pre-emptive war against Russia. Indeed, in some cases, a state may expand the scope of its ambitions without any concomitant expansion of the resources committed. An example of this might be the French decision in the interwar years to attempt to erect a "little entente" on Germany's eastern periphery without developing the military resources to defend its alliance commitments - a policy that I code as "hollow expansion".

The second criteria I examine is risk/liability. Risk can be categorized on two dimensions for the purpose of strategy- Grand Strategic or political risk and Strategic risk. The first type of risk refers to the degree to which a state is committing its own (and its executive) politically to a given outcome. States intervening unilaterally, for example, operate under the high levels of grand strategic liability characterised by Colin Powells' famous Pottery Barn quip- "you break it, you buy it, you won it". States may choose to buffer themselves against this risk by acting covertly, utilising a multilateral framework or devolving responsibilities to a regional ally. Strategic risk, by contrast, refers to the level of risk and cost incurred by the use of a specific instrument. For example, military strategies can be framed on a spectrum of liability from coercive bombing to quick joint expeditions and outright war of annihilation of conquest - each of which varies in risk levels. Left of this spectrum of military options, I code actions such as unilaterally and openly supporting a proxy or instituting sanctions as being particularly low risk strategic (but not grand strategic) options.

As per my predictive framework, a state operating within the confines of a liberal strategic culture should opt to expand its commitments or maintain an indiscriminate defence even as it limits its liabilities at either the grand strategic or strategic level in each instance. Utilising pre-existing typologies of grand strategy from sources such as Johnston (2008), Trubowitz(2011) and Narizny (2005) I categorise grand strategic choices based on their levels of feasibility under different conditions of geopolitical slack and domestic pressure and identify my predicted equilibrium for a liberal strategic culture in each case in the table below:

Table 3- Predictive Framework

	Geopolitical Slack	High	Low
Partisan Preference			
Guns		Indiscriminate Conquest Liberal Primacy Hegemony Selective Expansion	Internal Balancing Defensive War Preclusive defence Discriminate deterrence Pre-emption
Butter		Hollow Expansion Retrenchment Isolationism Selective Engagement	Bait and bleed Hedging Buck passing Devolved Hegemony

In Chapter Two, I will articulate the specific features of each grand strategy in further depth. The following section will outline the research design with which this framework will be falsified.

Research Design

Before articulating my methodology and case selection criteria, I reiterate the central objective of my thesis. My thesis is aimed at testing a theoretical framework anchored on a hitherto untested causal mechanism which integrates rational actor models and the

assumption that strategic culture impacts national grand strategic decision making. To that end, I aim to answer what Bennett and George dub a "how" question.

According to J. Blatter, the testing of a causal mechanism is best attempted through the articulation and falsification of a derivative hypothesis (Blatter,2008,320).

This mode of testing delivers a series of predictions which are expected to hold true if the causal mechanism postulated is in operation. Contextually, the derivative hypothesis is, therefore, a model of grand strategic choices that the executive of a nation operating within the bearings of its strategic culture would make under different combinations of systemic pressure and domestic partisan preference.

My research presents two objectives:

- 1) To establish a congruence between my postulated model of grand strategic choice and the decisions made by elites.
- 2) To establish that strategic culture, acting as a set of focal points, determines the choices made within the constraints postulated by my model.

I will now outline my methodology for achieving these research objectives, before indicating the basis for my selection of the empirical evidence applied in my thesis.

Methodology

To test my hypothesis, I adopt a case study-oriented methodology centred around the congruence method and process tracing. Before enunciating the reasons for selecting this methodology, I will discuss my reasons for eschewing alternative methods. I avoid quantitative methods for several reasons.

First, as C. Ragin notes, statistical methods are poorly suited to the study of complex causal mechanisms in conjunction with one another (Ragin,1989,110). Uncovering and testing

causal mechanisms (“answering how questions”) as opposed to correlating causes and effects is beyond the remit of quantitative research (King, Keohane, Verba, 1994, 36). Second, the outcome studied (grand strategy) is difficult to formulate as either a discrete variable or a quality which varies in increments along a continuum. Finally, the universe of cases studied amounts to a small N sample that is not amenable to statistical analysis. I must rule out QCA and other mixed methods for similar reasons. QCA and mixed methods more generally identify those studies which examine a causal outcome that is either a discrete binary outcome or a non-discrete variable that varies in gradations along a continuum. The study of outcomes which are qualitatively highly differentiated, such as national grand strategies is beyond the remit of these methods.

Instead, I adopt case study-oriented methodology. Employing the congruence method, I correlate coded outcomes (in this case, grand strategic choices) with causal conditions. The objective of the methodology is to test my predictions regarding the outcomes of a liberal strategic culture's interaction with diverse configurations of domestic and systemic pressure. This approach has been applied with some success by K. Holsti to the intensive study of political leaders' operational codes. This additionally grapples with complications inherent within efforts to draw generalizable theoretical conclusions from unique outcomes (Holsti, 1970, 128).

The aim of the congruence procedure within this section is twofold:

First, the congruence method will demonstrate that the grand strategic outcomes of each case are consistent with the ideal type strategies above. Secondly, I will utilize counterfactual testing concomitantly with examinations of policy debates within each case - demonstrating that other equilibria existed for the states' leadership to choose from within the constraints imposed by domestic and systemic conditions. This constitutes a “weak test” of a hypothesis; it is a prerequisite for empirical data to pass, although alternative causal pathways are not eliminated (Collier, 2011, 823). The empirical evidence utilized will comprise of largely secondary material used to identify and label specific grand strategic outcomes.

However, to demonstrate the existence of alternative equilibria, I will also utilize primary sources.

Three definitive loci of analysis will be addressed - intra bureaucratic struggles, debate within the legislative and intra administration debates - as those areas which collectively comprise the apparatus within which strategy is debated. Contextual archival research and the testimonies of primary agents will, where possible, will exhibit the existence of alternative equilibria. Additionally, existing models such as those of Trubowitz (2011) will validate alternative options as plausible counterfactuals under specific conditions.

The congruence method, as A. George and T. McKeown maintain, does not permit the certainty of conclusions derived from quasi-experimental analysis. This stated, scholars working within the methodology may apply a number of means to improve the robustness of their findings. George and McKeown believe that the congruence method relies heavily on the Bayesian notion of prior probability in order to measure the robustness of positive findings - prior probability being based on considerations of whether the theoretical framework offered is a contentious one and whether similar theoretical frameworks have been tested successfully in other contexts (George, McKeown, 1985, 42-50). The theoretical framework offered by my thesis offers a fairly uncontentious definition of culture that has seen it combined with theories of utility maximizing rationality in the field of economics - most notably in studies by D.M Kreps and A. Grief (Grief, 1994, 920) (Kreps, 1990, 216). Consequently, I consider the prior probability of my predictions to be high.

To further establish the probability that my hypothesis can be affirmed, the congruence procedure enables the use of counterfactual testing. D. Laitin recognizes that counterfactuals control for exogenous variables which do not vary greatly within a case. This is particularly useful when attempting to control for the role of factors such as geography and the domestic political system (Laitin, 1995, 455). As my case posits, pace C. Lord, that strategic culture is an emergent property shaped, in part, by both factors but separable from either of them, I must control for the effects of variables that covary with strategic culture (Lord, 1985, 270-272). Counterfactuals represent one means by which this can be achieved within the context of congruence analysis. For example, within an economic analysis of the impact of culture as

a focal point, A. Grief(1994) utilizes counterfactuals to demonstrate that domestic institutions leave actors with a number of equilibria to choose from in any decision making scenario and are therefore, unsuited to theorizing the specific choices actors make.

Additionally, I propose to utilize between case variation for each of the cells in table 2 where more than one case is examined in order to control for exogenous variables. The cases used typically span presidents from different parties with different leadership styles and different operational codes. As such, where possible, case studies in any given cell of my predictive model have been chosen to control for exogenous determinants of strategic choice.

Additionally, the temporal period I cover offers some methodological advantages. Neoclassical realist theorists such as F. Zakaria and J. Snyder who posit a role for domestic institutions as determinants of policy (by acting as valves on the executive's extractive power, for example) typically argue that institutions have their greatest impact in the absence of a threat. By contrast, following a geopolitical "shock", institutions are expected to alter their contours in order to empower the executive (insofar as even actors opposed to such action find it difficult to oppose arguments made in the name of security). Within the case study of the U.S. such shocks include the Soviet launch of Sputnik and the Korean War (Snyder,1991,18) (Zakaria,1999 50). Case analyses of Presidents who operated in conditions of low geopolitical slack in a "post shock" period pose what Bennett and George call "hard cases" for the argument that strategic culture impacts grand strategic choice independently of institutional structure. If these cases demonstrate that strategic culture focal points such as limited liability still play a role within domestic bargaining - supporting interested actors in successfully resisting pressures created by a shock - it follows that strategic culture while acting as an intervening variable in conjunction with domestic institutions, is not an epiphenomenon.

With geography as a second variable which conditions the emergence of strategic culture, I will distinguish the impact of strategic culture from that of geography by using within case variation on what R. Aron dubs the "salience of geography" (Aron,2003,400). Geography, argue Aron and A.C. Harth, has an impact only as a function of the efficiency of the technology

used to surmount it (Harth,2003,40-65). For example, in Y.H. Lim's view, J. Mearsheimer who discusses the importance of factors such as the “stopping power of water”, ignores the significantly increased ability of great powers to project power across water bodies since the early 20th century - when the thesis had salience (Lim,2014,25-50). To distinguish the impact of a strategic culture that was shaped by geography (as an initial formative condition) and the “objective geography” of a nation as a variable in and of itself, I examine a range of administrations across a protracted period of half a century, during which the salience of geographical features (such as maritime barriers) varied.

However, as J.W. Davidson notes, the congruence procedure allows the examination of whether certain causal factors and outcomes align without specifying causal linkages. Given that my thesis posits a specific causal mechanism by which strategic culture impacts grand strategy, the use of the congruence procedure must be seen as a “first cut”. Each case study will also contain a process tracing segment to establish the causal link hypothesized - namely, that strategic culture serves as a tool for achieving intra elite consensus on a choice between a range of available grand strategies (Davidson,2011,108).

The aim of the process tracing section of the thesis is threefold. Primarily, as A. Bennett and C. Elmann write, process tracing must affirm the non-substitutable causal links hypothesized by my theoretical framework.

A non-substitutable link within the context of my focal point theory would be the invocation of a focal point within the debate on the selection of specific strategies by a state's leadership. Contextually, I will analyse three key types of sources.

First, Defence white papers and public pronouncements on strategy (such as the Quadrennial Defence Review) and leaders speeches will be used as statements of policy.

Second, debates within the legislative over a specific aspect of a broader strategy, such as the decision to launch a war or funding for specific programs, will be analysed to demonstrate that appeals to specific focal points were made over the duration of these debates. The legislative is selected as it represents a locus of “top down” pressure within a ruling coalition and “lateral pressure” applied to a coalition by domestic opponents.

Simultaneously, I will analyse bureaucratic debates - the locus of “bottom up” pressure from functional agencies and top down pressure from an administration to such agencies - to establish verbal appeals to focal points such as limited liability at this level. Given the relatively opaque nature of these debates, the referenced sources will be more varied than the relatively accessible records of legislative debates and will include archival research, transcripts of specific conversations and second-hand history (which relays the distilled content of such primary works). This follows a pattern initiated by Gaceck (1994,1-30) in the study of intra-administration debates.

This segment of process tracing represents a “straw in the wind test” which is the first cut in any process tracing methodology. A straw in the wind test does not confirm a hypothesis, but failure to pass this test eliminates the hypothesis immediately. For example, if an individual is accused of murder, proving a motive is a straw in the wind inasmuch as this evidence does not prove the hypothesis but its absence is fatal to the argument. Similarly, the invocation of absolute security in the form of the logic of falling dominoes and limited liability in the form of appeals to garrison state images, is a *sine qua non* for my hypothesis (Van Evera,1997,31-32). While this does not unequivocally affirm my hypothesis (pending a solution to equifinality), it serves as a “first cut” (Bennett, Elmann,2006,460).

Secondly, Elman affirms that process tracing must derive evidence that logically weakens or eliminates alternative theories that might explain an outcome (Elman,2005,300). Central to my thesis, should an appeal to a specific focal point coincide with a decision to cede ground by domestic rivals and a rallying of domestic support, it will be assumed that the focal point served its role as a bargaining tool with which to break logjams to an executive's satisfaction. For instance, J. Scott observed that Reagan's public appeals both to the necessity of defending or reclaiming global interests (perimeter defence) and the feasibility of limiting the cost of doing so by aiding proxies with limited force or purely with arms transfers (limited liability via an indirect approach at the operational level) coincided with the truncation of the middle of the road “pragmatists” in Congress - suggesting that the appeal to strategic nostrums had made it difficult for the opposition to state its case and split its less dedicated members from the ranks (Scott,1996,58).

Such coincidences of appeals to focal points and domestic bargaining success will strengthen my theory while marginally weakening opposing ones. This level of testing, known as “hoop testing”, serves to increase the probability of a theoretical framework or causal mechanism operating vis a vis alternative, without proving it in absolute terms (Bennett, 2010, 209). A hoop test serves as an illustration of an argument’s viability vis a vis an alternative if it can simultaneously affirm the case being made and at least partially call into question the alternatives. For example, if the invocation of a focal principle coincided with coordination by actors who had previously opposed a policy, both arguments regarding personal belief and political self-interest as sufficient explanations for policy coordination come into question.

Finally, process tracing aims to find “smoking gun” evidence which unequivocally affirms my hypothesis. This includes a direct admission from a policymaker that a focal point was adhered to with a view to rallying coalition support, or an admission by an opponent of a ceded strategy because bargaining against an appeal to a focal point appeared too costly and likely to incur transaction costs. Transcripts of private conversations between interested actors and past and personally conducted interviews would prove useful as part of the entire referenced documentation.

Therefore, in conjunction with each other and the congruence procedure, these three measures would arrive at a probabilistic validation of my hypothesis. Bennett and Elman (2006, 459) postulate that these conclusions share logical similarities with Bayesian logic, providing high degrees of probability but sacrificing the certainty achieved by experimental methods to examine complex causal relations. The method effectively amounts to a nested analysis with the manifestation of strategic culture over an extended period, its ability to predict similar choices by leaders under similar circumstances when controlling for exogenous causes and the ability to identify focal points in action through process tracing each play a role in allowing a reader to update their probabilities.

Measuring Strategic Culture as a Variable

To identify the delineated liberal strategic culture, I utilize within case process tracing. The process by which strategic culture is identified in operation as a set of focal points used by domestic actors as bargaining equilibria, is also treated as a gauge of its existence. Accusations of "double counting" are sometimes levelled at this practice since the data used to generate a hypothesis cannot also test it. However, as A. George and T. McKeown write, econometrics and political science typically utilize precisely such procedures in producing and testing hypotheses. An initial model is posited, following which observation occurs to confirm both the operation of the causal variable and its outcome (George, McKeown, 1985, 25), following an archetypal Kuhnian framework for paradigm generation (Kuhn, 1970, 200). The validity of the new model is assessed and double counting eliminated, by its further application to other cases - a task beyond the remit of this thesis.

Case Selection

The case study chosen for an analysis of the liberal strategic culture is the U.S. - since it constitutes what Bennett and George dub a "most obvious case" (Bennett, George, 2005, 23). The objective of my thesis stated as providing preliminary support to a new framework for the analysis of strategic culture - the use of a "most obvious" case represents a useful tool for corroborating my model. That being stated, the individual administrations examined in the thesis involve cases that are, respectively, the most and least obvious cases. Within the case study, I examine 9 of the 11 post war administrations within the United States. As my thesis examines the interaction of strategic culture with geopolitical slack on one hand and domestic preference (oriented either towards security or civilian spending) on the other, this selection of cases accords me the investigation of a set of administrations that coped with multiple possibilities in combinations of systemic and domestic pressure. The within case variation of the two variables that interact with strategic culture supports the study of an exhaustive set of interactions.

As previously stated, the study of the Eisenhower and Nixon/Ford administrations (which absorbed the geopolitical shocks of the Soviet ICBM tests, the debacle of Vietnam and the achievement of strategic parity by the U.S.S.R.) pose a "hard cases" that will separate the impact of strategic culture from that of domestic institutions - if strategic behaviour retains its consistency despite the sudden change in the security environment - which is a deviant

outcome from the perspective of those who see institutions as sufficient to explain outcomes. The Nixon case, which examines an administration dependent on a fundamentally economically nationalist coalition also presents a riposte to the arguments of figures such as S. Lobell, who might make the case that the makeup of a leaders ruling coalition is sufficient to explain the outcomes observed insofar as Nixon adhered to the focal points of a liberal strategic culture even as he led an illiberal ruling coalition.

The large number of administrations involved in the paper, controls for the idiosyncrasies of individual executives, both in terms of organizational procedure and personal features such as Presidential operational codes. Finally, the use of a long timeframe of half a century controls for the effects of geography.

Chapter II

Strategies of Liberal Primacy

Under conditions of high geopolitical slack and a domestic imperative to invest in guns over butter, a government typically has several options at its disposal. These options differ both in terms of the scale of the risk that they require a statesman to accept on the world stage, and the exertions that they demand of society as a whole. The five options identified by this thesis are:

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- internal balancing
 - Selective expansion
 - Conquest
 - Compellance
 - Primacy

A policy of internal balancing would entail a state generating resources for the defence of its homeland and existing commitments without necessarily pursuing expansive objectives abroad. Effectively, this amounts to a "fortress state" concept where military extraction is not necessarily matched by an expansion of a state's geopolitical commitments. An example of such policies might be Bismarck's post-unification grand strategy which saw the German Chancellor placate the "iron and rye" coalition of agrarians and military conservatives with a substantial military build-up, but which did not see Germany pursue expansionist policies of the world stage. Indeed, Bismarck's strategy was characterized by conservatism and hedging, based upon an interlocking set of reassurance treaties. Within this context, military force is used only in extremis but decisively.

A grand strategy is selective expansion and by contrast, employs force in select locales under specific diplomatic and strategic circumstances. Typically, a selective expander will bide its time for periods in which other states, by virtue of their own disagreements or the selective expander's own diplomatic manoeuvres, will not form countervailing coalitions against it before expanding in specific, strategically chosen locales. These regions may be chosen for a litany of reasons from resource endowment to defensive utility but will usually be well

defined so as to avoid mission creep. Like internal balances, selective expanders are likely to utilize force decisively but for limited well delineated aims. Examples include post Meiji Japan from 1900 until the 1930s and Bismarck's Prussia.

A strategy of conquest may be more wide reaching, entailing expansion across multiple locales. Examples of grand strategies of conquest abound, with Napoleonic France and Hitler's Germany often cited as examples of particularly expansionist states. A grand strategy of conquest typically involves long term commitments to a region, coupled with the costs of defeating defending forces and, as such, requires substantial resource extraction and social regimentation. In addition, in all but the most fragile societies, manpower is required to police conquered or client states - meaning that the grand strategy is also manpower intensive.

A grand strategy of compellance, by contrast, involves the coercive or punitive use of force to secure diplomatic concessions, without an overarching vision of territorial or systemic change. For example, scholars such as Andrew Scobell note that successive Chinese regimes have used force as a means of forcing opponents to reassess their policies toward China without seeking either territorial gain or a major shift in the material balance of power. A case in point would be Mao's war with India and his clashes with the Soviet Union on the Ussuri river in the wake of the Sino Soviet split. This emphasis on coercive diplomacy entails limited aims and by extension, limited liability but remains extroverted enough to placate a domestic coalition oriented towards guns over butter.

Finally, a grand strategy of primacy aims to shift the strategic balance of forces towards a state without entailing massive military commitments. The distinguishing traits of a strategy of primacy are its emphasis on shifting the strategic balance on the world stage rather with steps that are either short of war or entail the use of limited force in what are assumed to be low risk peripheral theatres. Effectively, primacy entails short sharp expeditionary operations on the periphery, coupled with the diplomatic and political encirclement of rivals at the core. Typically, however, the forces allotted to both tasks are relatively small and attempt to use capital intensive modes of fighting to compensate for this fact.

An example of a grand strategy of primacy would be that of late Victorian Britain, which expanded its sphere of influence on the periphery of the international system through what effectively amounted to informal imperialism while utilising a combination of maritime primacy and financial support to allies as a means of encircling Russia, its primary rival, at the core. Britain's objectives were maximalist, entailing not just the containment of Russian power but the active inhibition of its growth with treaties such as the one signed at the end of the Crimean War, limiting Russia's capacity to build a Black Sea fleet.

However, primacy, unlike conquest, does not invoke the risks and costs of great power war. Accordingly, on the periphery, Victorian Britain relied on small expeditionary forces and local proxies in campaigns such as its Persian, Afghan and Boer Wars - expecting rapid victories at limited costs followed by quick withdrawals. Primacy, then, mandates attempts to expand a state's influence across multiple domains whilst limiting the scope and scale of its commitments at the strategic level. If my results are congruent with my model's predictions, it is this approach that we should expect to observe.

Interest based models such as those of Trubowitz (2011) and Narizny (2007) can take us some way towards understanding the strategic orientation of a leader under this preference set but are, to an extent, underdetermining. As the suite of options above illustrates, leaders with this preference set can prioritize the investment in and use of military force to differing degrees. For example, the aforementioned Bismarckian strategy of internal balancing enhanced Germany's relative power without the explicit use of force - something that the leaders of contemporary China are currently emulating.

Additionally, the question of whether expansion is sought at the core or the periphery of the international system is not readily explicable using purely interest-based models. Although Narizny (2007,21-30) makes the case that the predominance of either core or periphery oriented economic interests might explain this choice, his model is underdetermining in several ways.

Firstly, even if one accepts that the predominance of peripheral interests gives Presidents an incentive to adopt an interventionist strategy on the periphery, there are multiple avenues

by which this might be achieved. A state may opt, for example, for some form of collective management of the periphery by great powers or, alternatively, might adopt an expansionist policy itself.

Moreover, there are in principle, multiple avenues by which peripheral interests might be appeased, such as allowing them cheap access to credit to compensate them for the risks they undertake. As such, models such as Narizny's are fundamentally underdetermined.

Furthermore, there is a difference between a strategy (an ends means ways chain) and a locus of interest. Existing models suffice to narrow the options available to a leader under specific interest matrices but are underdetermining with regards to particular choices.

George W. Bush - Grand Strategy of Primacy

The conditions under which America's 43rd President articulated his grand strategy are somewhat unique when juxtaposed with those Presidents who acted under dissimilar frameworks as demonstrated in my other case studies. Bush is the first President - within the span addressed by this thesis - who operated under conditions of high geopolitical slack and a strong domestic incentive to pursue a policy of "guns over butter". As per my model, this conjunction of circumstances should lead to a grand strategy of primacy distinguished by three features:

- 1) A direct, unilateral and pre-emptive approach at the grand strategic level, involving the use of force on a pre-emptive basis.

- 2) An indirect/limited liability theatre/operational level strategy centred around achieving "low strategic" objectives by policies aimed either at eliminating an opponent's political capacity for resistance or to achieve strategic denial rather than eliminating its operational means. The asymmetrical relationship between grand strategic goals and theatre/operational level means lies at the heart of the strategy of primacy's aim of achieving absolute security while adhering to the focal point of limited liability.

3) A diplomatic strategy centred on “soft multilateralism” – a policy that does not treat institutional legitimization as a prerequisite for action but rather as a means for “locking in” the gains made as a result of unilateral action - consistent with the choice to limit liability using operational rather than political means.

The Bush administration’s grand strategy was one which, as C. Dueck notes, represented the external manifestation of its policy of big government conservatism (Dueck,2010,286). The grand strategy hinged on the direct use of force, within a political context of “soft multilateral” legitimization. In effect, the administration would use force pre-emptively to eliminate threats to American security. Paradoxically, however, a cardinal tenet of the administration’s doctrines on the use of force was the fundamentally non Clausewitzian axiom that minimal amounts of force would be allotted to individual commitments - and that ensuring the economy of scale and term of American involvement was a central priority.

As J. Mearsheimer put it, the Bush doctrine was predicated on the existence of “a nimble military instrument” which, to put it in Muhammad Ali’s terminology, could “float like a butterfly and sting like a bee” (Mearsheimer,2005,1). Accordingly, the American military was to be transformed into a nimble, adaptable force, capable of intervening decisively at short notice to pre-empt threats to national security. Whether the full scope and scale of the specific interventions undertaken would have been possible had the events of September the 11th not occurred is worthy of discussion - but what does seem clear is that the force posture to effect a pre-emptive grand strategy was a central feature of the administration’s policy from the outset.

The outcome, therefore, was the direct application of force (or commitment of military forces) to several theatres, coupled with theatre level strategies that emphasized an indirect approach of decapitation and denial by RMA forces - effectively obviating the need for sizable commitments. In the following section, I will outline the systemic and domestic

circumstances that delineated the boundaries within which the Bush administration would have to locate an apposite policy equilibrium.

Next, I will outline the administration's security strategy - a topic that will be divided into an exposition of its internal elements and its external manifestation within what Mearsheimer (2001) dubs the three pivots of American grand strategy: the Middle East, Europe and North Asia. The latter two regions constitute what George Kenan dubbed the industrial rim lands of Eurasia (collectively comprising 48 percent of the world's GDP at the time) and affording the United States access to the periphery of the Eurasian landmass (which geostrategists since Spykman (1944) had identified as a core grand strategic objective for the U.S.) (Fujita, Thisse, 2013, 3). The final region owes its importance, first noted by the Eisenhower administration, to its importance to American energy security (Mearsheimer, 2001, 40).

After demonstrating the congruence between my model's predictions and the outcomes observed, I will proceed to demonstrate the ways in which appeals to strategic cultural focal points incentivized a strategy of "primacy on the cheap" as articulated above.

Following this, the third section of this chapter will detail the political and economic strategies that accompanied the security strategy of primacy and demonstrate how appeals to the focal point of structural power helped coalesce support for a strategy of "soft multilateralism" as a complement to the administration's NSS.

Geopolitical Slack and Domestic Incentives

As P. Trubowitz (2011) points out, the Bush administration had entered office with an incentive to emphasize its strength on defence related issues. This stemmed from the public consensus that national security was an area in which the Republican party was perceived as being more competent – delivering a strong incentive to accentuate this perception. This was best articulated by the party's chief electoral strategist Karl Rove, who noted that national security was an issue area in which the party had consistently garnered more trust than its Democratic rivals (Levin, DeSalvo, Shapiro, 2012, 281).

Secondly, as J. Snyder notes, conservative parties such as Lord Palmerston's Tories in 19th century Britain have often used liberal imperialism as a partisan wedge with which to divide progressive opposition - enabling them to pursue a policy of social stasis at home coupled with liberal imperialism abroad (Snyder, 1991, 153). Indeed, Snyder, Shapiro and Bloch-Elkon explicitly view the Bush administration's pursuit of primacy as an example of such a partisan wedge (Snyder, Shapiro, Bloch-Elkon, 2007, 20). Consequently, the administration's domestic agenda of limiting and, in some cases, downsizing the economic role of the state could be seen as symbiotically linked to an expansive grand strategy which appealed to a segment of its opposition and thus attenuated its cohesion.

Finally, of course, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 catalysed a nascent domestic consensus for a more assertive foreign policy, rallying the public behind the widespread perception of ever proliferating threats and low room for error. Simultaneously, at the systemic level, the existence of what scholars such as W. Wohlforth have dubbed a historically unprecedented concentration of power within the hands of the United States, allowed the executive a large degree of systemic slack (Wohlforth, 1999, 28-30). It follows, then, that strong incentives existed for an expansive unilateralist grand strategy.

However, while this explains the orientation of U.S. grand strategy, it must be noted that several policy equilibria existed within the possibility space delineated by these political incentives. In addition to primacy, the executive had the option of pursuing either a strategy of conquest or selective engagement coupled with internal balancing. The first strategy involves establishing a long term and large scale political and military presence within multiple theatres. Importantly, I follow T. Schelling in coding any policy which uses large bodies of troops to seize and hold a given territory over a long period of time, irrespective of whether the state chooses to assume direct governance (as traditional impressions of conquest would imply) (Brigety, 2007, 42). By contrast, C. Powell's Clausewitzian post 9/11 vision of a strategy of selective engagement centred around using a maximal number of troops to secure and hold Afghanistan over a long period of time. Both strategies would, in effect, be direct at both grand strategic and low strategic levels.

Significantly, the strategy of primacy which was adopted, attempted to push frontiers towards expansive goals, while simultaneously minimizing the level of political and military liability associated with attaining each individual goal – conflicting with evaluations of realistic levels by those strategists.

The role of structural power within the context of a grand strategy of primacy is appreciably greater than that which would be entailed by conquest, but more circumscribed than its role within a strategy of compellance, within which it plays the role of a substitute for the use of hard power rather than a tool to “lock in” gains. It is this choice between available alternatives that is best explained through the lens of strategic culture.

In the next sections, I will articulate the manifestation of the U.S. strategic culture within the context of the second Bush administration’s grand strategy.

Security Policy of the Bush Administration

Strategic Orientation

As Y.K. Heng notes, the central ordering principle of the administration’s security strategy was risk pre-emption. Significantly, it must be noted that the perception that remote risks could materialize into devastating threats was not a new one and could be observed in American administrations as far back as that of Roosevelt (Heng,2006,29). Effectively, the strategy articulated in the 2002 NSS and elucidated by D. Rumsfeld and P. Wolfowitz amounted to a continuation of the search for absolute security - a principle that serves as a central focal point within American strategic culture as per my paradigm. The emphasis on risk pre-emption was best encapsulated by Cheney’s pronouncement that, “If there’s a one percent chance that Pakistani scientists are helping Al Qaeda build or develop a nuclear weapon, we have to treat it as if it’s a certainty” (Suskind,2007,63). This principle led to the selection of regime change as a grand strategic objective on two separate occasions (the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan) within the greater Middle East. Simultaneously, the U.S. expanded its defence perimeter in East Europe and (temporarily) in East Asia.

Crucially, however, at the operational level, the use of the instruments of statecraft centred around strategic concepts such as decapitation and denial that were intimately linked with the proliferation of technologies linked with the RMA (Revolution in Military Affairs) along with the maturation of technologies such as the ABM (Shimko,2010,21). Thus, the strategic orientation of the Bush administration appealed to the focal point of limited liability, despite its expansive aims, by pursuing what M. Ignatieff (2003,20) (among others) dubs a “light footprint” centred around the rapid and decisive use of indirect strategies at the operational level, coupled with attempts to avoid the exertions of post conflict nation building. In the following sections, I will articulate this security strategy in greater detail.

Internal Balancing

From the very outset, figures in the administration such as Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld had started to push for a transformation of the U.S. military. The rationale for this transformation, which was outlined by key Pentagon insiders – such as CSBA figures like Andrew Krepinevich and Andrew Marshall - was the creation of a force that was sufficiently nimble to be moved quickly between geographic theatres in order to allow the U.S. to proactively “shape the environment” rather than reacting to events (Krepinevich,2003,20). To this end, the armed forces were directed towards capabilities based rather than threat-based planning - a departure from the 2 MRW concept that identified clear thresholds for action (namely a sizable military confrontation with a prospective regional hegemon) (2001 QDR). Furthermore, Rumsfeld’s four strategic nostrums - assure, dissuade, deter, defend represented a definition of shaping the environment that was largely distinguished from the Clintonian QDR’s “shape, respond, prepare” directive by its emphasis on the direct application of force to assure and deter in lieu of the use of indirect grand strategic means such as diplomatic signalling implied by the Clintonian QDR (Davis,2010,3). In particular, the aim of securing a decisive victory should deterrence fail, coupled with an open textured definition of what might constitute failure, amounted to novel doctrinal innovations that marked a shift to risk preclusion by pre-emption.

Finally, the QDR maintained the need to use force in a manner more consistent with the aims of policy - a nod to conservative critiques of Clintonian gradualism. In effect, the reorientation of the military’s strategic concepts centred around two directives at the grand strategic level:

pre-emptive use of force and direct, rather than indirect, grand strategic goals. That is to say, force would cease to be used as a tool of alliance support as in Kosovo but employed to directly achieve goals unilaterally decided upon (Cimbla,2002,100).

At the operational level, however, the Defence Secretary along with figures such as Admiral Cebrowski placed a significant emphasis on EBOs (Effects Based Operations) - the targeting of specific components of an enemy's system (such as communications nodes) that would have a disproportionately disabling effect and render the task of annihilating forces superfluous per se. Accordingly, the reformers proposed the reorganization of troops into modular forces based around brigades. As T. Adams notes, the emphasis on light modular forces in tandem with factors such as jointness and information dominance, all focused on one objective – the enabling of a significantly smaller force than had been used in the past to carry out expeditionary operations and using what amounted to a manoeuvre centric variant of Liddell Hart's indirect approach at the operational level (Adams,2006,50-70). As such, the early variant of the planned defence transformation seemed to address the focal point of limited liability and attempted to achieve it via an indirect approach of reduced manpower and capital at the operational level, aimed at denial rather than annihilation - in broad accordance with my model.

Furthermore, although defence transformation was most closely associated with Rumsfeld, it must be noted that it had broad acceptance within the party platform and finding its way into a number of the then candidate Bush's election speeches (Ferrill,Renning,Terriff,2013,60). Demonstrably, the underpinnings of the administration's security strategy largely preceded the events of September the 11th, although the attacks almost certainly had a catalysing effect. Simultaneously, the 2001 QDR specified the need for "flexible alliances" in accordance with operational (rather than strategic) needs - implying that ad hoc partnerships rather than long term institutions were to be the centrepiece of the alliance strategy that underpinned the use of force. The notion that partners should be sought, but that longstanding alliances were superfluous to this end, resonates with the "soft multilateralism" elements of my predicted grand strategic outcome. I will now move on to the realization of this security strategy following September the 11th.

The Bush Administration's Security Strategy in Action

The Greater Middle East

Afghanistan

The first test of the new national security strategy was the response to the events of September the 11th. The administration's response, whilst not pre-emptive, amounted to a direct approach at the grand strategic level aimed at destroying both the leadership of Al Qaeda and the Taliban regime that supported it - effectively identifying the capabilities that constituted the Taliban's governing apparatus (it's territorial base and armed forces) as the nexus' centre of gravity and aiming to destroy both - a quintessentially direct approach at the grand strategic level (Lovelace,2010,260). The direct nature of the action at the grand strategic level was further affirmed by the fact that the U.S. eschewed the political and strategic buffer of NATO support at the outset of the campaign - effectively assuming total liability for the grand strategic outcome (Saideman, Auerswald, 2014, 20).

However, at the low strategic level, the approach assumed by the U.S. was largely indirect and aimed at limiting liability. As B. Lambeth points out, the initial American contribution to operations in Afghanistan largely centred around a campaign of strategic denial - pulverizing key Taliban positions outside strongholds such as Mazar-E-Sharif while the U.S.' newfound allies within the Northern Alliance were tasked with exploiting these gains and routing the Taliban's forces (Lambeth,2005,140-150) (Cordesman,2002,19). Simultaneously, the U.S. engaged in political efforts to buy over Taliban affiliated warlords who held key operational positions which is an action that I code as an indirect strategy, insofar as it represented the use of a non-military strategic tool (financial suasion) to achieve operational goals (Schneller,2008,20).

This mode of warfare, which E. Luttwak dubs "positional warfare" (contrasting it with what he sees as the outmoded concept of annihilation) amounts to an indirect approach at the operational level that allowed an expansive goal to be achieved with limited means (Luttwak,1995,31-34). Indeed, the emphasis on indirect approaches was reiterated by key administration figures such as C. Powell and C. Rice, both of whom stated that disruption at a

pace sufficiently rapid to allow the U.S. to move on (and deal with what was flamboyantly dubbed the “hydra effect” of terrorism elsewhere) was central to strategic success (Campbell, Flournoy, 2001, 300). General Tommy Franks somewhat prematurely stated, “this campaign has the easiest exit strategy we’ve seen in years” (Fitzgerald, 2013, 38).

Importantly, two alternative approaches were offered to the administration. As Heng (2006, 50) writes, one discussed option was a policy of repeated decapitation strikes against the Al-Qaeda leadership that left the Taliban regime extant. Lambeth (2005, 50) and Olsen (2007, 51) note that this approach arguably fell prey to the fact that “draining the swamp” i.e. eradicating the potential sources of risk permanently had become a focal issue for the administration.

Simultaneously, however, the initial CENTCOM plan built around a policy of conquering and holding territory with a force of several hundred thousand troops was rejected on the grounds of cost and overextension (Wills, 2012, 66).

Broadly speaking, the focal principles of absolute security and limited liability do seem to have rendered the strategy of regime change using strategic air power and local proxies particularly salient in Afghanistan - leading to my conclusion that this iteration of the Bush grand strategy passes my straw in the wind test.

Iraq

The invasion of Iraq, *prima facie*, coheres well with my model of a direct unilateral approach at the grand strategic level coupled with an indirect approach at the theatre/operational level. At the grand strategic level, the goal of operations was the military and political apparatus that sustained the Iraqi state, much as had been the case in Afghanistan. At the political level, legitimization by the participation of allies and multilateral institutions was sought but not treated as prerequisite for action. For example, the Saudi Prince Bandar Bin Sultan would later claim that he had been informed of the decision to invade by C. Powell before the UNSC resolution on Iraq (Lucas, 2010, 15). Similarly, the then German Chancellor G. Schroeder

would later opine that the sense he received was that allied participation was “welcome but not necessary” (Hay-Sicherman, 2007, 16-23). Indeed, Vice President Cheney’s turn towards advocating pre-emption openly at the U.N. was apparently made without prior consultation with allies - much to the expressed chagrin of, among others, France’s Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin (Gordon, Shapiro, 2002, 76-90). The strategy with regards to Iraq can thus be coded as direct at the grand strategic level.

At the operational level, as recorded by A. Krepinevich (2003, 18), two models were floated: a manpower intensive “Desert Storm Two” aimed at annihilating major Iraqi formations and securing control of the country’s major cities following the achievement of this goal and a manoeuvre-centric strategy of decapitation. Consistent with my model, the latter approach was chosen and executed with an exceedingly small force of 148,000 men with only 78,000 of these entering Iraq at the outset of hostilities (Warren, 2011, 43). Additionally, the U.S. attempted to end the war at the outset by an attempted strategy of political decapitation - an airstrike carried out against the person of Saddam Hussein (Allawi, 2007, 21).

The attack, which targeted the Dora Farms compound outside Baghdad at which Saddam Hussein was expected to meet several of his aides, was to be followed up by the airlift of the 82nd, airborne to Baghdad international airport in order to secure the nerve centre of power in Iraq after the expected regime collapse (Gordon, Trainor, 2007, 196). This having failed, the army put its indirect approach of decapitation by manoeuvre into effect.

First, efforts were made to relay false invasion plans to the Iraqi army through “April Fools” - an Iraqi espionage agent who was identified and “sold” operational plans that stated that the U.S. would invade from the north with the help of the Kurdish Peshmarga. This coupled with efforts to mobilize the Peshmarga using special forces working in conjunction with local allies dislocated and fixed 13 Iraqi divisions in the north of the country (Murray, Scales, 2005, 60-70) (Russell, 2004, 1).

This objective having been achieved, strategic airpower was used to fix Iraqi force to the cities in which they were deployed by denying them access to the open road, while the army largely bypassed these positions. Thus, for example, the army’s V Corps under General William

Wallace largely circumvented Iraqi forces (with the exception of unintended skirmishes outside Nasiriyeh) on its way to Baghdad (Lambeth, 2013, 50-100) (Belote, 2004, 5). Similarly, IMEF advanced 100 kilometres into the country without making significant contact with opposing forces (Cordesman, 2003, 46). This demonstrates a strategy that combined multiple axes of advance coupled with the use of a strategy of denial using airpower - and thus allowed a relatively small force to avoid major contact while converging upon Baghdad, thereby decapitating the regime in a manifestation of the indirect approach which coheres with my model.

Thus, the U.S. security strategy in the greater Middle East is congruent with my predictions, relying on a direct approach at the grand strategic level in multiple theatres, coupled with an indirect approach at the low strategic level. This is consistent with my prediction for a combination of high geopolitical slack and a domestic preference for guns insofar as the need to appeal to absolute security precludes the possibility of selective engagement coupled with internal balancing (which was Powells' preference), while the need to appeal to the idea of limited liability precludes the possibility of using large forces to secure multiple theatres over a long period (which I code as a grand strategy of conquest).

I will now carry out process tracing of the decision-making process that produced these outcomes, in order to pass this segment of the thesis through my hoop test and smoking gun test. Following this, I will move on the U.S. grand strategy in the two other pivotal regions.

Decision Making in the Afghan and Iraqi cases

A cursory examination of the executive's rhetoric in the build-up to the engagements outlined above demonstrates strong appeals to the implacable nature of an illiberal foe, the internal sources of its behaviour and the attendant need for absolute security rather than a process of what Schelling called armed bargaining with relative security as its aim.

For example, in his first address to the graduates at West Point, Bush stated that, “to draw the blame away from their failures, dictators place the blame on other countries and other races...the status quo of despotism and anger...cannot be bought off” (Bush Speech to National Defence University,2001) (Harland,2013,16). Similarly, he would go on to state that, “If we wait until threats materialize we will have waited too long.... we must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans” (Bush,2002,1). In a similar vein, senior administration figures such as Rumsfeld and Cheney repeated the motif of pre-empting risks, with Rumsfeld noting that the imperative was to create a strategy to proactively eliminate the risks posed by “unknown unknowns” (Kelly, Shields,2013,24) (Clapton,2014,24).

Simultaneously, figures such as Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz made repeated allusions to the need for a light footprint. While this is explicable in terms of Rumsfeld’s commitment to transformation, Wolfowitz was largely uninvolved with transformation. Rather, although he was distinguished by his advocacy of regime change since the 1990s, yet, at the outset of the war, as one aide noted, he repeatedly emphasized the importance of manoeuvre in meetings, stressing the need to use RMA forces to limit the liabilities assumed (Harris,2009,50).

The emphasis on an indirect operational approach was made evident by the overruling of CENTCOM’s plan for Afghanistan, followed quickly by a directive to Generals Franks and Myers to review and redraft the manpower heavy OPLAN 1003 contingency plan that pertained to the invasion of Iraq (Caldwell,2011,83). Indeed, the light footprint motif was adhered to at the very pinnacle of the executive, with Bush making assurances that he would avoid another “Vietnam” (which he referred to as the defining conflict of his generation), while after the Afghanistan conflict, he would note that the light footprint had been vindicated = a point underscored in Rumsfeld’s subsequent report to the Senate (Mockaitis,2012,50)(Kalb,Kalb,2012,212) (Barzilai,2013,100). Bush explicitly linked the feasibility of his grand strategy to the indirect strategic level options made available by the RMA, stating that, “America had changed how you fight and win wars and that makes it easier to keep the peace” (Segell,270). Clearly, the rhetoric expected does accompany the strategic outcome - further strengthening my hypothesis that the strategic outcome chosen was selected due to its compatibility with strategic cultural focal points.

It now remains to be demonstrated that the strategies and accompanying rhetoric were chosen for their focal effect. The impact of the selection of a focal strategy, coupled with the use of rhetoric that highlighted its focal nature appears to have had the top down coordination effects expected. For example, as D. Badie notes in her interviews, appeals to the logic of pre-emption and the inevitability of conflict with rogue states by figures such as Cheney played a significant role in securing the acquiescence of initially ambivalent figures such as Powell and Condoleezza Rice. Indeed, as R. Gellman (2008,100) points out, available transcripts portray a Powell who is increasingly reduced from arguing against war per se, to trying to slow the pace of the rush to war and limit the liabilities that would be incurred by calling for allied involvement. Gellman observes that Powell's relative intransigence suggests that he was outflanked rather than convinced. As S. Recchia notes, military calls for allied involvement in a war have, within a domestic context, typically constituted a de facto protest against an intervention and an attempt to impede its execution - in lieu of an actual protest that might constitute a dereliction of duty (Recchia,2015).

Crucially, however, Cheney, who appears to have been tasked with securing group cohesion, was observed to pursue a largely integrative consensus building strategy when negotiating with administration insiders who had reservations about the chosen strategy - thereby ruling out the possibility that dissenters were merely bulldozed over. On the contrary, as Badie notes, Powell found it increasingly hard to argue against the case – a process largely in accordance with my theory that shared expectations based on a focal principle secure coordination regardless of personal convictions (Badie,2010,285). This was later reiterated by Douglas Feith, who observed that it was difficult for opponents of the Iraq war to rally around a specific counterargument and that figures like Powell slowly ceased to voice dissent (Feith,2008,246-249). In a similar vein, George Tenet would argue that he had remained silent for want of a counterargument but that the leadership “should not have let silence imply agreement” (Tenet,2007,317)

Similarly, figures such as Rumsfeld who were not directly opposed to a strategy of primacy but had not been its most vocal proponents seem to have converged rapidly on the ideological justifications for the strategy, with Rumsfeld's conviction that the use of American power had “helped discipline the world, by virtue of the fact that we had capabilities and were willing to

use them...and to the extent that we were not willing to use them, we had reflexive pull back, it encouraged people to do things that were not in our interest” (Cockburn,2007,181).

Given Rumsfeld’s reputation as an advocate of limiting overseas commitments during his time as a member of the Nixon team, it seems unlikely that this was an ideologically conditioned argument (Mann, 2004, 13). In fact, it appears that the administration’s arguments provided a salient equilibrium that allies immediately understood how to act as partisans for.

To be sure, one cannot rule out a more hawkish turn by Rumsfeld in light of the attacks of September the 11th, but it remains difficult to conceive why this turn would be justified in terms that, as my other chapters will demonstrate, are fairly consistent over the period studied. Additionally, as previously noted, a number of relatively expansive strategies (such as conquest and compellance) existed in opposition to primacy and had enjoyed greater support from figures such as Powell, who favoured using overwhelming force to achieve a circumscribed list of key objectives. The level of coordination around primacy cannot be explained purely in terms of the impact of ideational change following a “shock”. In point of fact, the appeal to the focal point of absolute security appears to have secured coordination around a given policy equilibrium within the “core group” of the administration.

Concurrently, it was observed that the top down pressures of the administration’s appeal to the focal point of absolute security achieved rapid coordination from allies outside the core group, both within other branches of government and in policy relevant social spheres such as academia. For example, the rhetoric of surmounting rather than controlling risk was quickly reproduced by academic figures such as K. Pollack - whose work propounding the argument that Saddam Hussein was undeterrable was cited by 10 Congressmen as a crucial factor in shaping their decision to vote for the Iraq war (Kauffman,2004,12-20). Similarly, appeals to limited liability at the operational level achieved rapid top down coordination. The convergence of expectations between the executive and its allies was demonstrated in a December 28 briefing on the possibility of invading Iraq, where both Rumsfeld and General Franks took pains to reassure Bush that the existing force requirement of 275,000 troops was a soft number that was to be revised. While Rumsfeld had an obvious preference for a “light force”, the fact that he (along with Franks who seems to have had no a priori reason to prefer

such a force) felt the need to reiterate the prospects for achieving the administration's national security objectives at a minimal cost, suggests that they expected Presidential opposition to a costly direct approach at the operational level - leading to a convergence of expectations between the Chief Executive and the planners of the war (Shimko,2010,140,).

Similarly, when asked to review OPLAN1003, General Myers started from the presumption that it was outdated and produced an estimate suggesting that the force needed would be as low as 125,000 men. The fact that the generals converged on this without prior prodding from Rumsfeld (whose notorious micromanaging of the campaign would only begin later in the planning process) implies that they anticipated pressures to adhere to the focal point of limited liability (Gordon, Trainor,2006,40).

This pattern was also replayed in Afghanistan where the consensus on a light footprint and a rapid withdrawal which avoided the task of seizing territory and being engaged in nation building pervaded intra administration discourse (Immerman,2014,48). The appeal to limited liability was also quickly taken up by legislative allies, most notably by the then Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, who publicly stressed the impact of the RMA in reducing the duration and cost of deploying forces, whilst simultaneously underscoring the targeted nations' ability to rebuild themselves under allied governments (Ahmad,2014,121). Similarly, in a conference with a Wall Street Firm, Richard Perle argued that the war could be won with a light footprint force and that the costs of occupying Iraq would be yet more circumscribed (Gordon, Trainor,2007,189). The rapid coordination around the ideas of absolute security and limited liability by figures who were hardly privy to intra administration debates is particularly noteworthy as a hoop test for the notion that these ideas served as a focal rallying point to the administration's allies.

Plainly, simultaneous appeals to limited liability and absolute security do appear to have coincided with effective top down coordination, often originating crucially from people who were not natural proponents of either component of the strategy. For example, Wolfowitz' advocacy of the unconventional use of a military in the throes of transformation is not as obviously explicable as that of Rumsfeld's. However, given Wolfowitz' espousal of regime change, it is immediately apparent why he might converge upon and argue for a strategy

which appealed to the focal point of limited liability - as expressed in the exposition of pure coordination in my theoretical chapter. In a similar vein, Powell, Armitage and Rumsfeld who were not obvious seekers of a grand strategy that sought direct action in multiple theatres, nonetheless largely converged on it - arguing in favour of this focal strategy both privately and publicly. Significantly, it might be observed that Powell and Armitage did not have a focal alternative to rally to. Finally, the appeals to these focal points and the selection of a policy equilibrium appear to have effected coordination among the legislators, public figures and functional agencies that comprised the base of the executive's coalition.

I submit that the hypothesis passes my hoop test – namely, that appeals to a focal point coincide with top down coordination.

The smoking gun with regards to this case, however, is the acquiescence of figures such as Powell and Tenet who either tacitly or openly stated that they were not convinced but coordinated nonetheless – demonstrating a lack of focal alternative. Indeed, Tenet's testimony that he was silenced by the lack of a counterargument rather than having been carried by a convincing one, is particularly explicit evidence of my mechanism in action. As per my methodological framework, an open admission of coordination despite a lack of conviction is the smoking gun for my hypothesis.

An open admission of coordination for lack of a counterargument directly eliminates both the possibility that dissenters were genuinely convinced by the administration's arguments (insofar as the reticent members openly admit to assenting to a decision they knew to be incorrect - a particularly difficult admission to make) and eliminates the possibility that the core group reacted uniformly to a given strategic environment, an erroneous assumption of the nonexistence of dissent. This eliminates both ideational arguments where groups of politicians share strategic ideas, as well as framing arguments, which assumes genuine conviction in those persuaded by the framing of issues in definitive ways.

More centrally, the description of coordination in terms that do not eschew rationality, but rather describe the need to adhere to certain strategic conventions (the use of which deprived dissenters of a counterargument) directly coheres with my causal mechanisms describing

cultural focal points as standards of propriety around which actors converge, regardless of their convictions.

I now move on to the topic of lateral pressure, whereby appeals to strategic cultural focal points were used to outflank domestic opposition outside the ruling coalition. With respect to the Afghan war, there appears to have been no opposition in the wake of the events of September the 11th. To an extent, however, appeals to a light footprint were made in anticipation of potential future opposition. For example, Kalb and Kalb identify Bush's efforts to stress that the light footprint would not result in another Vietnam, coupled with Rumsfeld's insistence on avoiding nation building as centred upon the anticipation of criticism should the conflict be ongoing once the "rally around the flag" effect had abated. Kalb and Kalb cite a memo from Rumsfeld to Bush stressing the need to avoid "future domestic difficulties and costs" to corroborate this argument (Kalb and Kalb, 2010, 100). Indeed, Jones (2012, 117) notes that the appeal of the light footprint was partially rooted in extreme cost effectiveness - which allowed the administration to put off requesting Congress for financing until late 2002. While finances would almost certainly have been made available in this case, Jones notes that an administration planning on assuming multiple responsibilities needed to ensure that each individual theatre incurred a low cost.

Appeals to focal principles were more obvious in the build-up to the much more controversial Iraq war, however and appear to have driven a successful partisan wedge between the opposition. For example, Trubowitz (2011) notes remarkably low cohesion among Democrats over the vote to authorize force against Iraq. Significantly, content analysis of speeches by key Democrats such as Hillary Clinton, Joseph Biden and Joseph Lieberman demonstrated a broad resonance between the rhetoric of the administration with regards to absolute security and that of the figures listed. Biden and Clinton were as statistically likely to cite undeterrability and a potential nexus of risks (rogue states and terrorists) as house Republicans, while Lieberman was statistically even more likely to do so (Hampton, 2011, 21).

Furthermore, to the extent that opposition was voiced, it was framed with respect to the focal point of limited liability and largely rendered inert by more affective administration

arguments to these salient issues. For example, the House Budget Committee expressed concerns about the potential costs of a conflict that were quelled by arguments regarding the reduced temporal and manpower commitments made feasible by the RMA (Ray,2014,144). The most serious challenges to the administration's strategy coalesced when this appeared not to be the case; during a temporary delay in the advance through Iraq due to a sandstorm, domestic opponents briefly rallied around the idea that the administration had started a gruelling and costly war in Mesopotamia, an argument temporarily dispelled by the quick resumption of the advance (Brewer,2009,256).

The effective lateral coordination achieved by appeals to strategic cultural focal points serves as a hoop test for my hypothesis - strengthening it and weakening countering alternatives. To illustrate - the contention that lateral coordination was achieved due to the personal beliefs of opposition members is belied by the fact that coordination behind the administration's policies and statements supporting the administration's rhetoric, followed rather than preceded the administration's appeals to specific focal points. This would not have been the case had personal belief been the driver of political advocacy.

Secondly, the question of why the administration anticipated the dominance of these preferences rather than others (i.e. why convergent expectations existed) and why ideational preferences should prevail over party interest (which was not served by allowing the Republicans to focus the nation on foreign policy thereby rallying popular support behind the executive and its party) are not easily explained by a framework that sees the coordination as a result of ideational preferences.

Consequently, this hoop test strengthens my hypothesis, whilst weakening rival hypotheses such as the idea that both Democrats and Republicans were responding to the median voter, the ideational preference-based argument and also, the possibility that the case was one of framing, whereby the administration's selection of rhetoric actually convinced opponents rather than merely securing cooperation. The sequence of events, with support from the Democrats following the administration's appeals to limited liability and absolute security, coupled with the fact that the recalcitrance shown was typically framed in the language of limited liability, weakens the argument that the party was merely responding to the median

voters' preferences. This stems from the fact that the party did not proactively attempt to demonstrate its hawkish credentials (much in the way both parties did during the Cold War when appealing to the median voter) but rather, responded to an initiative by the executive.

More importantly, the fact that the party was willing to raise objections regarding limited liability (even though polls showed a relatively high tolerance for both the scope of a potential intervention and potential casualties) suggests that appeals to the median voter were not the primary determinant of the Democratic response (Gallup, 2003, 308). To be sure, we cannot rule out the possibility that the Democrats were genuinely convinced by the administration's arguments but the fact that the opposition did rally rapidly when an appeal to limited liability could be made, weakens this hypothesis.

Two smoking gun pieces of evidence are employed to validate my argument regarding the focal nature of the chosen strategy. The first is Wolfowitz' reaction to General Eric Shinseki's claim before the Senate Armed Services Committee that destroying the Iraqi army and holding Iraq would require around 400,000 troops. The estimate was derided by Wolfowitz, who stated that "some of the higher end estimates we've seen and the notion that it would take several hundred thousand troops...are wildly off the mark" (Ferguson, 2008, 51). If indeed coordination was based on relatively stable preferences for action (as in a preference for absolute security rooted in belief as espoused by Clinton, Biden and others) it is unclear why the administration felt the need to rebuke General Shinseki so publicly. If, indeed, the preference rankings of the opposition coalesced with that of the administration, it seems that in all likelihood, it would be predisposed to support the administration's viewpoint, Shinseki's statement notwithstanding. Certainly, Shinseki's military credentials lent weight to his opinion, but the administration's position had the support of a broad array of civilian and military officials as well. By contrast, if coordination is seen as the grudging admission of defeat by political opposition that could not successfully appeal to a focal point to oppose the administration, then the need to silence a figure who provided precisely such a rallying point (by delegitimizing the administration's appeal to limited liability) is inexplicable.

In a similar vein, Lawrence Lindsey, the President's Chief Economic Advisor, was publicly reprimanded and then dismissed for suggesting that the war would cost 200 billion dollars

(Ohaegbulam, 2007, 208). The rapid pace at which figures who questioned the administration's appeals to the focal point of limited liability were reprimanded, points strongly to the notion that the administration saw these appeals as playing a pivotal role in achieving lateral coordination.

My second piece of smoking gun evidence points to the testaments of ambivalent figures such as Democratic Congressman M. Cleland and the ambivalent Republican R. Armev, both of whom stated that they were unconvinced but that it was politically impossible to oppose the war - with Cleland explicitly adding that his party did not know how to rally behind an alternative narrative (Ricks, 2006, 58)(Draper, 2008, 128). This militates against a framing argument - insofar as the observer is unconvinced - while affirming my hypothesis that a successful appeal to a focal principle typically renders coordination by opposing political opponents difficult, if not impossible.

Finally, I will turn to the topic of bottom up coordination – namely, the idea that functional specialists and agencies have an incentive to propose policies that appeal to focal points in order to advance their own positions in budgetary and bureaucratic squabbles. This was particularly visible in the case of the armed forces where Admiral Cebrowski and General Myers had both taken to propounding limited liability variants of manoeuvre centric warfare prior to the administration's rise. Both figures had strong career related incentives to stress the importance of the RMA. However, that both chose to stress the fact that the RMA made force a usable instrument of policy once more, by limiting the cost of its use, demonstrated a certain convergence of expectations between themselves and the political elites to whom they hoped to “sell” the new strategic concept (Dannereuthner, 2013, 20-22). Importantly, a rapid convergence upon the idea of network centric warfare occurred even among figures such as General Franks, who had been less than partisan about the concept in the preceding decade. There did seem to be a general acceptance that the best way to achieve a place within national policy for one's organization was to appeal to limited liability (Bird, Marshall, 2011, 51). Undeniably, even opponents within the military (such as C. Powell) who proposed a more traditional Clausewitzian concept to guide the use of force, attempted to appeal to the focal point of limited liability by contending that commitments could be limited

at the grand strategic level by pressing allies into service. As General Shinseki, notwithstanding his later turn to military traditionalism, would put it when propounding a transformation of the military into a lighter force that could be deployed at lower risk, “If you dislike change, you will dislike obsolescence even more”. This, combined with interviews carried out by Shimko (2010) strongly implies that the functional interests of a service and its continued relevance, was symbiotically linked to its political usability – which, in turn, depended on whether its use accorded with the principle of limiting liability. It is for this reason, Shimko contends, that the army and air force in particular, vied strongly with each other, to demonstrate to policymakers that each service could more effectively serve as a tool of the limited application of force.

Accordingly, my findings for the U.S. national security strategy in the Middle East pass the tests set by both the congruence method and process tracing. The strategy of pursuing direct grand strategic objectives whilst limiting liability through the use of indirect approaches at the theatre/operational level is directly congruent with the predictions of my model. Furthermore, strong evidence (including what I code as smoking gun evidence) is found to corroborate my hypothesis describing the use of strategic cultural focal points as a tool of top-down, lateral and bottom up coordination.

Europe

The U.S. national security strategy in Europe can be largely reduced to two features. The first feature is the attempted expansion of the NATO defence perimeter at the grand strategic level, coupled with the partial militarisation of the alliance’s new Eastern European holdings. I code this as a strategy of expansion to the degree that the U.S. was directly committing the capabilities needed to meet the operational needs of defence in addition to balancing via an alliance.

The second feature of the strategy was the inauguration of missile defences at the theatre level - an action identified by the seminal RAND study *The New Calculus*, as pivotal to achieving “deterrence by denial” over both rogue states and resurgent regional powers (Bowie, et al,1993,89). While the stated end of this deployment was to deter rogue states, the fact that Russian proposals for a joint missile defence in Central Asia were rebuffed,

suggest that Russia as a potentially resurgent regional power was potentially the focus of the missile defence shield (Clunan,2009,71-75). To this end, the administration abrogated the ABM treaty with Russia in 2002, before introducing plans to introduce theatre missile defences to Central Europe (Fuller,2013,45).

Simultaneously, at the 2008 Bucharest summit, Bush pushed for membership action plans (MAPs) to be extended to Ukraine and Georgia, whilst the U.S. opened bilateral military ties with the two states in the early years of the decade (Abramowitz,2008,1). The strategy is coded as being direct at the grand strategic level, since, rather than extending a political commitment (via alliance membership) in lieu of a substantive material commitment as the Clinton administration's round of NATO expansion had done, the Bush strategy attempted to commit the U.S. politically to the security of new allies while introducing substantive coping mechanisms to enable the U.S. to contend with the capabilities of an actor that posed a potential threat to its new partners. Extended deterrence, then, was no longer a political tool taken in lieu of balancing but part of a balance and fight strategy which, as per the framework in Chapter 1, I have coded as direct.

That said, the role of theatre missile defences at the low strategic level is effectively one of denial - precluding the effective use of an opponent's nuclear arsenal rather than destroying its forces and thereby altering the political calculus of the target state. This, in turn, opens the possibilities of diplomatic threats of a first strike (which could be launched from a position of impunity) being used to deter or compel the given power (Steff, 2013, 48). As R. Pape notes, this amounts to a fundamentally indirect approach aimed at neutralizing the nuclear centric doctrines of second tier powers such as Russia (which, in its 1993 Defence White Paper, abandoned no first use) along with those of rogue states, rather than destroying their conventional forces (Pape,2005 50).

In effect, this amounted to a military policy of strategic denial coupled with the threat of nuclear punishment without declaring the administration's intention or preparation to fight a war in the region. It merely signalled that it was building the capacity that would allow it to maintain a pre-emptive strategic posture and prevail in any regional war at a low cost.

The grand strategy pursued in Europe, then, is consistent with the features expected from a strategy of primacy – namely, a direct approach at the grand strategic level and an indirect approach at the theatre/operational level.

Process Tracing

As the former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. John Bolton recounts, a high degree of enthusiasm for a more entrenched commitment to the “new Europe” already existed among administration figures such as Condoleezza Rice. Critically, however, the support for both expansion and the ABM met with ambivalent reactions from figures such as Powell and Rumsfeld. According to Bolton, arguments regarding securing the new perimeter of Europe coupled with efforts to reiterate the limited political and economic costs of expanding and militarizing the eastern frontier of the alliance were sufficient to achieve coordination from the latter two figures (Bolton,2009,58). Indeed, Bolton recalls Powell privately expressing doubts about the operational utility of ABMs even as he acquiesced to a withdrawal from the 1972 treaty - support that was largely garnered by the innate ability of appeals to absolute security to effect coordination (Bolton,2009,67). This level of top down coordination was also achieved among the administration’s legislative allies, with the Republican B. Schaffer making explicit appeals to the possibility of a second tier power allying with a rogue state and issuing dire warnings of a “nuclear Pearl Harbour” should missile defence and an expanded European perimeter not be effected (Moltz,2008,270-275). While this level of hyperbole far exceeded any argument the administration would make, it effectively amounted to an extremely exaggerated variant of the appeals to risk preclusion and absolute security made by the administration.

Finally, the administration took great pains to publicize an analysis by the Congressional budget office that stipulated that the contributions made by new NATO members to collective defence outstripped the costs of extending political and material guarantees to them in the form of the ABM shield - an argument that directly cohered with appeals to limited liability (U.S. Congressional Budget Office,2001,12) (Moltz,2008,300-305).

The coincidence of the expected rhetoric and top down coordination definitively serves as a hoop test while former Ambassador Bolton's explicit exposition of the focal role of arguments regarding the necessity of expanding NATO's perimeter in order to effect absolute security, serves as a smoking gun with regards to top down coordination.

In arguing that the use of a focal principle directly denied a pretext to otherwise reluctant actors, this admission directly demonstrates my causal mechanism of top down coordination in action. In terms of lateral coordination, the administration was able to effect a unanimous statement of legislative support for the President's stated goals of NATO expansion as articulated at Bucharest, in addition to securing funding for missile defence. While the former policy was shared with the Clinton administration and therefore, would not be expected to draw the ire of political opposition, the topic of missile defence was significantly more contentious. It is noteworthy that both opposition and supporters framed their arguments in terms of limited liability, with Rumsfeld responding to Congressional opposition by asserting that, "The Défense Department currently is receiving something less than 3 percent [of America's gross domestic product]" and that "the missile defence budget is, in total, less than 2.5 percent" of that limited amount (Spencer,2001,1).

By and large, these appeals do seem to have coincided with low coordination among political opposition. As Trubowitz (2011) and Nelson (2013) comment, roll calls reflect relatively low party cohesion rates of 48% on the issue of missile defence among the Democrats across the period from 2001-9. Vitally, this low rate of cohesion belies any arguments that an expansive strategy was the by-product of a post 9/11 rallying around the executive.

With this, the strategic cultural argument passes my hoop test with respect to the Bush administration's grand strategy in Eastern Europe. The fact that the use of a focal point coincides with low cohesion amongst the government's opposition coincides with the predictions that would be made if a focal principle was being utilized to effect lateral coordination. Certainly, passing this test is prerequisite but not sufficient to demonstrate my mechanism in action, although it does partially validate the hypothesis. It must be admitted that, in the absence of smoking gun evidence, counter arguments are not eliminated.

The Asia Pacific

The Bush administration's grand strategy in the Asia Pacific broadly mirrored its approach to Europe in its early days, albeit with a more heightened and explicit emphasis on balancing a rising power. The rhetoric of containment with regards to the PRC was explicitly stated in a (likely purposefully) leaked Pentagon report in 2001 (Dietrich,2005,271). Simultaneously, C. Rice unreservedly stated that China was not a status quo power, while Donald Rumsfeld publicly questioned the intentions implied by China's arms build-up amidst a secure geopolitical environment (Johnston,2005,5-40)(Glaser,2010,271). Concomitantly, the MDA opened public discussions about the role of a THAAD program in the Asia-Pacific, while arms shipments to Taiwan (including modern destroyers) commenced (Yoshihara,2007,291).

Following 2001, however, a shift in strategy occurred, with the U.S. reorienting its policy towards the PRC to one of engagement with C. Powell reiterating support for the One China policy in the face of moves by Taiwan's Chen Shui Ban to amend Taiwan's constitution as part of an advance towards statehood (Bush,2009 140-5). Additionally, China was engaged as a vital partner in the six party talks geared at deterring N. Korea from nuclear adventurism. Within the broader Asia Pacific, the U.S. strategy focused on loose engagement initiatives such as piracy (most notably with the multilateral RIMPAC initiative) along with bilateral efforts to aid countries such as Thailand and the Philippines in combating groups that were viewed as manifestations of the global phenomenon of terrorism (Tow,2006,70). Synchronously, the U.S. expressed verbal support for the role of groupings such as the ARF and APEC but demonstrated little substantive interest, with Rice notoriously skipping one of the ARF's annual meetings altogether (Swaine,2011,171-9). As such, the strategies pursued after 2001, unlike those prior to this period, are not consistent with my model. I attribute this to the fact that the overextension of the U.S. after 2001 made engagement a necessity.

As the focal point theory assumes the existence of at least one available equilibrium within the set left available to the decision maker that accords with the focal principle, a highly

constrained scenario in which only one option existed can be considered as beyond the remit of my theory. This is true insofar as the focal point theory assumes a degree of indeterminism, as the systemic slack and domestic preferences of the executive leave several competing options open. It is under these conditions that one equilibrium stand out as being focal due to its accordance with strategic cultural principles. If, however, strategic overextension leaves only one policy (in this case, engagement) open to the executive, the outcomes observed fall beyond the remit of the theory.

Economic and Political Strategies

The economic and political strategies of the Bush administration are largely consistent with my theoretical prediction of a strategy of liberal primacy that views structural power as a means to lock in the gains made by hard power, but not a substitute for it. Within this framework, the administration followed a political strategy centred around what S. Krasner dubs “soft multilateralism” coupled with an effort to compliment primacy while expanding the remit of existing free trade arrangements.

With this background, the support of the U.N. was sought as a tool of legitimation relating to the use of force without it being treated as a prerequisite. After the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, however, efforts to involve the U.N. in post war stabilization efforts largely coincided with the predictions of soft multilateralism - a view that sees multilateralism as a tool to legitimate the use of force rather than as a means of limiting liability (Singh,2006,28-36). Similarly, the administration withdrew from the ICC whilst simultaneously utilizing the rhetoric and principles of international law as a crucial legitimating tool with regards to its strategy in Iraq (Galbraith,2003,28)

Within its economic policy, the administration lent strong support to an integrative strategy aimed at winning over developing world nations at the Doha round of WTO negotiations, while it secured Trade protection authority for the President, enabling it to move ahead with 11 FTAs and plan the ambitious MEFTI (Middle East Free Trade Initiative).

The use of soft multilateralism and a laissez faire economic policy to compliment the security strategy of primacy, largely coheres with my predictions relating to the centrality of a metastrategy based on structural power embodied in the use of structural power, in what Ikenberry dubs a 'lock in mechanism'.

Process Tracing

With regards to top down coordination, evidence was extant for the focal nature of structural power even within a unilateralist administration. For instance, Badie writes that C. Powell was able to secure the "soft multilateral" approach to the U.N. prior to the Iraq war, largely using arguments centred on this focal point - ensuring grudging coordination from fellow administration figures who, according to Badie, felt similarly outflanked by arguments which addressed the instrumentality of structural power (in this case legitimacy) (Badie,2010,289).

Similarly, within the area of free trade, the arguments articulated in the 2002 national security strategy relating to the link between free trade and security strategies of primacy, immediately effected coordination among legislative allies such as Republican Senator Johnson of Connecticut who appears within congressional records of the debate over the TPA quoting this argument verbatim (National Security Strategy,2002,20-21)(Congressional Record,131,24179).

Notwithstanding this, I have found little evidence of lateral coordination and indeed, strong opposition to the TPA from the Democrats. This highlights a weakness of the focal point theory. Any theory of focal points assumes a priori that both parties want coordination over a logjam. However, if the actor has strong incentives to avoid any coordination (as the Democratic opposition did over trade promotion in the interests of protecting their constituencies) a focal point will likely have little effect

Conclusion

The findings from the study of the grand strategy of the second Bush administration largely support my theory. With a few exceptions, the actions that comprise the national security strategy of the Bush administration coupled with its economic and political supports are highly congruent with the features of my ideal typical model of primacy. Furthermore, process tracing of the decision-making processes that produced these outcomes demonstrate strategic cultural principles acting as focal points to effect top down, lateral and bottom up coordination – thereby demonstrating the action of my posited causal mechanism in conjunction with my predicted outcome.

The Bush administration embarked upon a grand strategy characterized by an alliance policy of quantitative multilateralism based on the political use of ad hoc coalitions to legitimize the use of force and the pursuit of institutional legitimation as a tool to facilitate action, without being a prerequisite for acting. With regards to the use of force, the administration engaged in the direct use of force at the grand strategic level, coupled with the indirect use of force at the low strategic level - in accordance with the principles of absolute security and limited liability. Under similar conditions, we would expect American administrations pondering the use of force to make limited or cursory use of international institutions and eschew substantive contributions by either multilateral institutions or allies - relying instead on ad hoc coalitions that serve as minimally useful tools for political legitimation.

Furthermore, the model would predict that the principle of absolute security would lead an administration to commit forces to the inhibition or elimination of both central and peripheral threats. At the strategic level, however, we would expect administrations to rely on airpower to effect strategies of denial or decapitation (in conjunction with local proxies) whilst the introduction of ground forces would either be eschewed or be limited in both scale and temporal scope - and characterized by the use of light nimble forces to effect strategies of decapitation, as was the case with Iraq.

A purely materialistic interest-based analysis certainly goes some way towards explaining the hawkish posture that the Bush administration adopted in the post 9/11 era, inasmuch as the administration was working under conditions of both high geopolitical slack and an incentive to pursue an expansionist foreign policy. But the policy could have taken several forms, from a combination of conquest at the periphery and a military build-up at the core (which Narizny dubs supremacism) to an effort to combine internal balancing with a limited actual use of force. The decision to choose expansion in multiple theatres with limited (and, it would emerge, insufficient) means is only explicable in terms of an appeal to the twin focal points of absolute security and limited liability

Chapter III

Strategies of Preclusive Defence-American Administrations Under a Low Slack/Butter Matrix

Under domestic conditions which favour a policy of armament but where a leader faces constraining geopolitical circumstances, the leader is typically caught between the Scylla and Charybdis of type 1 and type 2 errors - doing too little risks domestic consequences from a "guns" oriented coalition while doing too much produces geopolitical pushback. Leaders working with this constellation of constraints have several grand strategic options at their disposal.

- Offensive detente
- Conservative expansion
- War / Prevention
- Perimeter defence

A grand strategy of offensive detente aims to combine military build ups and expansion in specific locales with concessions to potentially hostile rivals in other issue areas - effectively attempting to hedge. Examples of such approaches include Leonid Brezhnev's grand strategy during the 1970s which combined arms control and diplomatic demarches to the West with a military build-up and a willingness to expand Soviet influence in Third World "grey zones" which Brezhnev incorrectly assumed to be outside the Western defence perimeter

Conservative expansion, by contrast, is a strategy aimed at improving a state's defensive position by expanding in a select locale. For example, Russia during the 18th century sought to improve its strategic perimeter by acquiring buffer spaces in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

A grand strategy of preventive war, by contrast, assumes that a worsening security situation will only be rectified by a massive and decisive use of force in a core theatre.

An archetypal example of this would be Wilhelmina Germany's decision to initiate conflict with Russia in 1914, so as to avoid a war on less favourable terms later (Copeland, 2000). Similarly, at the outset of the Cold War Walter Lippmann argued that rather than frittering resources along an extended periphery, the U.S. should utilize its momentary post war advantage to push the U.S.S.R. out of Eastern Europe militarily.

Finally, a grand strategy of perimeter defence involves maintaining commitments on a wider scale than envisioned by the other strategies. The defence or restoration of a massive defensive perimeter is, within the context of this strategy, achieved by economy of force means such as punitive strategies and the use of proxies- because the sheer size of an extended perimeter dictates this. That said, states such as Hapsburg Spain and imperial Rome have chosen to defend extended perimeters with substantial fielded forces. As such, to distinguish between the two approaches, I determine the differences between preclusive defence and preclusive defeat. The former seeks to maintain forces sufficient to win in any given theatre while the latter merely attempts to commit forces sufficient to frustrate a hostile power or powers across several theatres. Both policies are fundamentally maximalist in their ends, however, as both treat both central and peripheral losses as being unacceptable. As a strategy consistent with both limited liability and absolute security, I expect liberal states to opt for preclusive defence.

The Grand Strategy of the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations

“What I downgrade, Mr. Nixon, is the leadership the country is getting, not the country. I believe the Soviet Union is first in outer space...you yourself said to Khrushchev, "You may be ahead of us in rocket thrust but we're ahead of you in colour television" in your famous discussion in the kitchen. I think that colour television is not as important as rocket thrust” John. F. Kennedy in a televised debate with Richard Nixon (Siracusa,2012,951)

The central theme around which the foreign policy platform of the Democrats revolved around during the period following the Eisenhower administration's term was the idea that the United States was in danger of being placed in a decisive strategic disadvantage vis a vis its Cold War rival. Eisenhower's overreliance on massive retaliation and neglect of the United States' conventional forces, critics alleged, had allowed the Soviets to mount a series of challenges against American allies at a level of escalation that rendered the threat to launch an all-out nuclear attack hollow-effectively "nibbling at the periphery of the free world" as Kennedy put it.

Domestic critics, who included hawkish Democrats such as Lyndon Johnston and Stuart Symington, along with figures within the military such as General James Gavin and General Maxwell Taylor (who would become Kennedy's personal advisor) could point to events such as the French debacle at Dien Bien Phu, the fall of the Batista regime in Cuba and the ongoing Communist insurrection in Laos as evidence of this trend (Collins,2000,57). Nor, the critics alleged, could Eisenhower's distinction between central and peripheral interests be regarded as tenable. As Dean Rusk would put it "If you don't pay enough attention to the periphery, the periphery changes and the first thing you know the periphery is the centre" (Gaddis,2005,201).

Simultaneously, however, the administration had to counter allegations raised by figures such as Eisenhower and Nixon, that it was on the road to bankrupting the country. Predictably, the administration would also be compelled to appeal to the focal point of limited liability.

This was achieved by two means: firstly, with an outspoken criticism of Eisenhower's policy of massive retaliation on the grounds that its reliance on tactical nuclear weapons would escalate local conflicts into general wars. Simultaneously, as C. Dueck points out, Kennedy skilfully incorporated appeals by liberal Democrats to use the United States structural power to lock in the gains made by hard power into his platform- making the case that the U.S. would use its economic power to act as a "midwife for modernization" in the developing world and, by implication, limit the degree to which hard power would have to be used (Dueck,2010,145).

The dilemma that faced the administration was that of achieving a strategic synthesis that reflected both its willingness to use force more liberally (and unilaterally) than its predecessor and its pledge to limit the United States' strategic liabilities.

In the following sections, I will examine the strategy of flexible response that emerged as the administration's key to this political cypher. The first part of the following section will articulate the domestic and systemic constraints under which the administrations of Kennedy and Johnson operated, and outline the alternative strategic equilibria that this left open to the respective administrations.

I will then articulate the broad contours of the flexible response approach, before examining the congruence between the strategy of flexible response in application and my model and attempting to demonstrate the ways in which appeals to the strategic cultural focal points of limited liability and absolute security compelled the administrations of Kennedy and his successor to both articulate and adhere to this strategy.

Domestic and Systemic Constraints

The Democratic party would, throughout this era, stake its claim to legitimacy on being, as Lyndon Johnson put it, the "party of both guns and butter" (Saldin,2011,192). As might follow, the party campaigned on a broadly Keynesian economic platform, deriding the Eisenhower administration's homage to the idea of a balanced budget as being the product of an outmoded economic worldview. Economists such as W. Heller and John Galbraith, within successive Democratic administrations, explicitly propounded a version of moderate military Keynesianism as part of a broader departure from the fiscal orthodoxy of the Republicans (Wier,1992,58). Indeed, the party had strong electoral incentives to take this stand.

First, the regional distribution of the Democrats' electoral base produced clusters of support in the traditionally Democrat South and the Eastern seaboard - two regions which, for differing reasons, would produce a strong domestic impetus towards a more expansive grand strategic vision. The South, as a region in flux, had seen a significant shift in the structure of

its economy in the early decades of the 20th century. Given the South's relative abundance of factors of production such as land and labour, a disproportionate portion of the nation's newly built military infrastructure along with its supporting industries had come to be located in Southern states. In conjunction with this, the South contributed a significant portion of the military's recruitment base (Schullmann,1991,2007).

This is not to suggest that pork barrel politics was the sole root of the hawkish stance of southern Democrats. As J. Fry (2015) points out, a cultural predilection for what W. Russell Mead (2002) dubs a "Jacksonian foreign policy" centred around the unilateral use of force may well have increased the appeal of a more ambitious approach to grand strategy among even those Southern voters who were not directly invested in its economic ramifications. Whatever its origins, however, the outcome was a cohesive hawkish constituency that played a significant role in steering Democratic executives towards articulating a more expansive version of the national interest. Simultaneously, the party's Northern internationalists from the nation's industrial core retained a strong interest in the ongoing process of opening both core and peripheral markets - a task that impelled the executive towards a more expansive commitment towards both defending and reforming these potential markets. Again, this is not to posit an explanation for the North's voting patterns based purely on economic determinism. However, economic interests combined with multifarious other factors to produce a strong base of support for internationalism in the North and Northeast (Busby, Monten,2008,460).

Concurrently, a more outgoing approach to foreign policy served as a partisan wedge - allowing the Democrats to avoid the Republican charge of being "soft on communism" while exploiting cleavages between the more dovish eastern Republican establishment and the party's conservative wing which was embodied in figures such as Barry Goldwater (Dueck,2010,144). Finally, with the Democrats having inherited a surplus from the Eisenhower establishment coupled with a stagnant economy, the stage seemed set for a more activist government approach in all spheres (Gosling, Eisner,2015,47).

The Kennedy and Johnson administrations are coded as operating under conditions of low geopolitical slack and domestic incentives to spend on "guns". While this configuration of

incentives certainly oriented the party towards a more ambitious grand strategy, this strategy could have taken several forms.

The primary approach that might have been taken is what A. Friedberg dubs a “full warfighting” doctrine, which presupposed the notion that the U.S. would have to build the counterforce and conventional capabilities to directly intervene in and prevail in any conflict in either the core or the periphery of the globe without placing restraints on the use of force. Alternatively, the administration may have chosen to engage in internal balancing but focus its defensive measures on industrial “core” regions, where the bulk of the nation’s economic interests were concentrated - a policy that could conceivably have encompassed the needs of both hawks and internationalists. This final pathway, which the administration departed down, was the strategy of flexible response - a strategy which assumed that the U.S. would, either alone or with allies, defend both core and peripheral interests but which also promised to restrict the scope of each individual commitment to a level well below that presupposed by full warfighting by the adroit use of force in tandem with non-military tools in the form of coercive diplomacy aimed at securing political outcomes by gradually escalating costs for an opponent rather than defeating him outright (which I code as an indirect approach insofar as it targets an opponent’s will rather than his capabilities).

This strategy, which aims for the direct defence of an extended perimeter while attempting to limit costs by resorting to an indirect approach at the operational level coheres with the ideal type of preclusive defence predicted by my model.

The empirical puzzle, then, is why this outcome was chosen from the range of strategic options available, despite its often suboptimal outcomes.

The Strategy of Flexible Response

The central nostrum of the strategy of flexible response, as Walt William Rostow would point out, was that perceptions were as central to maintaining a favourable balance of power as reality. It was, in effect, irrelevant if Soviet advances in peripheral regions directly augmented the power of the Kremlin or not. Rather, even apparent advances in Soviet power could endanger the United States by creating the impression of a monolithic communism on the march (Gaddis, 2005, 230). Thus, as Lyndon Johnson would put it, “a loss anywhere is a loss everywhere” (Dumbrell, 2004,18-20).

Eisenhower’s policy of attempting to shift the burden of policing peripheral regions to local allies was deemed untenable. At the grand strategic level, this dictated a sharp break from what officials derided as Eisenhower’s “pactomania”. The support of alliances like SEATO would, according to figures like McNamara and Rusk, be sought to legitimise actions being taken, but this support would be neither a substitute for direct action nor a prerequisite for decisions to intervene (Porter,2005,181-186).

Similarly, while NATO was called upon to meet its commitments to increase force levels, no serious action was taken to ensure this occurred, while the administration signalled early on its opposition to independent nuclear forces within NATO (Priest,2006,50). To the extent that the help of NATO allies such as the UK would be sought, as McNamara would note, it was largely for the legitimization of decisions already taken rather than a practical augmentation of the American commitment (Ellis,2003,186-190). This broadly coheres with the prediction of “soft multilateralism” as outlined in Chapter 1. Furthermore, the elements of structural power such as access to international institutions (particularly financial institutions) would be used, as Rostow pointed out in his Basin National Security Policy, to secure the gains made by force. In effect, then, structural power still played a pivotal role but as a means to “lock in” the gains made by hard power, rather than as a substitute for it- an outcome broadly consistent with my predictive model (Foreign Relations of the United States 1961-63, Document 70,1) (Dulker,1994,261).

With regards to the nation's military posture, the emphasis placed by McNamara was on increasing the options for response whilst eschewing the untenable military and political commitments that a policy of massive retaliation entailed (Krepinevich,1986,207). While the administration presided over an enlargement of the army's force structure from 10 to 16 divisions, a heavy emphasis would be placed on rationalizing both the bureaucratic process that produced strategy and the strategy itself.

At the bureaucratic level, this would require the introduction of the PPBS system -a system that McNamara assured the public would trim programmes deemed effectively useless. At the strategic level, an emphasis was placed on producing unprecedented levels of political control on the operational conduct of the military. This was in keeping with the administration's broader vision of the military's role as a tool of a Schellingesque form of graduated escalation.

In effect, the executive would reserve the right to calibrate the use of force to exactly the level needed to demonstrate resolve in a given situation, before threats of escalation and diplomatic overtures were to be made to a rival. Unsurprisingly, operational plans made during this era revolved around the use of indirect operational strategies such as strategic bombing (following Schelling's model of punishment) and the use of positional warfare to effect strategic denial in conjunction with the threat of graduated nuclear escalation (a strategy aimed at eroding the will of a superior conventional force). While the specific operational plans produced during this era were often diverse and tailored to specific situations, they shared a commitment to the use of indirect operational means within the context of direct grand strategic commitments to use force - an outcome broadly consistent with my model.

The Execution of the Strategy of Flexible Response

Flexible Response on the Global Periphery

Laos

The ascendance of the Pathet Lao, a Soviet backed insurgency, in Laos had already attracted the interest of American strategists prior to the assumption of power by the Kennedy administration. Under the aegis of Eisenhower's indirect approach at the grand strategic level, however, American commitments to combating this insurgency had, in keeping with Eisenhower's broader grand strategy, been restricted to an indirect approach at the grand strategic level – namely, the supply of arms to anti Communist forces, coupled with the introduction of a small number of advisors (who, by virtue of being sent under the aegis of being civilian contractors, did not represent a direct visible commitment at the grand strategic level (Mahajani,1971,81-89).

Unsurprisingly, this nondescript approach soon became the target of the Kennedy campaign, which sought to hoist Eisenhower by his own petard by appealing to the domino theory - with Laos playing the role of the first domino. This rhetorical appeal to absolute security would continue after the election with Kennedy stating that "Laos is far away from America, but the world is small...The security of all Southeast Asia will be endangered if Laos loses its independence" (Kennedy, Grover,1964,241). Privately, however, Kennedy demonstrated a more nuanced understanding of Laos' importance, commenting that "Whatever is going to happen in Laos, an American invasion, a Communist victory, or whatever, I wish it would happen before we take over and get blamed for it." (Schlessinger,1965,307-309). Clearly, then, it appears that the domestic costs of apparent weakness had a conditioning role.

Consequently, the administration had several options at its disposal with regards to resolving the Laotian imbroglio. The first option, presented by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was to introduce a sizable ground force to seize and control the Laotian panhandle, defeating the Pathet Lao with a very Jominian show of force (Hilsman,1967, 127-129). This prescription carried very little weight with the administration, despite its resonance with the fundamentals of what Gaceck dubs the "All or Nothing" logic that often pervades military thinking. However, the approach had a number of supporters both within and outside the administration - notably from Eisenhower, who was of the opinion that the perceived risk of Chinese intervention

could be effectively precluded by threatening to escalate the war to Chinese soil in the event that China did intervene (Sust,2012,263). Moreover, as J. Gaddis notes, the administration had begun to show a heightened awareness of the existence of a Sino-Soviet split, rendering problematic the idea that the fear of a coordinated Sino-Soviet escalation in Laos was the key factor in inducing the administration to forego the extensive use of force (Gaddis,2005,262). Despite this, Kennedy seemed keen to reassure audiences that this would not be an extensive commitment, posing to them the rhetorical question, “Do we want an indefinite occupation of an unenthusiastic...population, tying up our forces and not those of the Communists?” (White House Conference on 1 May 1961).

Alternatively, the administration may have followed a second policy prescription floated within its internal discussions that held that the sole objective of American policy in Laos was to ensure an effective division of Laos into zones of de facto control,-thereby setting the administration the rather minimalistic objective of ensuring that Phoumi Nousevan retained control over the regions he already controlled. This approach was eschewed on the grounds that it would incur the accusation of retreating in the face of Communism. (Mahajani,1971,90).

Instead, the administration decided upon a calibrated, unilateral show of force aimed at coercing the Pathet Lao to join a coalition government that would be effectively dominated by the right. Although the possibility of intervening in conjunction with SEATO allies was broached, figures such as McNamara seemed extremely leery of the possibility of achieving coordination with reluctant allies such as Britain, France and New Zealand. Despite fears that unilateral action (or bilateral coordination with Thailand, the sole regional player which shared America’s concerns) could undermine SEATO, this decision was made in March 1961 - cohering with my prediction of soft multilateralism (Memorandum of Conference with President Kennedy March 9th,1961).

Structural power was specifically seen as a welcome accompaniment to the use of hard power but not a prerequisite for its use. After the decision to use force was made, however, the SEATO council was consulted to acquire a statement of support- an outcome congruent with

the idea of structural power being used to lock in any gains made by the use of hard power. At the low strategic level, the use of force was largely in accordance with the prediction of an indirect approach at the operational level that what I code as a grand strategy of preclusive defence entails. American PEO's in Laos (whose numbers had been greatly augmented), were ordered to wear their uniforms and accompany Royal Lao troops into battle. The object of this application of force was not to militarily defeat the Pathet Lao (indeed, the forces committed were not sufficient to do so) but rather to affect the political calculus of the movement's leaders and its North Vietnamese backers by a direct introduction of American forces (and the implicit threat that more would be introduced) (Hall,1971,67).

The result of this escalating coercion was an agreement to form a coalition government reached at Geneva and the introduction of an international commission for supervision and control to Laos. The outcome proved fragile, however, and an emboldened Phoumi Nousevan soon resumed the offensive hoping to utilize American aid to defeat the Pathet Lao comprehensively. As these offensives soon faltered, before dissolving into a rout, the Seventh Fleet was introduced to the Gulf of Siam while India and Britain were used as diplomatic backchannels to communicate both the U.S.' resolve and its stated policy on Laos to the Communist powers.

As the situation on the ground escalated in 1962, a 5000-man force was introduced to Thailand, while the Navy was deployed to the South China Sea (Johnson,1984,326). This produced a brief interlude in the violence, as the U.S. compelled Phoumi Nousevan to form a right wing dominated coalition government headed by the neutralist Souvanna Phouma. Following the resumption of hostilities by the Pathet Lao, however the United States, now under the Johnson administration, initiated Operation Barrel Roll- an air interdiction campaign aimed at severing the Pathet Lao's supply lines and halting their advance - a strategy of denial at low cost in keeping with my model (Lamy,1995,26-27).

Intrinsically, then, it appears that American policy in Laos is broadly congruent with my model's predictions. The policy eschewed the option of either abandoning or seeking circumscribed objectives within what was a peripheral objective, instead choosing to directly apply American political and military power to its defence- in keeping with the approach to

commitments at the grand strategic level predicted for a strategy of preclusive defence. Simultaneously, however, both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations eschewed the option of a direct strategy involving large ground forces at the theatre/operational level- instead opting for a strategy of risk escalation-which, as per the typology in Chapter II, I code as an indirect approach at the operational level.

Vietnam

While the subject of the American involvement in Vietnam can, and has, produced sufficient material for tomes of literature, this segment of the chapter will focus solely on aspects of the war that directly pertain to my model. South Vietnam, with its large demographic base, had come to be seen by figures such as W. Rostow and, increasingly, Kennedy himself as being the test case for the new variant of containment (G. Gelb, Betts1979,69). An incipient insurgency sponsored by North Vietnam was growing in momentum, with the number of South Vietnamese government officials who were assassinated surging from 1200 to 4000 annually (Karnow,1983,238).

In response, Kennedy dispatched Rostow and General Maxwell Taylor to South Vietnam, with orders to produce a report on both the situation on the ground and steps that might be taken to resolve it. The resultant Taylor-Rostow report made an argument for the introduction of several thousand ground troops to Vietnam (Donaldson,1996,92) (Letter from Taylor to the President,1961,484-5). Deeming this prescription a recipe for overstretch, Kennedy instead opted for a reiteration of his strategy in Laos announcing the dispatch of uniformed advisors to the South while reiterating the United States resolve over the issue of the South retaining its “independence” (Dallek,2003,54). This decision broadly coheres with the strategy of preclusive defence. As private discussions within the administration reveal, these commitments were made to erode the will of Hanoi rather than to achieve operational objectives (The Pentagon Papers,1971, 73-120).

By the time the Johnson administration inherited the task of crafting a policy towards Vietnam, the insurgency had only intensified (aided, in part, by a misguided attempt to stabilize the South by removing Ngo Dinh Diem in a CIA backed coup). The Johnson

administration responded with what R. Pape dubs a “weak Schelling” strategy of gradually escalating coercion aimed at the North’s military and industrial base.

The first phase of this strategy was the initiation of OPLAN 34-A, otherwise known as the De Soto raids, which saw the U.S. lend naval support to ARVN commandos who mounted punitive raids upon the North’s coastline. When, in August 1964, the destroyers USS Turner Joy and Maddox allegedly came under attack by Vietnamese patrol boats, this commitment saw a rapid escalation in the degree of America’s commitment with the passing of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution (Gibbons,1985,294-296).

Qualitatively, however, America’s approach remained initially static, with punitive reprisals being launched against North Vietnamese targets from the U.S.S Ticonderoga and Constellation while Ambassador Seaborne of the Canadian delegation of the ICC (who was acting as an informal conduit to the North) informed North Vietnam’s Premier Pham Van Dong that the continuation of the insurgency in the South would bring increasing escalation from the United States (Thies,1980,748).

With the North effectively dismissing these threats as non-credible a priori, U.S. policy in Vietnam slowly lurched towards its next escalation. Still confident that the war could be won with what effectively amounted to coercive bargaining via an indirect operational strategy, the administration-initiated Operation Rolling Thunder. The underlying logic of rolling thunder was the idea, as Rostow put it, that the North would not be willing to sacrifice a decade’s worth of industrial development in its pursuit of reunification (Milne,2007,169). Proceeding under this assumption, the campaign advanced in four phases, the first of which was initiated in spring 1965 and aimed at the destruction of the North’s transportation network, before extending to quasi civilian targets such as the port town of Hon Gay (Pape,1990,113). The bombing began at a slow pace in March 1965, before escalating into full swing in April (Thies,1980,87).

As it became increasingly clear that this approach was flagging, the President and his advisors met at Honolulu to discuss a shift in strategy. At the urging of General Westmoreland, it was

decided that ground troops were to be introduced. However, the scale of the introduction fell well below Westmoreland's request for 44 brigades while the scope of the mission was initially restricted to holding coastal enclaves and interdicting Viet Cong supply lines - an indirect and limited operational approach that left the task of clearing out the Viet Cong to the ARVN (Gaceck,1994,140).

Simultaneously, the second phase of rolling thunder was initiated, followed by the third and fourth. These phases operationalized between 1965 and 67 initially targeted Viet Cong supply lines as a complement to the strategy of interdiction. Central to this was an effort to destroy facilities associated with petrol oil and lubricants - without which, the Air Force reasoned, the North would find itself incapable of supplying infiltration operations.

The initiation of the third phase saw the U.S. shift to a strategy of punishment aimed at the North's urban centres such as Hanoi and Haiphong, along with infrastructure such as the Paul Doumer and Canal Des Rapides bridges while the fourth phase combined elements of civilian punishment and interdiction (Pape,1990,119)

The emphasis on indirect operational strategies such as interdiction and punishment as a means for limiting liability even as the U.S. sought the expansive strategic objective of convincing the North Vietnamese to permanently abandon their objective of national unification broadly coheres with my model's predictions for a strategy of preclusive defence. To be sure, the American ground commitment and its operational tasks did grow significantly over this period-in contravention to my model. However, given that these stuttering increases were made grudgingly and in a piecemeal manner after all indirect approaches had faltered, does lend some validity to my model - insofar as the focal point theory is not expected to account for actions after all focal strategies have been exhausted. Critically, however, the administration stubbornly refused advice to introduce forces en masse to secure South Vietnam and, possibly carry the war North (what Gaceck dubs the All or Nothing position) (Burke, Greenstein,1991,155).

Thus, the U.S. strategy in Vietnam is broadly congruent with my model.

Process Tracing –Laos and Vietnam

Laos

An examination of the Kennedy administration's approach to Laos lends broad support to the notion that appeals to strategic cultural focal points played a significant role in the selection of policies from available equilibria. Indeed, Kennedy directly articulated the need to appeal to the focal points of limited liability when he noted that his administration's Laos policy was constantly buffeted between the twin desires to "get tough" and to not fight an Asian war (Schlessinger, 1965,333). Kennedy's public and private rhetoric broadly corresponded with appeals to absolute security. For example, he privately asserted to his inner circle, that a central assumption of his policy must be that the United States could not afford credibility sapping humiliations-even in peripheral regions (Schlesinger,2002,332). Similarly, in a public address to a Senate committee he stated that "the security of all Southeast Asia will be endangered if Laos loses its Independence"- an explicit appeal to absolute security (Public Papers of the Presidents, John F Kennedy,1964,214). Simultaneously, as noted earlier in the chapter, Kennedy took pains to articulate his opposition to the deployment of American forces en masse which, as he stated in a White House press conference on May 9th, 1962 was a "very hazardous course" (Rust,2012,262).

This rhetoric was quickly reiterated by administration insiders, including figures such as Robert McNamara and Dean Rusk - despite the former's initial suggestion that American troops be introduced en masse into the Laotian panhandle reiterated the need to limit America's involvement to the level of coercive bargaining (Gibbons,1995,6). Similarly, initially sceptical legislative allies such as Senator Fulbright conceded the administration's stance, even going so far as to advocate similar measures elsewhere. As Fulbright noted Kennedy's "explanation on the Laotian situation was very effective" and would probably rally intra party support (Gibbons,1986 22). Furthermore, Fulbright was not alone as initially unconvinced legislative allies responded well to promises to limit liability (Woods,1995,269).

As such, then, the Laotian case passes my hoop test for top down coordination within the administration's coalition.

Similarly, the policy passes my hoop test for lateral coordination. Despite early opposition from Republicans such as Barry Goldwater and former President Eisenhower who cohered around the position that the U.S. should launch an all-out effort to “win” militarily in Laos, the majority of the opposition eventually supported the President’s strategy in Laos (McDonald,1992,164). Moreover, Eisenhower’s retreat from his Laotian position directly corresponds with the President’s dispatch of John McCone and McNamara to make a case for a strategy of limited liability and the danger of overstretch to the former President - a decision which McNamara credits directly for Eisenhower’s retreat. However, Eisenhower appeared less than fully convinced - stating that he felt that if force was committed it should be used without limits, but nonetheless desisted from public criticism - an action that I interpret as smoking gun evidence insofar as an actor who remained clearly unconvinced by the extant policy still refrained from criticizing it after appeals to the focal point of limited liability and absolute security being made in tandem (Filipikn,2015,44-45).

At the level of bottom up coordination, I find straw in the wind evidence of attempts to coordinate in the form of prescriptions from figures such as Hilsman, Harriman and Walt Rostow to utilize limited coercive signalling in Laos (Hall,1971,451). It is unclear why Rostow (an ardent interventionist) should be ideologically driven to propose limited liability strategies. On the other hand, one can more easily interpret Rostow’s actions as an attempt to secure sanction for intervention by making the case for their being achievable without the undue expenditure of force. To be sure, not all actors involved did rally around limited liability. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, for example, typically made prescriptions for the unfettered use of force (Gaceck,1994, 175).

However, given the failure of these prescriptions and the eventual shift of the JCS to a more gradualist position, this largely confirms my hypothesis - insofar as deviations from rationality (in the form of a non-focal policy prescription) were punished.

I therefore submit that the evidence from the Laotian case broadly confirms my model.

Vietnam

An examination of the policymaking process that drove the American involvement in Vietnam confirms, in large measure, the operation of strategic cultural focal points as a tool for policy coordination. The Kennedy administration's rhetoric, both internally and externally, broadly passes my straw in the wind test with Kennedy publicly reiterating the American commitment to Vietnam (as per the domino theory) while simultaneously underscoring the need to avoid a costly quagmire in response to the Taylor-Rostow report's prescriptions (Davis,1984,334). This rhetoric was continued by Kennedy's successor, who explicitly articulated his support for rolling thunder in terms of limited liability stating (somewhat distastefully) that limited bombing was "seduction, not rape, making it controllable, even reversible" (Gelb, Betts,1979,137).

Appeals to these focal points had the effect of achieving immediate top down coordination, with figures such as McNamara taking pains to reiterate the limited nature of America's involvement, stating that the United states had "turned a corner" in Vietnam and would not have to raise its troop levels (Tuan,2009,681). Similarly, figures such as Rostow took pains to underscore the ways in which a limited strategy of coercive signalling could limit costs-dubbing it "our version of guerrilla warfare" (Milne,2007,169). Most crucially, however, dissenters within the Johnson administration's ruling coalition such as George Ball and John McGovern were either outflanked (as was the case with Ball) or, in McGovern case, shifted their criticisms to the execution of the policy rather than the policy itself. Thus, appeals to limited liability and absolute security do appear to have affected intra administration coordination. In terms of smoking gun evidence for appeals to focal points serving as a tool for coordination, two pieces of evidence are particularly telling. The first is the memoirs of George Ball, who states that his objections to the idea that Vietnam would be an open-ended commitment involving ground troops were deftly dispelled by McNamara who produced "a pyrotechnic display of statistics" that suggested that limited coercive force would win the war. Ball claims not to have been convinced but avers that he was deprived of a valid counterargument (Ball,1982,392). McGovern too, recounts his appeals to limited liability being met by Johnson with the riposte that he was "going up Ho Chih Minh's leg one inch at a time" with coercive bombing - thereby, in McGovern's recollection, leaving him

without a valid counterargument to Johnson's stance and silencing both his and Ball's dissent (McGovern,1977,194).

At the level of lateral coordination, significant evidence backing appeals to absolute security exist. For example, prior to the dispatch of advisors by Kennedy, the administration had come under withering fire from critics such as Melvin Laird, Representative Halleck (R-Indiana) and Dirksen (R-Illinois) who claimed that the administration was allowing a vital cog in the United States Southeast Asian defence system to fall (Johns,2010,44-45). Indeed, as M. Selverstone articulates, these criticisms directly coincided with internal discussions within the Kennedy administration about the domestic costs of being seen as an appeaser and immediately preceded the dispatch of advisors to Vietnam (Selverstone,2014,484-485). Simultaneously, however, Kennedy noted in an internal memo that the introduction of troops would be a problem as "Senator Russell and others would be opposed" - making it clear that it would have to select a policy which limited liability at the operational level even as it assumed a grand strategic commitment (Kaiser,2000,11). While the figures cited may have had ideological reasons to take their stances, the fact that the administration could be relatively sure that neither group would push for its first preference (all out intervention for the hawks and none for domestically oriented Senators) once appeals to the focal points of absolute security and limited liability had been made (by the use of a limited coercive strategy) suggests that focal principles did direct Kennedy towards this course of action in order to effect lateral coordination - something it did with its policy receiving broad bipartisan support.

Johnson was, in a similar manner, able to secure support for what McGeorge Bundy dubs the "little Tonkin" resolutions regarding increasing appropriations for the war by appeals to absolute security, stating that "each member of Congress who approves this request also votes to continue our stand against Communist aggression in Vietnam.... our credibility impacts our security in the world". Moreover, Johnson's initiation of air strikes engendered the support of Republicans such as Melvin Laird, Barry Goldwater (at least initially) and Everett Dirksen, who publicly supported the administration's stance of "turning the screws" on North Vietnam (Johns,2010,67-72). At the same time, however, Johnson took pains to stress that he would not be sending "American boys" to fight in lieu of the ARVN - emphasising

this as being a salient difference between him and Barry Goldwater (Thompson,2014,40). Indeed, this simultaneous appeal to absolute security and limited liability reduced Republican opponents to advocating incremental shifts in policy (such as an increase in bombing, as advocated by Nixon) but deprived them of a substantively different policy alternative (Johns,2010,72).

The fact that these appeals coincided with both broad legislative support for resolutions allowing the administration leeway in how it ran the war and a paucity of criticism by the opposition allows my hypothesis to pass its hoop test for lateral coordination.

Furthermore, there exists sufficient smoking gun evidence for focal policies being chosen in order to effect lateral coordination.

The first such piece of evidence is Johnson's claim (as stated in his memoirs) that any loss, no matter how peripheral would result in a reprisal of the "who lost China debate" – thereby compelling him to make a substantial commitment to Vietnam and foreclosing the option of abandoning or circumscribing the nation's commitment to a peripheral interest (Burke, Greenstein,1989,251). The administration, however, anticipated significant dissent in the event that it could not limit America's commitment, with Johnson stating that "I know the day it escalates.... that would be the beginning of the end" (Woods,2003,276). It appears fairly certain that the administration selected strategies that stood out as salient in light of the need to appeal to the principles of limited liability and absolute security.

In terms of bottom up coordination, there appears to be some evidence to support my hypothesis. In particular, the explicit advocacy of limited options by figures such as Rostow and Hilsman who, as administration hawks, had no a priori reason to concern themselves with limiting the response to what both men perceived as a vital threat to American grand strategy. By contrast, efforts to select policies that both men felt might be palatable to the administration, coupled with the fact that existing strategic cultural traditions of limited liability gave them broad expectations regarding what types of policies might best serve this purpose, better explains the behaviour of both men who, unlike McNamara, had not

been ardent advocates of rationalizing and limiting the use of force (Goldstein,2013,10-12) (Hennesy,1984,18).

Similarly, during both the Honolulu conference and earlier discussions on America's response to Tonkin, the Air Force took pains to state the case that the use of airpower in an indirect strategy of interdiction and punishment could assuage fears within "public opinion" that the administration was embarking on a full-scale war (Horwood,2010,70). Needless to say, the Air Force had incentives to advocate for their service playing a leading role, but this does not contradict my model (which assumes that focal points are tools used by rational actors for policies that favour them).

Importantly, the fact that they chose to frame their advocacy within the context of appeals to the focal point of limited liability is telling.

Thirdly, even administration dissenters such as McNaughton attempted to present their reservations in terms of appeals to limited liability- with limited success as when Johnson assured McNaughton that airpower would be the primary coercive tool used in Vietnam (Kennedy,1985,96).

Finally, those functional agencies that did offer prescriptions that were non-focal, such as the army, were given short shrift by the administration- adhering with my predictions insofar as deviations from rationality were punished (McMaster,1998,140). Thus, the hypothesis broadly passes my straw in the wind and hoop tests for bottom up coordination. However, I have not uncovered smoking gun evidence-rendering the support for bottom up coordination partial.

The Strategy of Flexible Response in Core Regions

Europe

The arrival of the Kennedy administration heralded a seismic shift in the United States' security policy in Central Europe. At the heart of this shift was a departure from the essentially deterrent policy of massive retaliation towards the strategy of flexible response - a strategic synthesis that would allow the U.S. to respond to Soviet escalations at any level (Combs, 2015, 270). At the behest of the NPG, the administration presided over a build-up of American conventional force levels in Europe, which grew from 11 to 16. After initially attempting to convince NATO to meet part of these obligations, the administration largely met these obligations unilaterally (Chapman, 2009, 8). The administration continued in its efforts to avert the possibility of NATO allies achieving independent deterrents and discouraging any efforts to develop national nuclear forces - to instead propose the creation of a Multilateral Nuclear Force over which the United States would have a veto.

This largely coheres with my model's prediction of "soft multilateralism" whereby structural power continues to play a role in grand strategy, but largely as a means of legitimizing unilateral decisions rather than augmenting "hard power" (Schwartz, 2003, 52).

Importantly, however, the strategy and force posture which was to direct the use of these forces at the theatre level was an indirect and coercive one aimed at undermining the will of the Warsaw Pact in the event of a war in Central Europe, rather than destroying its forces. SIOP 62, produced under McNamara, did not eschew the use of a nuclear first strike while McNamara took pains to assure domestic audiences that he had no intention of building a force capable of challenging a Soviet advance through Central Europe without nuclear weapons (Sagan, 1987, 22-30) (Friedberg, 2000, 121). Rather, conventional forces were to play a holding role while diplomatic threats to escalate to the nuclear level should conventional defences crumble were to be communicated to the Soviets. The strategy, then, was one geared at giving the Soviets a pause to consider the ramifications of escalation and not to engage in a direct defence of Europe. Thus, scholars such as Stephen Biddle and Jeffery Friedman code the strategy as being fundamentally indirect and

coercive (Biddle, Friedman 2008, 124). Indeed, despite committing to an early build up, the administration would eventually preside over marginal reductions in American conventional forces in Europe (Betts, 2004, 10-15).

Process Tracing the Administrations' Decision making on Europe

From relatively early in its tenure, the Kennedy administration made multiple appeals to the dangers posed to the United States' absolute security posed by even incremental shifts in the balance of power and the need to be able to respond to actions at any level asserting that "Their (the Soviets') missile power will be the shield from behind which they will slowly, but surely, advance. Through Sputnik diplomacy, limited brush fire wars, indirect non-overt aggression, intimidation and subversion, internal revolution, increased prestige or influence, and the vicious blackmail of our allies...Each such Soviet move will weaken the West..." (Charleston, 1987, 8).

Concurrently, however, the President was keen to make appeals to limited liability, arguing that the Eisenhower administration's strategy had forced the United States to contemplate incurring unacceptable costs over limited aggressions- a recipe for military overstretch. Instead, Kennedy promised a defence strategy that would involve the adroit use of forces precisely calibrated to head off any given situation at a minimal cost stating that "a line of destroyers in a quarantine or a division of well-equipped men on our border may be more useful to our security than the multiplication of awesome weapons beyond all rational need ...we do not intend to expand our military indefinitely (Kennedy State of the Union, 1963, 17). Evidently, the strategy of flexible response in Europe was tailored to appeal both to the focal point of limited liability and absolute security.

The policy seems to have achieved fairly rapid top down coordination, with administration figures both within and outside the immediate national security apparatus lending it support.

For example, the President's Chief Economic Advisor P. Samuelson took pains to highlight the fact that a limited build up would not cause economic overstretch stating that within the context of an increasingly fractious geopolitical environment he was in favour of - "any stepping up of a defence programme that is deemed desirable in its own sake" - a direct appeal to absolute security (Patterson,1996,489). Samuelson had no obvious ideological reason to support this stance but, as a fiscal Keynesian, had an incentive to support policies that represented a departure from fiscal orthodoxy. The fact that the appeal to a focal point (absolute security) was immediately understood and reiterated by allies who were not directly involved in formulating the administration's strategy is emblematic of the way in which self-interested actors utilize focal points to rally around a common platform - even if divergent interests lead them to favour a given type of policy. Just as crucially, however, intra administration dissent that did appeal to focal points such as limited liability enjoyed significant success. For example, Treasury Secretary Dillion's somewhat dubious claim that increasing conventional troop levels in Europe would wreak havoc with U.S. monetary policy gained the grudging acquiescence for troop withdrawals from even hawkish figures such as McNamara (Gavin,2002,63). Indeed, McNamara, despite frequently being an advocate for a more ambitious force posture, seems to have increasingly rallied to the focal point of limited liability- writing off projects such as the mobile launchers that the military felt would be required to execute a full warfighting counterforce doctrine in the event of a conflict in Central Europe (and the nuclear posture that required these accoutrements) on the grounds that the administration "could not afford to be seen as turning the United States into a garrison state"(Ball,1980,123). McNamara would also eschew the building of missile defences near cities on similar grounds (Kaufman,1964,136).

Hence, there appears to be significant evidence to satisfy both the straw in the wind and hoop tests for top down coordination, although the thesis lacks smoking gun evidence at this point.

The need to achieve lateral coordination also seems to have played a clear role in the selection of flexible response (as opposed to nuclear stalemate or full warfighting) as a policy equilibrium from within the options that its configuration of systemic and domestic constraints and incentives left open. Both Johnson and Kennedy would repeatedly make the case to the legislature that the nation did not have to choose between guns and butter, and

that increasing security would not result in either economic or military overstretch (Duiker,1994,334). Moreover, the paralysis of the Eisenhower administration in the face of the fallout from the Gaithner report had demonstrated that even limited increases in Soviet power made appeals to the focal point of absolute security relatively easy (Roman,1996,33).

Just as importantly, the administration took pains to assure the legislature that it was not engaging in an endless build up in Europe with both McNamara and Walter Heller taking pains to assure a Congressional committee that conventional forces were not being built to defeat the Red Army and that troop levels would in fact be decreased in the years after the initial build up (Annual Report of the Secretary of Defence,1963,31-32) (Hearings Before the Joint Economic Committee Congress of the United States,1964,82). Indeed, these assertions were timed to head off criticisms by figures such as Barry Goldwater and House Minority Leader Halleck on precisely the grounds of overstretch (Karol,2009,135-136).

In terms of smoking gun evidence, we have a number of admissions that the need to ensure absolute security at a limited cost was driven by politics rather than ideology, with Kennedy stating that a key constraint on any defence policy was the fact that the American people were imbued with a sense of “the sinfulness of deficits and inflation” (Schlesinger,2002,630). Similarly, Walter Heller stated that the administration’s avoidance of more expansive strategic synthesis such as full warfighting was caused by fear of being accused of strategic overstretch and the over centralization of national resources (Friedberg,2000,145).

In terms of bottom up coordination, it seems clear that the forces were jockeying for the key role of defending Central Europe and, as such, were attempting to outdo each other in trying to demonstrate how their force could provide absolute security at a minimal cost. This was evident in Maxwell Taylor’s advocacy of the limited use of the army as a means to control escalation and his critiques of the Eisenhower administration’s policy of massive retaliation (Sbrega, 1990,413). Indeed, even before the new administration had assumed office, figures such as General Ridgeway were openly opposing massive retaliation on the basis of overstretch and attempting to demonstrate their utility in remedying this problem to the new administration through public advocacy in various forms of media (Bacevich,2002,89).

Nor can this be said to be merely an ideational preference since, as Gaceck (1994) points out, the army had typically espoused Jominian concepts regarding the All or Nothing use of force when left to itself. For its part, the Air Force (long the financial beneficiary of massive retaliation) attempted to integrate itself into the strategy of flexible response by claiming that air interdiction of supply lines, rather than denial of territory by ground forces, represented the best way to slow a Soviet advance using limited force as the threat to escalate risks for the U.S.S.R.

The smoking gun evidence that appeals to limited liability by both forces were driven by a belief that this would ensure policy coordination, is attested to in an interview conducted by Sbrega (1990) with an Air Force official who claimed that both the forces were attempting to demonstrate how their use would be more politically acceptable to a domestic audience, because neither wanted to be relegated to the status of an adjunct of the other (Sbrega,1990,413). Consequently, there seems to be significant evidence for bottom up coordination.

Conclusion

The grand strategy of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations broadly coheres with the strategy of preclusive defence predicted by my model. The strategy embraced a soft form of multilateralism, while emphasizing the direct use of force at the grand strategic level. Crucially, however, the administration eschewed options such as Barry Goldwater's prescription for full warfighting (which would have entailed the direct use of force in a given theatre), the creation and use of large conventional forces in line with the "All or Nothing" strategy proposed by Westmoreland in Vietnam and McNamara in Laos, or merely balancing internally without assuming additional external commitments-all of which were feasible within the context of low systemic slack and incentives to spend on guns. Instead, the administration chose to combine a direct approach at the grand strategic level with an indirect and coercive strategy of graduated escalation at the theatre/operational level- in line with the predicative framework in Chapter 1.

Moreover, as has been demonstrated, appeals to strategic cultural focal points as a tool for achieving top down, lateral and bottom up coordination seem to have been the key causal variables driving the selection of flexible response in lieu of either full warfighting or internal balancing without encumbering the state with additional commitments.

The Grand Strategy of the Reagan Administration-Preclusive Defence by Other Means

"The fibre of American muscle was so atrophied that our ability to respond to Soviet attack is very much in doubt"- Ronald Reagan (Martel,2015,294)

Like John. F. Kennedy, who came to power facing a similar combination of systemic and domestic imperatives, Ronald Reagan framed his grand strategy in terms of a renewal of America's role on the world stage, after the purported atrophying of American power under the Carter Administration. The Reagan administration, as will be discussed below, faced limited systemic slack inasmuch as America's Soviet rival had attained nuclear parity with it following the Brezhnev arms build-up and had seemingly enjoyed a string of successes in the global periphery as a litany of nations saw Communist parties rise to power in the 1960's and 1970's. Internally, Reagan's winning coalition was, much like Nixon's before him, heavily anchored in the "sunbelt" regions of the South - manufacturing regions that stood to gain most from a hawkish foreign policy. Unlike Nixon, however, Reagan did not have to mediate between the Eastern and Midwestern wings of the Republican party and its growing Southern stronghold, given the shifts in the party's electoral geography.

As per my framework, a combination of low systemic slack and a domestic imperative to invest in guns rather than butter, should lead to a policy of preclusive defence- involving the

defence of an expansive perimeter encompassing both central and peripheral areas at the grand strategic level, coupled with efforts to limit liability at the strategic level.

Consistent with my model, the Reagan grand strategy entailed a substantial military build-up coupled with an effort to restore an eroded perimeter in the developing world. Significantly, however, in both core and peripheral regions, efforts to limit liability at the strategic level were effected. In Europe, this took the form of utilizing a technology centric doctrine of follow on forces attack, coupled with a nuclear doctrine that entailed the selective use of counterforce capabilities to effect punishment rather than annihilation. This essentially crafted a strategy that broadly mirrored the Kennedy/McNamara formula of flexible response, inasmuch as it utilized a combination of technology-centric conventional forces and the threat of graduated punishment to offset the Soviet numerical advantage in Central Europe, rather than creating a force capable of either matching the Warsaw Pact numerically or engaging in a protracted conflict at any level of escalation, despite Reagan's initial promises to this effect.

In the periphery, the grandiloquently titled "full court press" against the U.S.S.R. and its allies involved direct American commitments (as opposed to commitments to aid regional parties or international organizations in pursuing an American objective) but generally relied on a combination of substate proxies or highly limited graduated shows of force to achieve political objectives.

Moreover, consistent with my model's predictions, the Reagan administration adopted a "soft multilateral" policy when engaging in regional crises - relying largely on ad hoc coalitions of interested actors to confer legitimacy upon its actions rather than engaging with formal institutions, with a few notable exceptions.

In the following sections, I will briefly articulate the political context within which the Reagan administration formulated its grand strategy, before examining the administration's behaviour in both core and peripheral regions to demonstrate both its congruence with my model and the way in which the process of negotiating the contours of the grand strategy evinces the effect of strategic culture acting as a focal point.

Systemic and Domestic Conditions

At the systemic level, the Reagan administration inherited a world of what might be described as symmetrical bipolarity, in which the U.S.S.R. had achieved nuclear parity with the U.S. and had achieved near parity in fields such as naval warfare, with the Okean exercises announcing the Soviet Union to the world as a blue water force (Bradford,2016,306) (Herspring,1990,53). This contrasts with the asymmetric bipolarity of the early Cold War where, despite its preponderance in ground forces, the Soviet Union had lagged behind the U.S. in the aforementioned areas.

The election of 1980 saw the Reagan administration romp to office in part on the back of a promise to rectify the effects of years of perceived foreign policy setbacks under the Carter Administration. In addition to benefiting from the Republicans' traditional strength in being seen as a party competent in the realm of national security, the Reagan administration's winning coalition was heavily anchored in the export competing southern regions of America. These regions, which depended heavily on increasingly uncompetitive heavy industries, stood to gain the most from a hawkish foreign policy. This stemmed from the fact that the so called "sunbelt" had effectively become the manufacturing hub upon which the American military depended and, additionally, was home to many of the military's bases. By contrast, export dependant regions in the Northeast that might have typically favoured a restrained military posture (even if these regions interests were not entirely averse to certain forms of interventionism) had lost much of the weight they had once possessed within the Republicans' electoral coalition (Trubowitz,1998,170).

It would appear, then, that a combination of low systemic slack and a domestic imperative to pursue guns over butter should produce a greater emphasis on balancing against the U.S.S.R. Indeed, mirroring the Johnson administration's pledge to be the party of guns and butter, the Reagan administration would embark on an expansive military build-up without either an effort to increase its revenue base or to drastically reduce federal spending, in what

effectively amounted to (despite the administration's popular image) a Keynesian consensus (Trubowitz, 1998, 170). However, this constellation of strategic interests did not necessitate the grand strategy the administration would eventually articulate. In theory, the strategy might have been well served by an effort to build a conventional force in Europe comparable in numbers to that of the U.S.S.R. This might have placated Northeastern interests which largely depended on Transatlantic trade and which typically still produced many of the older conventional platforms that the U.S. deployed in Europe. Alternatively, the grand strategy could have combined internal balancing with decisive large-scale operations in specific regions (an option articulated by Alexander Haig who favoured a full-scale invasion of certain Communist outposts such as Cuba).

Instead, the administration would preside over a technology-intensive build up in Europe which, in doctrinal terms largely amounted to an enhanced version of the limited liability doctrine of flexible response. Moreover, the administration would assume multiple peripheral interests whilst attempting to limit liability at the strategic level by either shifting the burdens of fighting to local proxies or applying force in a manner that, much to the chagrin of the uniformed military, mirrored the gradualism of the McNamara defence department. This demonstrates that the administration's grand strategy is broadly congruent with my model of preclusive defence. In the following sections, I will substantiate this argument, before articulating the conclusions that we might glean from studying the Reagan doctrine.

The Reagan Administration's Grand Strategy in Core Regions

Europe

In military terms, the Reagan administration's defence build-up in Europe amounted to a minor doctrinal revision of the existing strategy of flexible response. Indeed, the then SACEUR Bernard Rogers would explicitly frame the army's new doctrine of a follow-on forces attack in these terms. The doctrine called for the U.S. to take advantage of advances in the field of precision guided munitions to target the bases and lines of communications of the U.S.S.R.'s second echelons – delaying their effective deployment and allowing the U.S. to deny the Red Army a decisive breakthrough for long enough for the credible threat of escalation in the event that hostilities did not cease, to be delivered to the U.S.S.R. In effect, then, American

conventional forces would serve the same role that they had during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations - that of a holding force rather than one geared towards either attrition or annihilation. Moreover, the follow-on forces attacks emphasis on PGMs effectively obviated the need for manpower centric deployments in Central Europe. Notably, however, FOFA was chosen over two plausible manpower centric alternatives: Airland Battle and mobile defence.

The Airland Battle doctrine would have called for NATO to take the operational offensive against Warsaw Pact forces at the outset of a conflict - seeking to outmanoeuvre and annihilate the Pact's first echelons, while the model of territorial defence would have seen large mobile reserves created behind a picket of light infantry armed with antitank weapons such as MANPADS, whose role would have been to wear down a Soviet offensive before the mobile reserve delivered a decisive blow. Vitally, both alternatives incorporated larger manpower commitments to create a tank force capable of manoeuvre at the operational level and envisioned that war with the U.S.S.R. would be protracted and high intensity.

By contrast, follow on forces attack obviated the need for massive manpower commitments and adhered to the central tenet of flexible response – namely, that a short period of attrition would be followed by negotiations combined with threats of escalation (Lock Pullan, 1989, 83). Combined with this conventional posture was a nuclear doctrine of “limited counterforce” which amounted, in effect, to a variant of the Carter administration's countervailing strategy. The administration's nuclear posture assumed that, in the event that negotiations were not concluded before the initial delay brought on by a follow-on forces attack was exhausted, nuclear weapons could be used in a gradual manner against Soviet centres of communication bases and strategic forces. The objective was not to destroy the Soviet warfighting capacity but merely to demonstrate that continued conflict would bring unacceptable escalation. Despite the administration's early rhetoric, however, there was never any serious move towards a “full warfighting” doctrine aimed at annihilating the U.S.S. R.'s nuclear forces in a protracted nuclear war - even as figures such as Defence Secretary Weinberger, citing the Clausewitzian axiom regarding war's tendency towards absolutes, believed this to be the logical endpoint of nuclear strategy. Instead, the Reagan administration effectively envisioned the role of nuclear forces in a manner not dissimilar to that conceived by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations under similar circumstances. The administration's

definitive doctrinal statement regarding nuclear weapons NUWEP-82 admitted to the possibility of nuclear first use, but, in a manner akin to Carter's SIOP-5D emphasising the gradual targeting of forward bases, communications, and urban centres over an immediate and large-scale counterforce strike (Njolstad,1994,48-55) (Fischer,1997,151).

In conjunction with this nuclear posture, the U.S. Navy's doctrine was tailored along more aggressive lines with the explicit purpose of menacing Soviet SSBN's in their Arctic bastions. As S. Cimballa points out, however, the prospect of eliminating the Soviet SSBN force was non-existent; rather, the strategy presumed that posing a credible threat to valued military assets that the U.S.S.R. would have difficulty replacing would align with the broader strategy of graduated punishment to bring the U.S.S.R. to the negotiating table (Cimballa,1994,234). Moreover, projects that might have contributed to a protracted warfighting posture, such as the MX shelter scheme, were scrapped on the basis of their purportedly excessive cost (Levine,1987,5-45).

Finally, the administration placed an emphasis on the SDI programme - a missile defence system which effectively lacked any operational utility but had the psychological effect of promising to insulate the American mainland from the effects of a nuclear exchange. It is unclear but worth contemplating whether the concept of a graduated nuclear exchange (the ramifications of which the American mainland would be insulated from) was operationally feasible (Grossman,1989,94-100). Also, the possibility that a follow-on forces attack would substantially delay a Soviet conventional assault has been regarded as, at best, debatable.

In conclusion, the capacity of the U.S. Navy to menace Soviet SSBNs in their own Arctic bastions was, even after a massive naval build up, non-existent, as will be discussed later. Rather, as I will argue, the administration had effectively adopted a defence posture that was inoperable in order to appeal to the focal point of limiting liability even as the U.S. strove to attain absolute security. More to the point, the strategy with its emphasis on limiting manpower commitments and controlling escalation at the operational level, even as it aimed for preclusive defence of the U.S. European perimeter at the strategic level, is congruent with my model's predictions.

Process Tracing

Top Down Coordination

The administration's initial efforts to articulate a doctrine for a high-level conflict with the U.S.S.R. initially clash with the expectations of my model, with Weinberger's defence Guidelines for the year 1982 emphasising the need for a protracted warfighting capacity (Mlyn, 1995,123). This vision of U.S. strategy provoked dissent from even conservative members of the administration, with figures such as Richard Perle arguing that the administration needed a force of intermediate nuclear forces to provide it with limited options - the latter's emphasis on missiles such as GLCMs eventually colouring Weinberger's own opposition to the withdrawal of such forces (Paine,1984,13).

Moreover, the emphasis on warfighting produced a public fracas between Weinberger and Alexander Haig after the latter suggested publicly that nuclear weapons could be used gradually to provide a deterrent "shot across the bows" to the U.S.S.R. (Halloran,1981,1). Thus, it appears that an initial failure to adhere to the focal point of limited liability weakened intra administration cohesion-leading to a series of contradictory statements and positions being taken up by administration insiders. Moreover, despite his predilections, Weinberger seems to have acceded to the view that nuclear forces should be used in a graduated manner stating to a Senate hearing in 1984 that the U.S. would place an emphasis on keeping war conventional whilst, in extremis, demonstrating a capacity to escalate to nuclear warfare at a level of its choosing - effectively reiterating the strategy of denial and risk escalation inherent in McNamara's strategy of flexible response (Garthoff,1994,40-43). Moreover, it was argued, the use of conventional forces against Soviet SSBNs would allow the U.S. to bargain coercively at a level of escalation below the nuclear threshold (Arkin,1984,6).

The fact that Weinberger's initial posture produced intra administration dissent that was framed in terms of limiting liability and using signal shows of force to achieve victory at a low cost, coupled with the fact that these objections coincide with a de facto policy shift means that with regards to the nuclear component of the U.S. force posture, the empirical evidence passes my straw in the wind and hoop tests. Further, I find weak smoking gun evidence that

framing America's military posture in terms of limiting liability was a response to these pressures in the form of an interview with an unnamed Défense Department official by Mlyn (1995,124) who stated that "We just didn't want to get beat over the head by our political enemies within the administration". As such, there appears to be diagnostic evidence that the contours of the administration's eventual adherence to an updated flexible response was built around a need to coordinate around the focal point of limited liability.

With regards to lateral coordination, there appears to be more substantial evidence that much of the administration's policy regarding force structure was a response to the exigency of having to adhere to the focal points of absolute security and limited liability. At the level of straw in the wind evidence, there appears to be a number of appeals by both Reagan and members of his administration to these focal principles. For example, Reagan framed the SDI explicitly in terms of absolute security, arguing that the capacity to "save lives" rather than exist in a condition of mutual threat vis a vis the U.S.S.R. (Slayton,1983,123).

Similarly, Navy Secretary Lehman would make the case for an increased naval budget to Congress by arguing that the Navy's capacity for posing the threat of unacceptable escalation to the U.S.S.R. would obviate the need for massive ground forces in Europe (Penner, 1985,12).

Furthermore, both Reagan and Weinberger framed the conventional and nuclear force posture of the U.S. in terms of appeals to absolute security and limited liability. Reagan would argue that the capacity to flexibly deploy nuclear weapons would obviate the need for massive conventional forces in Europe but would also allow the U.S. to deter the U.S.S.R. from actions adverse to its interests in peripheral areas such as the Middle East making the case that the administration's posture would allow it to avoid "The stationing of enough troops that we could stop the Soviets anywhere if they decided to advance" (Jervis,1984,125).

In effect, Reagan was arguing that the force posture would allow the U.S. to defend both central and peripheral interests through graduated escalation-limiting liability at the strategic level even as absolute security was sought at the grand strategic level. This sentiment was echoed by Weinberger, who argued that ceding territory for strategic depth as per the territorial defence concept both risked collapse and was unnecessary, given that Europeans

could pay for many of the costs of adopting new technologies (Reed,1987,174). Moreover, Weinberger would argue that the combination of FOFA and graduated nuclear escalation meant that “we don’t need to match them battalion for battalion on the ground” assuming that the U.S. could “pose a risk of nuclear escalation at any level of Soviet aggression” (DoD Annual Report FY1981,67) (DoD Annual Report, FY1981,33).

Finally, in an appeal to the focal principles of both limited liability and absolute security (and in contravention of his own claims that force should be used sparingly but that once committed to war, the U.S. should use overwhelming force), Weinberger would claim that the U.S. needed to deny the Soviets the material or psychological advantage of any gain in either central or peripheral areas but that if the U.S. did commit forces to a conflict “[it] should go without saying would try to end the conflict at a low cost as fast as possible” (DoD Annual Report FY1982).

Furthermore, these appeals had the desired effect of splitting any potential coalitions that might coagulate against this policy. For example, the build-up secured the support of figures such as Senator Sam Nunn, who had previously opposed a conventional build-up and would propose the withdrawal of American forces from Europe to coerce Western European states to pay for their own defence (Gwertzman,1984,1).

To the extent that critics such as Senator Pete Domenici did attack the government they framed these attacks in terms of limiting liability and, consequently, were restricted to targeting the number of fielded forces in Europe rather than many genuinely expensive technological programmes that the administration had defended in terms of this focal principle (Public Statements of Secretary of Defence Weinberger,1983,34).

Predictably, the army saw its share of the budget fall steadily over this period from 24 to 16 percent of the overall budget as critics of the administration had few options but to target the number of fielded forces in Europe (Ippolito,1988,169-175). However, even fiscal conservatives such as William Roth who proposed troop ceilings on the number of forces fielded in Europe on the grounds that the U.S. could not “allow taxpayer money to be diverted

to Europe indefinitely” waived their objections to both intermediate nuclear forces and investments in doctrinal changes after Reagan framed these developments in terms of limiting American exposure in Europe (Duke,1993,78).

Similarly, programs that could be framed in terms of limiting America’s exposure to war were accepted by Democrats with most funding for INF’s largely secured without opposition even as programs tailored towards warfighting such as an abortive attempt to revive the MX shelter scheme faced stiff legislative opposition (Waller,1987,81). The fact that the administration secured the coordination of potential legislative rivals such as fiscal conservatives and relatively dovish Democrats so long as it successfully framed its policies in terms of both absolute security and limited liability effectively serves as a hoop test for my hypothesis.

Smoking gun evidence that appeals to both absolute security and limited liability can be found in the accounts of legislative opponents of the administration such as Speaker of the House Tip O’Neill and Congressman Jim Wright who stated that their support stemmed from the fact that they feared “weak on defence” but could not oppose the President on fiscal grounds given that after he framed his build up in terms of limiting the scale of America’s ground commitment “the public would look at domestic spending as the source of inflation”. In effect, the Congressmen’s expectations regarding the viability of challenging policies framed in these terms converged with those of the administration - leading them to coordinate with it without even broaching the possibility of gauging the public’s reaction to a challenge. Significantly, however, despite any fears of “looking weak on defence” both Senators would vehemently oppose the creation of full warfighting nuclear capabilities and push for the withdrawal of ground forces from Europe (Jansson,2001,283).

Thus, the administration’s opponents appear to have been willing to attack it if they could frame their opposition in terms of limited liability-obviating both the possibility that they accepted the administration’s policies as legitimate or that the size of Reagan’s electoral mandate, as some have argued, was a sufficient condition for securing intra-elite coordination. Therefore, there appears to be strong evidence for the operation of strategic cultural focal points to effect lateral coordination between the administration and its legislative rivals.

With regards to bottom up coordination, there appears to be tentative evidence that different functional agencies within the administration attempted to make the case that they should secure a larger share of the budget than they currently were by contending that they were uniquely poised to deliver absolute security at a nominal cost. For example, Navy Secretary Lehman would, as mentioned before, frame using the Navy for limited counterforce as a cost-effective option relative to building the ground forces for either Airland Battle or defence in depth in Central Europe (Posen,1991,58). It is noteworthy that this argument was accepted even as figures such as retired Admiral Chester Zumwalt warned that carrier groups were inoperable so close the U.S.S. R's shoreline and risked potential annihilation by tactical nuclear weapons (Penner,1985,12). Interestingly, the army made the case for a follow-on forces attack as opposed to air land battle even though the air force was the main beneficiary of this shift in doctrine. This could reflect either genuine strategic convictions or a recognition that the demands that would be made in terms of manpower and machinery to execute air land battle in Europe would be politically unpalatable (Olsen,2011,377). So there does exist some positive evidence for bottom up coordination, albeit evidence of a somewhat circumstantial nature.

Overall, the administration's behaviour in Central Europe is congruent with my predictions. Moreover, process tracing the administration's decision-making reveals strong evidence that strategic cultural focal points played a role in securing top down and lateral coordination, as well as tenable but circumstantial evidence regarding bottom up coordination

The Reagan Doctrine in the Periphery

In the Global South, the Reagan administration's behaviour broadly coheres with my model's predictions. The Reagan administration committed itself to a "full court press" against the U.S.S.R. aimed at restoring eroded areas of the U.S.' amorphous defence perimeter in the third world and precluding future gains by Communist insurgents in areas held by loyal allies of the U.S.

At the strategic level, however, the administration took pains to shift the burden of military actions to sub state proxies with the U.S. restricting itself to either using limited military force or restricting its role exclusively to providing training and material aid. Moreover, international support was typically sought in the form of ad hoc regional coalitions in a manner consistent with my model's prediction that an administration facing the constraints and incentives of the Reagan administration would rely on "soft multilateralism" to appeal to the focal point of structural power. In the following section, I will elaborate on the contours of the Reagan administration's grand strategy in three peripheral regions - Africa, the Middle East and Latin America and examine the decision-making process that led the administration to pursue the policies that it did in these regions.

Angola

In the wake of the Portuguese withdrawal from Angola, conflict erupted between the MPLA government backed by Soviet aid and direct Cuban intervention and UNITA, an insurgency led by Jonas Savimbi a Chinese trained Maoist who would, over the course of the 1970s, attempt to reframe his movement as a nationalist movement. Under Nixon and Kissinger, the U.S. had largely attempted to limit liability at the grand strategic level, attempting instead to cobble together a coalition of regional powers such as South Africa to intervene in Angola whilst eschewing a direct role in the conflict (Litwak,1984,104). The Reagan administration, after intensive lobbying, secured the repeal of the Clark Amendment, which explicitly prevented the American government from playing a role in the Angolan conflict, and proceeded to funnel aid to UNITA in a quasi-overt manner, which is an action that I consider as direct intervention as it no longer relied on the buffer of either an institution or a regional power (Wright,1997,185). The amount of aid that the administration would be able to secure for its Angolan intervention was, however, a modest total of 163 million dollars over the course of a decade, with efforts to secure more expansive funding typically running into opposition framed in terms of avoiding overstretch (Scott,1996,12).

Nonetheless, the administration would completely discard Ambassador Ryan Crocker's two track approach centred on the minimal goal gaining Angolan assent for the withdrawal of Cuban troops in return for the withdrawal of South African troops from Angola

(McFaul,1989,110). Instead, the administration chose to set itself the maximalist objective of forcing the MPLA to recognize a role for UNITA in Angola's government and securing the unilateral withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. To this end, George Schultz envisioned the U.S. gradually ratcheting up the levels of aid provided to UNITA until the Angolan government agreed to come to terms – effectively amounting to a policy of gradualism comparable to McNamara's strategy of limited bombing in Vietnam (albeit through the use of proxies, rather than American forces as the primary strategic instrument) (Rodman,1997,367). This policy effectively amounted to the pursuit of the almost total capitulation by the MPLA at the grand strategic level, whilst attempting to limit American military exposure and financial costs at the strategic level by utilizing a highly circumscribed aid program to the Angolan rebels as the administration's main strategic instrument. This combination of the pursuit of absolute security at the grand strategic level and limited liability at the strategic level directly coheres with my model's predictions.

Process Tracing

Top Down Coordination

In terms of top down coordination, there appears to have been fairly rapid intra administration coordination around the focal points of absolute security and limited liability. Reagan had already evinced a commitment to these principles on the election trail responding to a question on Angola by saying - "Well, frankly I would provide them with weapons, there's no need for manpower" (James,2011,149). Within the administration conservatives such as Jeanne Kirkpatrick and William Casey were able to secure the cooperation of figures who had stated an ambivalence for the importance of peripheral conflicts such as Caspar Weinberger to assail Crocker's solution (Crocker,1992,271) (Alexiev,1986,4-6).

In George Schultz's recollection, appeals by William Casey to the idea that Angola would be a domino that might produce a rout in the third world gained support from figures such as Constantine Menges, Fred Ikle and John Poindexter and was quickly reproduced by legislative allies such as Senator Helms and even non-governmental organizations such as the Cuban American national foundation, Citizens for America (Schultz,1993,1110-1116). The domino arguments were coupled with appeals to limited liability, in particular the claim by

administration hardliners that Savimbi needed only minimal aid to win the war outright (Glejeessies,2013,290).

Moreover, a number of figures only loosely tied to the administration's ruling coalition immediately rallied to the focal point of Angola as a test of the U.S. commitment to absolute security with figures such as New York mayoral hopeful (possibly with the White House's tacit blessing) organizing public meetings between Savimbi and other anti-Communist leaders from around the world in the name of an "alliance for democracy" (Scott,1996,125). The rapidity with which the rhetorical appeals to absolute security and limited liability by insiders within the Reagan administration were anticipated, understood and reproduced by actors along the breadth of the ruling coalition for a melange of reasons provides strong evidence for the idea that strategic cultural focal points were acting as a coordinating mechanism for tacit cooperation.

In addition to the straw in the wind evidence presented above, the evidence I expect to see for the case to pass my hoop test appears to be available. Even initial opponents of the Angolan policy such as Schultz and Crocker put up little opposition with both men voicing support for aid but framing opposition in terms of the logistical difficulties of moving military aid through Zaire. Eventually, Schultz would play a primary role in the administration's approach to Angola (Glejeessies,2013,283-295).

Legislative allies of the administration rapidly reproduced its central appeals to the focal points of absolute security and limited liability, with Senator Symms arguing that the results of the conflict in Angola would be "heard all over the world" - while Senator Jesse Helms parroted Casey's claim that Savimbi could decisively end the conflict with minimal aid (U.S. Congress Senate Committee on Foreign Relations,1986,5) (Scott,1996,130).

To the extent that opposition to the administration's policies was posed by legislative opponents it was framed in terms of limiting liability with a number of Democrats rallying in opposition after Richard Moose, the former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs claimed that the U.S. was in danger of "finding ourselves taking on the South African...role" (Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence,1986,5).

Overwhelmingly, however, repeated assurances from the administration's legislative allies seemed to split the opposing coalition, with Democrats such as Claude Pepper supporting the administration's stance on the Clark Amendment on the basis that the U.S. credibility would rapidly erode if it looked like "we washed our hands of our commitments in Angola" (Wright,1997,185). The administration's legislative allies achieved their objective in the form of bipartisan support for the repeal of the Clark Amendment by a Democrat controlled Congress, coupled with the legislative defeat of the so called "baby Clark" amendment which attempted to place some restrictions on the scope of American aid to Angola (Landsberg,2003,351).

To be sure, this acquiescence in the White House's policies may be attributable to the scope of Reagan's electoral landslide and a fear of looking weak on national security. However, it is not immediately clear why the Democrats would feel that the strength of their commitment to national security would be hinged upon their degree of commitment to an essentially tangential conflict. Moreover, the possibility that liability might not be limited did produce a brief rallying of opposition to the administration's policies, coupled with long negotiations regarding the nature of the aid to be provided and the financial scale of the aid (Blakely,1986,2202-3). It does appear that the Democrats were willing to ignore the scope of Reagan's mandate when an opportunity to rally around the focal point of limited liability presented itself.

It is my contention that the evidence available satisfies my straw in the wind and hoop tests for coordination around the focal points of limited liability and absolute security. That being said, I have not gleaned smoking gun evidence such as an admission from an involved figure that this was the case, rendering the strength of the evidence moderate.

Latin America

Nicaragua

The ongoing conflict between the newly constituted Sandinista government in Nicaragua and its opponents, the Contras, who were largely (although not exclusively) constituted of loyalists to the deposed Somoza government would become a centrepiece of the Reagan administration's agenda from relatively the first days of the administration. In addition to presenting the administration with the challenge of what it framed as a "second Cuba" in the Western hemisphere, the Sandinista government was seen as a potential conduit for arms from Cuba to nearby El Salvador (Bilsland,2015,142). The administration could adjudicate between a number of options to resolve the central American imbroglio ranging from ignoring what essentially amounted to peripheral setbacks, to a strategy of engagement aimed at securing the cooperation of the Sandinistas on specific issues (such as the arms flow to El Salvador) as proposed by figures such as Ambassador Thomas Enders, to a direct military option, propounded by figures such as Alexander Haig, aimed at using decisive force in a full scale invasion of Cuba in order to "go to the heart of the problem". Instead, the Reagan administration would opt to define its objectives in maximalist terms, with the administration's stated objectives being "induce the Sandinistas, Cubans and their allies to cease their support for insurgents in the region, to hamper the Cuban/Nicaraguan arms trafficking" and when " the government of Nicaragua is demonstrating a commitment to provide amnesty and non-discriminatory political participation in the Nicaraguan political process for all Nicaraguans" – in effect including the collapse or reformation of the Sandinista government within the remit of the U.S. policy objectives (Scott,2001,247). However, Reagan eschewed the direct massive use of force against either Cuba or Nicaragua suggested by figures such as Haig. Instead, at the strategic level the administration would opt for a policy of imposing gradual pressure on the Sandinistas- both by the provision of military aid to the contras and by the limited use of direct military force.

From 1982 onwards, the CIA would preside over a massive influx of arms into Nicaragua to aid the Contras, a policy that was made quasi-official by Reagan in a speech to the OAS that year in which he tacitly acknowledged American aid to the Contras, before laying out a series of demands that the Sandinistas must meet before it was stopped (Reagan,1982,1). The

provision of a series of demands, coupled with an oblique commitment to providing aid to the Contras in the event that Nicaragua did not meet these demands constituted a major step towards direct intervention.

Following this, the American military would step up both direct and indirect aid to the Contras, carrying out the Big Pine Exercises in neighbouring Honduras whilst upgrading airbases at Aguacate, Trujillo and San Lorente (Dougherty,2014,92). The stated objective of these exercises was to deter the Sandinistas from attacking the Contras training camps across the shared border between the two nations and to hold out the prospect of direct military intervention. As William Casey would put it, the permanent presence of American forces in Honduras, coupled with the infrastructure to rapidly deploy more forces to the region at a short notice really amounted to a strategy which was aimed at “making the bastards sweat” (Leogrande,1998,331). The use of military forces as a demonstrative tool to alter the political calculus of an opponent is coded here as an indirect strategy aimed at limiting military liability.

In addition to this, the CIA’s role in the war between the Sandinistas and Contras would become progressively more overt, with the CIA eventually providing operational sea and airlift to UCLA’s (unilaterally controlled Latin Assets) in order to carry out strikes against vital elements of Nicaragua’s infrastructure. The most notable of these assaults would be the assault on the oil storage facilities at Puerto Sandino which saw proxy actors trained and provided operational lift by Navy SEALs. While the U.S. role was not directly acknowledged, it was widely known, with Casey framing the assaults as being attributable, in part, to the need to “make Congress know we were doing something” (LeoGrande,1998,316-325). I would code this as a direct intervention.

The final and most notable, escalation of the campaign was the mining of Nicaragua’s harbours by the CIA, an act which both Reagan and Casey did not deny – effectively amounting to direct intervention (Miranda, Ratliff,1994,241). In addition to military suasion, the Reagan administration would enact a policy of economic pressure against Nicaragua, freezing the assets of the Sandinista government in the U.S. and lobbying against loans to Nicaragua in

international organizations such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (Leogrande,1996,329-348).

Effectively, then, the policy articulated by the Reagan administration was one of direct coercion to achieve the maximal goal of forcing the Nicaraguan government to either radically alter its internal structure or collapse. At the strategic level, however, the strategy relied on punishment by aid to proxies, damage to the infrastructure of Nicaragua and economic coercion, coupled with the threat of direct military escalation - all of which involved the extremely limited expenditure of both blood and treasure. It is worth noting, however, that the administration was not restricted to these options.

In addition to the options of diplomatic engagement (conditioning the provision of American aid upon the verifiable reduction of arms flows to El Salvador) and a direct invasion of either Nicaragua or Cuba, the restricted interagency group created to produce policy options for the President regarding Nicaragua produced the option of a blockade of the country to halt the supply of Cuban arms (Kornbluh,1987,24) (Schultz,2009,367). The administration's eventual choice is not explicable, I will argue, without reference to the effect of the focal points of limited liability and absolute security.

Process Tracing

Top Down Coordination

Appeals to the focal points of absolute security and limited liability are all immediately apparent in the intra administration bargaining over the contours of the American approach to Nicaragua. Indeed, Reagan would frame the fate of Nicaragua as being salient to the national security of the U.S. at the outset of his administration's assumption of office, stating that – "the national security of all America is at stake in Central America; if we cannot prevail there we cannot expect to defend ourselves elsewhere" (Lynch,2011,87).

Thomas Enders' early demarche to the Sandinistas was assailed as appeasement by a broad array of figures including Caspar Weinberger. Indeed, Reagan's nostrums regarding absolute security and the implacability of illiberal foes were directly echoed by figures such as Fred

Ikle, who contended that “we can no more negotiate an acceptable political solution with these people than the Social Democrats in revolutionary Russia could have talked Lenin into giving up totalitarian Bolshevism” (Ikle,1983,3-4). It is particularly noteworthy to observe figures such as Weinberger, who explicitly framed his personal beliefs in terms of avoiding peripheral commitments, arguing that the existence of the Sandinistas might be the catalyst for a collapse of the U.S. position in Latin America. The deployment of the language of absolute security, through the insinuation that a defeat in Nicaragua would lead to broader cascading losses, is a persistent feature of the administration’s rhetoric (Pastor,1987,237). This settlement was rapidly echoed by William Casey, who argued that Schultz and Enders were effectively denying the U.S. a total victory over the Sandinistas by settling too early (Schultz,1993,305).

Nonetheless, opponents of direct military intervention such as Brent Scowcroft framed their opposition in terms of limiting liability, with Scowcroft claiming that Haig’s proposed direct action against either Cuba, Nicaragua or both would lead to a Vietnam like scenario. This claim was also taken up by Weinberger, despite his previous commitment to the use of decisive force in the event that force was to be used (Gutman,1988,60-81) (Canon,1991,354-56). The behaviour of pragmatists such as Weinberger, who appear to have been responsive to both arguments framed in terms of limited liability and absolute security, often in contravention of their own previously stated ideological beliefs, provides strong straw in the wind evidence that they felt compelled to adhere to the focal principles of limited liability and absolute security.

Moreover, opponents of the administration’s chosen policy within the administration not only aligned with the administration’s chosen policy but were able to argue effectively in favour of it. For example, George Schultz, who had initially supported Enders’ approach would shift positions and subsequently, frame the argument in favour of deployments such as the Big Pine Exercises in terms of absolute security and limited liability - arguing on the one hand that the Nicaraguan regime represented a source of regional instability whilst placating concerned legislators with the assurance that the deployment of American forces was purely demonstrative and would not require their active use (Schultz,1993,1000).

It is precisely this coordination between proponents of the administration's approach and both potential and actual opponents after the invocation of the principles of absolute security and limited liability that forms the hoop test for my hypothesis. Appeals to these focal principles both by the President and figures such as Casey (who appears to have played a central role in proposing the policy equilibrium adopted) secured the coordination of both ambivalent pragmatists such as Weinberger and proponents of a diplomatic approach such as Schultz and Enders (who would also come around to supporting the option of a limited intervention).

The understanding that the causal mechanism which I posit was in action is lent further plausibility by the fact that alternative possible mechanisms fail to explain the variation in outcomes observed here. For example, it is difficult to argue that the executive coerced recalcitrant members of the ruling coalition to cooperate, given that the *laissez faire* management style adopted by Reagan made protracted opposition to unwanted policies an attractive option to internal discontents within the administration (Bass, 1990, 540). Moreover, even if critics of the administration's policies were silenced, it is unclear why figures such as Enders and Schultz should become active proponents of the administration's policies and would have little difficulty in coordinating with the administration in terms of rhetorical appeals to limited liability and absolute security. Nor can it be argued that the administration's incentives to pursue a hawkish foreign policy were in and of themselves determining, as this still left open multiple policy equilibria such as Haig's proposed massive use of force. Indeed, such a policy would have been consistent with the views of figures such as Weinberger and yet received little support - even from figures who should have been its proponents, further strengthening the argument that the need to appeal to the focal principles of limited liability and absolute security rendered the policy equilibrium followed by salient and secured cooperation even from figures who would not be expected to be natural proponents of the policy.

My smoking gun evidence, however, is the testament of figures such as William Casey and Robert Gates. Casey explicitly stated that given the tacit agreement of a need both to act and to limit exposure, opponents of his policy could not rally around an alternative, in effect

ensuring that “there was no other way to do it” (Rodman,1994,237). Similarly, in Gates’ recollection, the administration “meandered into” the policy selected insofar as all the other options available were written off as being either too expansive or amounting to appeasement. In effect, Gates argues, the commitment to pursuing an expansive grand strategic goal on the cheap ensured that the Nicaraguan policy emerged organically as a “compromise position” (Gates,1984,1). Importantly, however, both Casey and Gates argue that a tacit consensus regarding both limited liability and absolute security existed prior to positional bargaining - meaning that the outcome cannot be regarded as merely satisfying by the administration.

Lateral Coordination

When we examine the administration’s rhetorical appeals to secure lateral coordination from its legislative opposition, we immediately encounter appeals to the focal point of absolute security, with both Reagan and members of his inner circle such as his speechwriter Patrick Buchanan highlighting the geographical proximity of Nicaragua to the U.S. as evidence that the outcome of the Nicaraguan conflict was a vital security interest. As Reagan put it, the conflict had led to “Soviets, East Germans, Bulgarians, North Koreans and various others [being] camped on our doorstep” and would lead to a broader Warsaw Pact presence in the Western hemisphere (Hayward,2009,521).

In a similar vein, Reagan would later point to the purported success of German U-boats in the Caribbean during the Battle of the Atlantic, to argue that the Soviets might build submarine bases in Nicaragua to menace American shipping in a similar manner (Reagan,1983,1143). The notion that the U.S.S.R. would operate essentially indefensible bases on the doorstep of the U.S. is, of course, highly implausible. It seems more likely, then, that appeals to the cascading effects of an even minimal erosion of the U.S. security perimeter was a rhetorical appeal to absolute security on Reagan’s part.

Simultaneously, the administration would attempt to reiterate the limited nature of the means with which it was pursuing its expansion, with George Schultz meeting with sceptical legislators such as Senator Robert Byrd to reassure him of the limited nature of the American

role in Nicaragua as well as in the limited capacity for escalation in the manner of Vietnam (Schultz,1993,1000).

Moreover, these appeals did secure coordination from opponents within the legislature. For example, despite his initial opposition, Byrd was eventually reduced to arguing for procedural controls versus concerns over policy execution - rather than for opposing the policy on substantive terms (Schultz,1993,1000).

Despite initial opposition to the administration's policy in the form of the Boland-Zabolicki amendment, efforts by the administration's legislative allies in the Senate's intelligence committee secured from the administration a vague commitment to a diplomatic track, coupled with caps on spending - effectively ensuring that funding for Contra aid achieved legislative support from a Democratic Congress, with the Boland-Zabolicki amendment effectively being watered down to the point of being meaningless (Scott,1996,187) (Congress and Foreign Policy 1984,1985,22-30).

Even after the catastrophic domestic fallout of the mining of Nicaragua's harbours, much of the opposition to the administration's policy was framed on procedural rather than substantive terms, with opponents arguing that the Reagan administration had escalated the conflict to open warfare without prior consultation with the legislature (Scott,1996,169) (Sullivan,1987,21-22) (Kornbluh,1987,29).

Following the passage of a second Boland amendment in the wake of the mining of the Nicaraguan harbours, the administration's push to remove the new restrictions placed upon it were couched in the rhetoric of ensuring absolute security and limited liability with Reagan making a case for the resumption of aid by arguing that "support for freedom fighters is...integral to our own security" and that "dollar for dollar" it was the most effective means of achieving absolute security (Reagan,1985,146).

Similarly, Assistant Secretary of State Robert Langhorn argued that a failure to act would result in a “second Cuba” emerging in the region (Scott,1996,172). Reagan maintained the expansive goals of his original policy, arguing that to secure peace the Sandinistas must enter a power sharing arrangement with the Contras (Reagan,1988,456).

The appeals to absolute security and limited liability do appear to have had the desired effect, with the administration securing defections in favour of their policy from Democrats such as Dave McCurdy. Opponents such as the Speaker of the House, Tip O’Neill, promised to articulate an alternative policy for Nicaragua but failed to do so. The result was the effective repeal of the so called “baby Boland” amendment with Congress agreeing to pass a request for 100 million dollars’ worth of aid to the Contras (Potter,1987,41-43).

The fact that the administration’s opposition appeared to be incapable of coordinating against it or providing an alternative policy equilibrium despite a stated desire to do so, coupled with defections from the coalition following the administration’s appeals to the focal points of absolute security and limited liability, constitutes the behaviour one would expect to see from an opposition that was actually denied the ability to coordinate effectively by an administration that had more successfully appealed to strategic cultural focal points. Thus, the behaviour of the administration’s opposition passes my hoop test - insofar as appeals to focal principles coincide with ineffectual attempts to coordinate opposition to the administration by its legislative opponents.

To be sure, opposition to the administration would become significantly more coherent (and effective) following the revelation of the illegality of its conduct during the Iran Contra scandal. However, my model does not consider exogenous shocks of this nature and I thus treat the administration’s efforts at lateral coordination after the emergence of the scandal as being beyond the scope of the thesis.

Moreover, there appears to be smoking gun evidence that, for as long as the administration appealed effectively to the focal points of absolute security and limited liability, its legislative opponents felt compelled to cooperate with it because an effective appeal to these focal principles denied them the ability to coordinate opposition (rather than because they were convinced by the administration’s stance). For example, Representative Michael Barnes

would later claim that Reagan's heresthetical use of appeals to absolute security -in particular his evocations of the Monroe and Truman doctrines - left opponents struggling to craft a coherent response. As Barnes put it, "we just didn't have the capacity to coordinate and get the votes after Reagan presented it that way" (Hayward,2009,521)

There appears to be sufficient evidence to substantiate my proposition that the mechanisms of top down and bottom up coordination were facilitated by appeals to specific strategic cultural focal principles and that the need to appeal to these principles played a determining role in affecting the administration's choice of a strategy from the available equilibria. While there is limited evidence that figures such as William Casey and the CIA lobbied particularly hard for a limited liability role that might allow them an expanded role, I find that there is no major evidence for bottom up coordination (Gutman,1988,112).

El Salvador

The Reagan administration's strategy in El Salvador is generally congruent with my model's predictions. The administration pursued the expansive goal of aiding the Salvadorian government in achieving the total defeat of the Marxist FMLN insurgency, avoiding options that might have aimed at a minimal stabilization of the situation – by pushing the Salvadorian government to either accept a power sharing agreement with the FMLN or aiming mainly at ensuring the government's continued existence rather than total victory.

In line with the recommendations of the bipartisan Kissinger commission, however, the administration would restrict the role of American forces to advising and training the armed forces of el Salvador. While the scope and scale of this aid would increase exponentially (eventually topping 2 billion dollars), the number of American soldiers that could be dedicated to the mission to El Salvador was capped at 55 men (LeFeber,1984,10) (LeoGrande,1984,273). Per se, then, the government was essentially aiming to achieve a broadly defined strategic goal with extremely limited military means- behaviour that is congruent with my model.

Process Tracing

Top Down Coordination

From the outset, administration insiders framed the conflict in El Salvador in terms of absolute security, with George Schultz arguing that “Central America is too close and of too much strategic importance for us to stand idly by...Our security is at stake, and our most basic principles are being tested.” (U.S. Department of State,1983,1). Simultaneously, however, internal documents produced by the administration uncharacteristically shied from criticizing the Carter administration’s approach to El Salvador on the basis that the Carter administration had correctly understood the need to limit American strategic liability in El Salvador. Indeed, NSDD82, which articulated the administration’s policy position on El Salvador, conceded that like the Carter administration, the Reagan administration could afford “no more Vietnams” and would thus have to adopt an approach that the document dubbed “Carter plus one”- in effect, supplementing existing programmes from the Carter era with an advise and assist mission. Given that this was a classified document at the time, it likely reflects an intra administration consensus regarding the nature of the administration’s limitations. Moreover, there appears to have been little debate regarding the issue, with the single dissenter (Alexander Haig who called for a more expansive commitment of forces) failing to attract tangible support from even hawkish members of the administration and dropping his objections relatively early on (Kraemer,2015,431).

There seems to be straw in the wind evidence for top down coordination in El Salvador.

The administration also made several unmistakable appeals to the focal points of limited liability and absolute security when attempting to outflank its legislative opposition. For example, Reagan stressed the purported centrality of El Salvador to American national security when addressing legislators, claiming that “what we see in El Salvador is an attempt to destabilize the entire region and eventually move chaos and anarchy toward the American border”.

However, he also took pains to underscore the limited nature of American involvement in El Salvador, asserting that “None of them (U.S. advisors) will be going into combat. None of them will be accompanying El Salvador troops on missions of that kind. They are there for training El Salvador personnel” (Blanton,1996,233).

These appeals coincided with either the support of sceptics from within the Republican Party (such as Robert Byrd) as well as the silence of previously vocal opponents such as Speaker Tip O'Neill (Crandall,2016,33). Any prospect of legislative opposition to the administration's stance was further eroded when Senator Jim Wright led a coalition of 55 rebel Democrats in offering vocal support to the administration's policies in El Salvador and suggesting that bipartisan support should be extended to it. It appears, then, that an appeal to the focal points of limited liability and absolute security had served the role of a heresthetical device - fracturing the opposition and delivering the administration the political capital that it needed to pursue expansive aims in El Salvador (Crandall,2016,338).

To the extent to which opposition did briefly coalesce, it was in the form of appeals to limited liability and the possibility of overstretch that were dispelled after the Joint Chiefs of Staff vouched for the limited nature of the involvement and the administration agreed to cap the number of American advisors in El Salvador (U.S. Congress House Committee on Foreign Affairs,1981,128).

Middle East

The conflagration that developed in Lebanon following the death of Camille Chamoun confronted the Reagan administration with an intractable conundrum. The development of a multidimensional conflict involving clashes between the PLO and Israel on the one hand and a Syrian invasion of Lebanon on the other, challenged the administration with the prospective charge that it had vacillated if it were to abstain from the conflict. Conversely, the prospect of a gruelling occupation was sure to evoke opposition on the basis of limiting liability.

Finally, the direct insertion of American troops into a foreign conflict would be expected to be accompanied by attempts to achieve at least minimal multilateral legitimation. The behaviour of the administration over the course of the conflict reflects an acute need to triangulate between these three contending objectives.

In line with the predictions of my model, attempts at legitimization were achieved by “soft multilateralism” in the form of an ad hoc coalition, including France, Italy and the UK. However, any attempt at “hard” multilateralism was eschewed and attempts to turn responsibility for the mission over to the U.N. were vetoed by the U.S. on the grounds that this would impede the mission’s operational flexibility (Davidson,2011,44-50).

The remit of the mission was highly limited, however, with American forces being tasked with helping to secure Beirut and, potentially, acting as a buffer between Israeli and PLO forces. There was no question, however, of sending a force capable of securing the country or pushing Syrian forces out of Lebanon - despite the withdrawal of these forces being a stated objective of the administration.

Moreover, following the bombing of marine barracks in Beirut by Shia militants, the administration moved its ground forces offshore whilst retaliating against Syrian forces primarily through the use of naval and air power (Zenko,2012,1).

Clearly, the administration’s combination of expansive grand strategic ends (intervention in a peripheral conflict) with limited means, coupled with its use of “soft multilateralism” is congruent with my hypothesis.

Process Tracing

Top Down coordination

There appears to have been significant dissent within the administration regarding the appropriate combination of means and ends that should constitute the administration’s policy in Lebanon. Whilst a consensus developed around excluding the possibility of placing the MNF under the auspices of the U.N., significant dissension existed regarding the size of the force and the remit of its duties.

Robert McFarlane, the National Security Advisor, favoured a full-scale deployment aimed at pushing Syrian forces out of Lebanon, whilst Caspar Weinberger believed that no intervention in an essentially peripheral conflict was necessary. Whilst McFarlane’s views seemed to have been dismissed offhand (as one would expect if an actor failed to align his policy with a focal

principle) the conflict between Weinberger and George Schultz (who favoured a limited deployment) was more protracted (Yoshitani,2011,90-99). Though Reagan, it appears, had already aligned his views with those of Schultz on the basis that inaction was an inadmissible policy option, he nonetheless appears to have urged Schultz to secure multilateral buy in and to limit the operational objectives of the MNF to “find a solution that Cap can agree to”.

Weinberger’s proposed policy failed inasmuch as it did not align with the principle of absolute security, but the administration did calibrate its policy to account for opposition that he might frame in terms of limited liability (Cannon,1993,350-354).

This coupled with the grudging acceptance of the administration’s policy by both Weinberger and McFarlane amounts to evidence that passes both the straw in the wind and hoop tests. The fact that McFarlane was never fully swayed by the proposed policy {he would later claim that he still supported a full-scale deployment but could not frame his stance in a way that others within the administration could accept) amounts to smoking gun evidence for the focal principles of limited liability and absolute security acting to produce cohesion within the leadership group (Yoshitani,2011,90).

Lateral Coordination

Given the paucity of initial opposition to the administration’s policies in Lebanon, it is difficult to ascertain the degree of lateral coordination that occurred around limited liability and absolute security. However, the fact that a strong bipartisan consensus emerged around a peripheral commitment and only started to fray following rising casualties does broadly confirm my hypothesis (Foyle,1999,237).

Afghanistan

The Reagan administration’s approach to Afghanistan appears to have mirrored that of the Carter administration in many ways, but radically altered the scale, directness and objectives of America’s involvement in the ongoing Afghan conflict. The administration’s central policy statement on Afghanistan, NDS166 declared that Carter’s government had done enough to

“harass but not win” in Afghanistan and promised that material aid to the Mujahedeen would increase substantially in both quantity and quality (Schweizer,1994,213-214). Consequently, the administration would increase the value of American aid, which would peak at 600 million dollars a year and following the export of stinger missiles to Afghanistan, would make its involvement overt – leading me to code this as a direct intervention despite the lack of an American military presence in Afghanistan (Cogan,1993,76).

Moreover, the administration’s “two track approach” combining coercion and diplomacy set the withdrawal of Soviet forces on the basis of a compressed timetable as a precondition to a broader settlement.

To all intents and purposes, the administration was attempting to get the Soviets to withdraw at a pace that would leave the PDPA government no time to adapt and would force its ultimate collapse - a point underscored in George Schultz’s memoirs. The administration aimed for an expansive objective (as opposed to the alternative objectives of either a Soviet withdrawal that left the PDPA intact or some form of power sharing arrangement between the PDPA and Mujahedeen). It, however, sought these objectives through comparatively limited means. Of course, avoiding direct confrontation with the Soviets (not to mention the inherent infeasibility of military operations in Afghanistan) may, in this case, serve as a more plausible explanation of the government’s chosen instruments than the need to appeal to the focal point of limited liability. However, a purely systemic explanation would not serve as an explanation of why the administration sought such expansive aims, given its inherently limited means.

Process Tracing

At the level of top down coordination, the administration seems to have applied the logic of absolute security to good effect, with George Schultz responding to initial opposition from the Pentagon to an escalation of the American role in Afghanistan by stating that “unless we hurt the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, they would have no interest in dealing with us elsewhere” – an explicit appeal to the indivisibility of security inherent in the logic of absolute security (Schultz,1993,692).

Notably and more to the point, appeals to absolute security both secured cooperation from the administration's legislative allies, and - when the administration attempted to deviate from this equilibrium - produced vehement pushback from them. For example, following Schultz's suggestion that the withdrawal of the Red Army (regardless of the timetable upon which it withdrew) was a sufficient condition for dubbing American policy in Afghanistan a success, legislative allies such as Senator Charles Wilson and Gordon Humphrey opposed the administration vehemently - arguing that only a rapid and unilateral withdrawal of Soviet forces (rather than the graduated mutual reductions in U.S. and Soviet involvement that Wilson proposed) could amount to a policy success (U.S. Congress, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, 1986, 5).

Similarly, non-government groups such as the Heritage foundation (a think tank which had been one of the most vocal proponents of the Reagan doctrine) vocally opposed any settlement that left the PDPA in charge - arguing that this would amount to a "spheres of influence" agreement with the U.S.S.R. The administration acceded to its allies' stance on the matter, with Schultz eventually pushing for a rapid Soviet withdrawal that would (it was hoped) bring about the Afghan government's collapse - suggesting that it perceived any deviations from the focal point of absolute security as being dangerous to the cohesion of the coalition it had constructed in favour of its policy.

At the level of lateral and bottom up coordination, there appears to have been a remarkable lack of dissent around the administration's policies in Afghanistan. While this may, in and of itself, amount to evidence of a policy framed in terms of focal principles securing cooperation from actors with an incentive to oppose the government, the lack of significant debate around the issue makes a positive confirmation of the hypothesis difficult to achieve.

Conclusion

Conclusively, then, the Reagan administration's Grand Strategy, like that of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, was one of preclusive defence. Despite superficial differences, both strategies committed the U.S. to directly defending an expanded perimeter (as opposed to the regional power centric Nixon doctrine) but attempted to achieve this through the use of inherently limited strategic means. Moreover, as I hope to have illustrated, evidence from the domestic debates surrounding the nature of the administration's strategy in both the core and periphery revolved around the recurring themes of absolute security and limited liability, which appear to have played a pivotal role in securing top-down, lateral and bottom up coordination.

Chapter IV

Strategies of Devolved Hegemony

Under conditions of low geopolitical slack and an incentive to focus on butter, leaders have several policy options available to them

- selective retrenchment
- Accommodation/ hedging
- Indiscriminate deterrence
- Selective engagement
- Strongpoint defence
- Bloodletting/bait and bleed

Strongpoint defence, a notion first articulated by George Kennan at the outset of the Cold War, entails selecting particular regional bastions that, either due to their defensive utility or economic value are to be heavily defended while all additional commitments are to be kept to a bare minimum. This vision would have seen the U.S. restrict its commitments to Western Europe, Japan and Latin America above the equator, whilst treating much of mainland Asia as being beyond the remit of the U.S. containment doctrine. Selective retrenchment, by contrast, commits a state to identifying and focusing on core aims, much as Britain rebalanced its armed forces to Western Europe in the build-up to World War I, effectively leaving commitments elsewhere subject to the goodwill of regional powers such as the U.S. and Japan.

Selective engagement, like selective defence, entails an emphasis on great power politics and refocusing on the core rather than the periphery of the international system. The salient difference between the two policies is that while both involve pivoting away from peripheral commitments, selective engagement also entails expanding one's geopolitical footprint at the core - albeit with the assumption that shedding peripheral commitments will still produce overall savings.

Alternatively, a power may choose to accommodate a rival or to ameliorate relations with at least some of its opponents on the international stage. Accommodation could also fit within the rubric of what Mearsheimer (2005) dubs the bait and bleed strategies, which involve accommodating some adversaries to facilitate conflict between them and the state which is deemed to be the most pressing grand strategic challenge.

Finally, we have what has been termed devolved hegemony (Lobell, 2000). This policy attempts to defend or even expand an existing defence perimeter, with the burden shifting to local regional policemen, multilateral institutions and offering low risk support to forces like sub state proxies. The policy typically protects this network of allies by threatening second order change (i.e. indiscriminate and asymmetrical retaliation) should they be targeted - effectively utilising the bluff of disproportionate retaliation in a place of the state's own choosing as a substitute for credible local forces. Britain's somewhat chimerical hope that the threat of strategic bombing of German forces would make its otherwise hollow commitments to the security of East Europe credible during the interwar years, would be an example of such a policy.

It is this combination of maximalist ends and minimalist means that I expect a liberal polity to opt for.

The Grand Strategy of the Nixon/Ford Administrations

The Nixon administration entered office imbued with a conviction, espoused in particular by its new National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, that the central failing of America's engagement with the world was at the conceptual rather than the procedural level. America's woes, this argument held, were not attributable to individual policymakers or the poor execution of grand strategy but to a radically flawed style of articulating policy which had, in Kissinger's formulation, committed the United States to an open ended commitment to the defence of peripheral outposts that exceeded the limits of what domestic opinion and resource constraints would allow whilst simultaneously wedding the U.S. to a rigid ideological conception of its contest with the U.S.S.R.

The Nixon administration, then, entered office convinced that the reintroduction of flexibility into Americas strategic repertoire was the order of the day. As a candidate, Nixon had articulated elements of his planned approach to the world in an article for foreign policy, extolling the values of an opening to China and a speech outlining his “Pentagonal model” of world order, in which five power centres (the U.S., the U.S.S.R, China, Japan and a United Europe) would constitute the pillars of a new security architecture in a strategic framework that actually bore a profound resemblance to the Metternichian system articulated upon the culmination of the Napoleonic wars. The U.S., within this framework, would play the more restrained role of a “pivotal power” as opposed to a bastion of containment in a bipolar world. To this end, the administration determined that it would be necessary to incorporate both the U.S.S.R. and China into the present international order and induce them to accept the grammar of a relationship based on limited competition coupled with an acceptance of the legitimacy of the status quo, broadly defined. Simultaneously, Kissinger argued, the U.S. would more clearly define its central interests on the world stage whilst liquidating or reducing its commitments to peripheral interests. The world, it appeared, was finally to see the articulation of a foreign policy akin to Kennan’s original conception of containment in which the U.S. restricted its military aims to the defence of vital industrial strongpoints whilst dealing with the Communist and non-Communist powers of Asia with a degree of flexibility, if not quite equidistant - mirroring the way in which Great Britain would pirouette between alliance partners in the 19th century. Indeed, Kennan would dub Kissinger one of the few people who possessed a sound understanding of the doctrine of containment.

However, despite drawing a clear distinction between its own practice and that of previous administrations, the Nixon grand strategy effectively reflected the grand strategy of the Eisenhower administration, which had inherited power under a similar constellation of low geopolitical slack and a strong domestic preference for butter over guns.

Despite the differences between Eisenhower and Dulles, who portrayed the Communist bloc as a dangerous monolith and framed the Cold War in Manichean terms and the more nuanced

worldview of Nixon and Kissinger, both administrations' grand strategies revolved around three core elements, namely:

- 1) The defence of both central and peripheral interests: Notwithstanding an espoused desire to avoid peripheral commitments, Nixon and Kissinger quickly found themselves committed to the focal point of absolute security and like Eisenhower and Dulles, resorted to the expedient of trying to create regional power blocs to allow the U.S. to manage regional contingencies indirectly (thereby satisfying the criterion of limited liability). While Eisenhower and Dulles would rely mainly on regional pacts such as the Baghdad Pact and SEATO which aimed to lock colonial powers such as Britain and France into the roles of regional policemen, Nixon and Kissinger relied on a panoply of regional powers including Iran, South Africa and to a limited degree China, Japan and Indonesia to fulfil this role. While the specific regional proxies chosen varied, clearly the structure of the Nixon Kissinger policy did not differ greatly from that of Eisenhower and Dulles. Indeed, as will be demonstrated, regional policemen were often encouraged to engage in revisionism at the expense of the U.S.S.R. and its regional clients-meaning that the U.S. was often expanding its aims at the grand strategic level even as it selected limited and indirect means to achieve its aims (Funigello, 1988, 221-222).
- 2) Dual containment of both the U.S.S.R. and the PRC: Despite a sea change in the U.S. relations with China during the Nixon and Ford administrations, the U.S. remained as committed to the defence of Taiwan and the containment of Chinese power as the Eisenhower administration, often despite the evident desire of both Nixon and Kissinger to move forward with relations with the PRC at the expense of Taiwan. Domestic conditions ensured that the U.S. would pursue a policy of simultaneously attempting to co-opt the PRC as a regional policeman, even as it remained committed to the continued existence of the ROC. Similarly, despite a stated desire to create a stable structure of peace vis a vis the U.S.S.R. settlements at the core of the international system such as SALT I, the CSCE and the MBFR agreements were seen not as a means of localizing conflict or transcending the Cold War, but as a means of preventing the U.S.S.R. from pursuing both central and peripheral adventures - in effect amounting to a policy of binding which, pace Trubowitz (2011) I classify as cheap revisionism which allowed the U.S. a veto over Soviet policy utilizing means that were limited at the grand strategic level. Indeed, the Nixon administration would, despite its better inclinations, find itself linking

détente to Soviet cooperation on a wide range of issues including both peripheral expansion in areas such as Angola and Soviet policies in its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe (Nixon,1972,231). It was, in large measure, the high expectations that were set of détente (which was treated less as an instrument of stability and cooperation on clearly delineated core issues and more as a means of obtaining Soviet acquiescence to American policy over virtually every issue area) that would lead to domestic disillusionment with the policy in later decades (Morgan,1994,58) .

- 3) The use of nuclear weapons as a deterrent of final resort in both central and peripheral disputes: In spite of a longstanding interest in limiting the use of nuclear weapons in wartime as a means of rationalizing their use, Kissinger was quickly forced to come to terms with the fact that even limited nuclear options necessitated the use of force at levels that would, in all likelihood, escalate to the level of general nuclear warfare. In fact, Kissinger is on record as incredulously querying “are you mad, this is a limited option?” after being informed by the JCS of plans to utilize 200 nuclear warheads in the event of a Soviet invasion or Iran. Nonetheless, the Nixon administration would substantially lower the thresholds for nuclear first use, particularly after the articulation of the Schlesinger doctrine which envisioned the use of limited nuclear options. In light of the administration’s acceptance of the rather flimsy divide between limited options and escalation to massive retaliation, however, this amounted to a de facto policy of using the threat of massive nuclear retaliation to deter both conventional and nuclear threats across an extended periphery. Indeed, Kissinger’s use of worldwide nuclear alerts to deter a Soviet intervention in the Yom Kippur war would directly mirror Eisenhower and Dulles’ response to the Quemoy Matsu crisis (Lewis,1980,).

What started out as an effort to transcend the logic of containment and establish a great power condominium marked by limited competition and a broad acceptance of shared rules of the road akin to the Congress of Vienna quickly became a second iteration of “containment on the cheap” (Starr,1984,5)(Gaddis,2005,294-295). In essence, as D. Litwak notes, there was a fundamental tension between détente and the Nixon doctrine, which sought to maintain and indeed, advance the U.S. security perimeter on the cheap (Litwak,1984).

How, then, did the nuanced vision of Nixon and Kissinger give way to a policy that I dub collective security (which might also, pace Lobell, be described as devolved hegemony) that

committed the U.S. to indiscriminate defence of an extended perimeter whilst also forcing it to rely on the unreliable services of regional partners to achieve these aims at a limited cost? In order to trace the evolution of the Nixon/ Kissinger grand strategy (which was continued by the administration of Gerald Ford which, in light of its brevity, is treated as an extension of the Nixon administration) we must first examine the policy options left open to Nixon by the conditions of systemic and domestic slack under which he operated before demonstrating how the need to adhere to the focal points of absolute security and limited liability compelled the administration to adopt a grand strategy that, despite some notable differences, largely mirrored that of Eisenhower and Dulles.

Systemic and Domestic Constraints

The Nixon administration assumed power acutely aware of the fact that it had inherited a country that was both economically and politically fatigued by a combination of the interminable war in Vietnam and a combination of stagflation and a twin deficits crisis that had characterized the American economy in the latter part of Johnsons tenure in office, with the concomitant effect of low private savings and a decline of investments from 10 to 6 percent of the GDP (Dallago,2012,13) .

Simultaneously, the U.S. was, for the first time, facing a U.S.S.R. that had attained strategic parity and, in some areas, superiority to it after having embarked on a military build-up of mammoth proportions under the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev. Obviously, then, the Nixon administration faced conditions of lower geopolitical slack than had any previous cold war administration.

Domestically, the Nixon administration had to cope with two trends that broadly inclined it towards an orientation towards butter over guns. Firstly, the median voter was generally predisposed towards the idea that, should the administration make good on its promises to draw down the war in Vietnam, the country was entitled to a “peace dividend” in the form of reduced military spending and a greater emphasis on domestic welfare (Ippolito,2015,20).

Nixon's own political coalition was split between fiscally orthodox Republicans such as Robert Taft, who insisted upon deficit cutting measures and the voters whom he won in traditional Democratic bastions in the South of the country who favoured the retention (at the very least) of high levels of military spending alongside the broader social programmes initiated by Democratic Presidents. Nixon's own preference does appear to have been initially geared towards the slashing of social programs to cut deficits, but a combination of Democratic opposition and a generally antimilitary national mood effectively foreclosed all options other than the retention (and in some cases expansion) of existing domestic programmes, whilst engaging in cuts to the defence budget to placate both fiscal conservatives within his own party and his Democratic opposition. The new bastions of the Republican party would be placated in the area of domestic policies regarding the jurisdiction of the federal government, rather than in the realm of fiscal policy.

Nixon quickly recognized that his coalitional interests favoured investment in butter over guns and therefore, initiated a policy of fiscal Keynesianism that would survive after him into the Ford administration. Under the aegis of this policy shift, the Federal Government initiated programmes such as the guaranteed annual income and presided over levels of discretionary spending by the Federal Government that actually exceeded those of the Johnson era (Gould,2014,100). While the subsequent Ford government would resist fresh spending initiatives and resisted calls to respond to the oil crises of the 1970s with efforts to spur demand, it retained the basic fiscal framework that it had inherited from Nixon's administration (Hibbs,1987,272).

In order to offset the costs of this emphasis on domestic welfare, it was assumed that defence spending would have to be slashed, with Secretary of Defence Melvin Laird and Henry Kissinger estimating that the defence budget would have to be cut at a rate of about four percent a year to reach politically acceptable levels (Hunt,2014). To be sure, Nixon's administration did fight a dogged rear-guard battle to defend certain defence programmes from Congressional Democrats and did, despite its cuts, retain defence spending at pre-Vietnam levels.

Nonetheless, the bulk of additional discretionary spending was targeted largely at domestic welfare, while the retention of pre Vietnam budgets must be considered in the context of a world in which the U.S.S.R.'s defence budgets were rising at a rate of 6 percent a year - which meant that these levels of spending did not buy the U.S. military preponderance in a way that they arguably had under Kennedy and Johnson (Harrison,2003,9-11).

Thus, I code the Nixon administration as one that was operating under conditions of low geopolitical slack with a domestic preference for butter over guns. For an administration working under such conditions, Trubowitz (2011) identifies several plausible grand strategic equilibria-appeasement, external balancing and buck passing. To this list, I add the options of a condominium (Dueck,2006) and collective security (or *pace lobell*, devolved hegemony).

While there might appear to be superficial similarities between elements of devolved hegemony and external balancing (such as the use of allies) the distinction between the two is that external balancing involves an alliance or entente with a second power with the purpose of checking a rival's military power. In other words it is a tool of power aggregation. This typically involves a mutual commitment to aid one's allies in the event of war but does not involve utilizing allies to check both central and peripheral threats. Moreover, external balancing typically entails allying with another great power (to aggregate power) rather than with a regional middle power (which typically acts as a client rather than an ally).

Devolution is distinguished from external balancing both by the scope of the responsibilities one attempts to bring one's partners to fulfil and by the level of control one feels the need to exert over a partner's policy.

Similarly, a condominium is distinguished from appeasement inasmuch as it involves an effort to delineate and respect spheres of influence, as opposed to unilateral concessions by one party.

Nixon's administration had, in theory, recourse to almost all of the options outlined above (with the exception of external balancing which was precluded by the absence of great powers comparable to the U.S. and U.S.S.R.). The U.S. could have retreated to a version of

the strongpoint model, effectively parsing down the number of commitments that it was obliged to defend internationally - a policy that would have fit the McDonald and Parent's (2011) definition of retrenchment. Alternatively, it could have exploited the Sino-Soviet rift to pursue a policy of buck passing vis a vis China. In the Mearsheimer (2001) formulation, this would involve improving relations with one's opponent (in this case the U.S.S.R.) whilst maintaining cool relations with the buck catcher (the PRC).

To be sure, this approach involved certain risks (for example, the prospect of a quick Soviet victory) but also offered substantial inducements – essentially the prospect of the PLA, in pursuit of its doctrine of people's war, engaging the Red Army in an unconventional battle on a massive scale, the outcome of which would have not just seriously undermined the U.S.S.R. militarily, but would all but expunge the possibility of Soviet adventurism in any other theatre.

Finally, there existed the options of selective appeasement (looking with equanimity on peripheral Soviet gains in places such as Angola and Yemen which, if anything, amounted to albatrosses for the U.S.S.R. in any case) or a great power condominium recognizing the Soviets as a great power and engaging in duopolistic management of the periphery in the manner that Brezhnev envisioned during the Yom Kippur War.

Instead, the U.S.' chosen strategy which mixed elements of devolution, binding and deterrence to defend an extended perimeter from both the U.S.' main rival, but also from subsidiary threats (for example the enduring commitment to Taiwan, aimed at the PRC). The outcome, then, amounted to a grand strategy which effectively aimed at maintaining or even expanding America's commitments at the grand strategic level, whilst relying on an instrumental shift in favour of a limited liability approach at the grand strategic level to adhere to the focal point of limited liability.

In Earl Ravenall's words, "The balance promised in the new security policy is achieved - but not by adjusting our commitments, restricting our objectives or modifying our conception of the United States. Rather, budgetary stringencies inspire....rationalizations that stipulate a reduced threat, count heavily on subsidized and coerced allied efforts at self-defence and suggest an early nuclear reaction if our calculations prove insufficiently conservative"- to put it succinctly, the Eisenhower redux (Ravenal,1971,1).

In the following sections, this chapter will articulate the ways in which this grand strategy manifested itself in the key theatres of East Asia, the Middle East and Europe, as well as in several peripheral theatres such as South Asia and Sub Saharan Africa and will demonstrate how both the grand strategic outcome and the domestic bargaining that produced it, adheres to the predictions of my model.

East Asia

In East Asia, the Nixon administration confronted three interrelated problems.

First, the administration had to confront the challenge of negotiating an American withdrawal from the Vietnam war (a campaign pledge that had played no small role in winning Nixon his election) whilst coping with seismic changes in the structure of regional power both within the Communist bloc, where a festering Sino-Soviet split had erupted into full blown clashes on the Ussuri River - signalling a permanent rift in the once seemingly solid Sino-Soviet bloc. Simultaneously, the region had seen the revival of Japan as an economic (if not a militarily) great power, as well as the emergence of regional powers such as Indonesia.

The administration's response to these challenges broadly evinced a grand strategy of collective security. In Vietnam, it placed a dual emphasis on shifting political and military liability for the war into the hands of the South Vietnamese government via the process of Vietnamization as well as the use of both limited military force (primarily in the form of airpower) and the threat of escalation, including potential nuclear escalation. This pressure was applied to coerce the North Vietnamese into making a series of concessions on the status of the South Vietnamese government and the NVA's own presence in the South. Simultaneously, the Nixon and Ford administrations would pursue the normalization of relations with China with the stated aim of engaging in a triangular diplomatic relationship between the U.S., the PRC and the U.S.S.R. that would see the U.S. adopt an equidistant position between the two states and, by extension, utilize relations with each state as a restraint upon the other.

This triangular relationship, however, would quickly give way to a tilt in the direction of China in the form of a tacit security condominium that under Ford, would assume the elements of an explicit entente - with the U.S. commencing the sale of dual use technology to China, amongst other things. China, then, would quickly assume the status of a regional policeman even as the Nixon administration felt compelled to oppose both the opposition of Taiwan from the U.N. and to explicitly commit itself to Taiwan's continued existence. Nixon and Kissinger laboured to escape the domestic strictures that forced them to assume these liabilities and effectively forced them into a de facto policy of dual containment.

Finally, in line with the doctrine that Nixon would articulate on Guam, regional powers such as Japan and South Korea were pushed to contribute more to their respective defences. Japan was nudged to expand the MSDF in order to better provide the ASW capabilities needed to patrol the Okean straits, even as U.S. troop levels were reduced to pre-1960 levels. Negotiations regarding the control of Okinawa commenced, while the U.S. forward deployed force in South Korea was downsized even as (in line with the Nixon doctrine) military aid to the South Korean army was increased so as to create indigenous military capabilities (Carpenter, Bandow, 2004, 14) (Dian, 2014, 214).

Cumulatively, this amounted to a policy of defending existing commitments such as South Vietnam and even expanding the U.S. perimeter in some areas (as in China which, as A. Scobell and A. Nathan note, was tacitly shielded by American extended deterrence) (Nathan, Scobell, 2012).

However, the political exposure of the U.S. to actually defending its newfound commitments, coupled with its liability in military terms was, if anything, reduced as both regional powers and local clients were enjoined to sustain the task of containing the U.S.S.R. - amounting to a policy of absolute security coupled with limited liability at the grand strategic level which is an outcome broadly consistent with my model.

Vietnam

When Nixon and Kissinger inherited the Vietnam war, they had three feasible options to pursue – namely:

A unilateral declaration that the U.S. had fulfilled its obligations vis a vis the South

An acceptance of North Vietnam's ten point peace plan which, with the exception of the formation of a coalition government in the South, the U.S. would largely find itself accepting later in the conflict. This outlined a modified version of the ten point plan sans an explicit betrayal of the Thieu government but accepting principles such as the retention of Northern forces in the South and an attempt to maintain Vietnam as a viable enclave (Kissinger, 1969, 1-10).

Consistent with my model's predictions, the administration opted for the third choice (which was consistent with a policy of indiscriminate defence) even as it attempted to shift the burden of the war to the South. While in theory, this could be presented as a policy that any leader might choose should it be deemed feasible (insofar as no country desires setbacks for its allies), a purely state centric explanation becomes harder to sustain in light of the fact that Kissinger privately questioned the viability of the South Vietnamese state, declaring that buying a "decent pause" was the central objective of American policy (Hahnimaki, 2003, 160). Indeed, R. Holbrooke went so far as to argue that "we could have gotten the same deal [that the U.S. would settle for] any time after 1968".

Even if we accept the argument of figures such as Dueck (2010) who argue that, in the absence of Watergate and the subsequent collapse of trust between the executive and legislative, Nixon could have, in fact, succeeded in bolstering South Vietnam into a self-sufficient enclave sans U.S. troops - the fact that estimations of Vietnam's prospects for survival were so dim did not make the course taken an obvious one in 1969. Nor can the policy be easily explained by the arguments offered by Mesquita and Silversson (2013) - that Democratic leaders felt the need to gamble for redemption, given the costs of initiating a losing war inasmuch as Nixon did not initiate the war in Vietnam.

At the same time, however, Nixon would eschew the most provocative (albeit militarily feasible) escalatory options at his disposal - instead opting for an approach that would limit liability at the grand strategic level even as his political objectives paralleled, in many ways, those of the Johnson administration. Central to this was a heightened emphasis of CORDS (Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support) as a platform upon which to launch the process of “Vietnamization”, whereby responsibility for the conventional defence and internal security of the South would be handed over to the Vietnamese. While General C. Abrahms had initiated parts of this policy already, Nixon would elevate it to the level of an overall strategic approach to Vietnam, as well as a template for future engagements on the global periphery (Johnson,1970,629-640).

Simultaneously, Nixon would escalate bombing campaigns against the North with operation Linebacker II, which was both larger in scale than its predecessors under Johnson and targeted both civilian and military targets - marking a shift to a more direct and less symbolic approach (Pape,1994,174-180). Nixon would also approve escalations such as the mining of Haiphong harbour, which had been eschewed by Johnson not least of all due to the international ramifications of targeting incoming ships from other Communist states (Schoon,2016,60).

More importantly, Nixon took pains to stress to the North Vietnamese, via third party interlocutors, that these bombings might well be the start of a series of massive escalations that could very well end with escalation to the nuclear level. However, Nixon abstained from options such as the planned “Duck Hook” operations that would have seen the U.S. engage in the actual use of tactical nuclear weapons as well as substantially larger conventional raids to effect battlefield success and force the North to the negotiating table. The escalation, then, was largely symbolic and amounted to a limited liability approach at the strategic level geared towards deterring the North from further escalation rather than achieving battlefield success - in effect a complement to the indirect approach Nixon had chosen at the grand strategic level inasmuch as it was meant to buy time for Vietnamization (Michel,2002,233).

Finally, Nixon would escalate the war into Cambodia and Laos - targeting Viet Cong command outposts in both these countries in the hope of decapitating the command structure of

the Viet Cong. This approach, which involved an escalation of the use of ground forces, is not congruent with my model but, as I will demonstrate later, saw substantial opposition coalesce around the focal point of limited liability and forced the administration to a more indirect policy of material support for the Lon Nol government that had taken power in Cambodia (Shaw,2005).

Nixon and Kissinger would attempt to limit liability at the grand strategic level by pursuing a policy of issue linkage vis a vis Moscow - linking a series on summits over arms control to Soviet cooperation in attempting to restrain its Vietnamese ally and compel it to participate in negotiations without preconditions (Keininger,2016,81).

Cumulatively, the emphasis placed on not just maintaining the regime in the South but forcing the NVA to withdraw from existing positions whilst relying largely (though not exclusively) on burden shifting to local allies and deterrence by the threat of massive retaliation broadly coheres with my model's predictions. The emphasis on absolute security and limiting liability at the grand strategic level forced the administration into pursuing broader aims than it could hope to achieve with the diminishing means at its disposal through largely non-credible deterrent threats and an effort to build up the ARVN into a credible military force.

The Opening to China

Perhaps the most notable legacy of Nixon and Kissinger's tenure in office was the opening to China and its transformation into what Chinese leaders jokingly dubbed "NATO's sixteenth member". As mentioned earlier, the prospect of being the leader to effect a historic resumption of relations with the PRC had clearly enamoured Nixon prior to his assumption of office and one of his first foreign policy directives to Kissinger and the NSC was to produce a series of options for reformulating the American approach to China (Dallek,2007,84).

The approach that Kissinger envisioned, framed China as a potential regional partner in checking Soviet revisionism, even as the U.S. pursued détente vis a vis the U.S.S.R. – in effect allowing it to play a preponderant role as the power that held the balance between the two Communist behemoths even as it withdrew offshore from its Asian commitments. While this

might seem an obvious response to relative decline (and certainly amounted to a rational policy choice) the U.S. possessed at least several other policy options that it could have pursued vis a vis China within the context of the systemic and domestic circumstances that it faced.

First, as had been discussed earlier, the U.S. could have pursued a policy of buck passing vis a vis the PRC. Such a policy would have seen the U.S. engage in détente vis a vis the stronger power (in this case the Soviets) even as it cooled relations with the buck catcher (Mearsheimer,2001,158). While one risk of such a strategy was that the U.S.S.R. might prevail rapidly and costlessly over the PRC by virtue of the sheer weight of its nuclear preponderance, the U.S. had several mechanisms with which to restrict any conflict between the two powers to the conventional level. For example, over the course of the 1970s, the U.S.S.R. would float several proposals suggesting that the two superpowers consult one another before the use of nuclear weapons in any context - even going so far as to suggest formalising such a condominium in the form of a treaty on the Prevention of Nuclear War signed in 1973, which stipulated that the great powers would both refrain from using nuclear weapons against each other and would consult with one another regarding the use of nuclear weapons against a third party (Goh,2005,487). When Nixon received a private query from Soviet leaders regarding the stance of the U.S. in the event of a Sino Soviet conflict, he possessed the option of responding that the U.S. would assume a position of neutrality but could not retain this position in the event of nuclear first use by either power - as opposed to his actual position which essentially, was that the U.S. would not remain aloof from any Sino Soviet conflict (Kissinger,2011,569) . Moreover, it is likely that even in the event of a disarming first strike, China possessed the second-strike capacity to devastate several major Soviet population centres. Finally, given the PLA's doctrine of people's war - effectively eschewing direct confrontation with the Red Army in favour of large-scale unconventional warfare in the mould of its conflict with the Japanese and KMT in the 1940s, it is unclear whether the Red Army's conventional superiority and advantages in battlefield nuclear weapons would have induced it to avoid an extraordinarily taxing campaign comparable in character to its later Afghan debacle. A second alternative to the policy that Nixon and Kissinger adopted would have been a policy of remaining aloof from the PRC without necessarily trying to encourage a Sino-Soviet clash.

When reviewing U.S. policy vis a vis China in the 1980's, Paul Wolfowitz would question several of the core assumptions that undergird it - namely that China was a valuable regional ally and a restraint on the U.S.S.R. The PLA could, Wolfowitz claimed, defend China effectively from a massive Soviet assault but, given its conventional weaknesses, it could not carry out offensive operations vis a vis the Soviet Union, nor did it have the expeditionary capabilities to operate effectively on its Asian periphery (a fact that the 1979 war with Vietnam would lay bare). Consequently, even if China could maintain its sovereignty in the face of a hostile U.S.S.R., it could not "tie down" large Soviet forces (a task that required offensive capabilities that China did not possess) nor could it act as a regional policeman in East Asia.

The Nixon administration, then, could have as easily left China and the U.S.S.R. in static opposition to one another, insofar as the latter added little to the substantive capabilities of the U.S. defence system (Tucker,2009,154). Hence, it is unclear whether an opening to China was the only viable choice available to Nixon.

A second empirical puzzle is the form that the opening took. On the one hand, Nixon and Kissinger envisioned China's role not merely as tying down parts of the Red Army and by extension, easing the conventional balance in Europe but rather as a regional surrogate that might play a role that the U.S. could not for domestic reasons, in peripheral conflicts both in and outside its region. For example, the PRC was encouraged to supply arms to Pakistan during the 1971 Indo-Pakistani war and, in a meeting with Kissinger, Ambassador Hung Sen was later enjoined to deploy forces on the Sino-Indian border to act as a restraint on India (Kissinger,1971,2) (Garver,2016,313). Similarly, China was encouraged to play a balancing role in far off peripheral conflicts such as the Angolan Civil war, where the Nixon and Ford administrations encouraged Chinese arms supplies to the MPLA.

Accordingly, China's role as a regional surrogate can only be viewed through the lens of the concept of absolute security, whereby the administration felt the need to be able to respond to both central and peripheral threats in an era where the capacity to intervene directly was heavily constrained.

A second aspect of the Sino American rapprochement that cannot be easily explained (except through the lens of a domestic commitment to defending both central and peripheral partners) is the administration's reticence to abandon Taiwan. Despite a recognition that Taiwan was of peripheral geopolitical value, the Nixon administration felt compelled to support a Two China policy at the U.N. and to negotiate for a vaguely worded Shanghai Communique that recognized that parties on both sides of the Taiwan Straits recognised Taiwan to be a part of China but did not commit the U.S. to a stance on the issue and, implicitly, left the American commitment to Taiwan intact - effectively committing the administration to a policy of dual containment despite itself (Garver,2015,100).

Finally, despite Kissinger's desire to keep the relationship between China and the U.S. tacit and to maintain a position of equipoise in the great power triangle, domestic pressure would (paradoxically given the hostility to losing ground in Taiwan) force the U.S. into an ever more explicit relationship with the PRC culminating with the Ford administration approving the sale of dual use computer technology to the PRC and open efforts to encourage NATO allies such as Britain to sell military equipment to it - thereby convincing Brezhnev that the U.S. was leaning towards China and transforming the great power triangle into two rigid camps in which China was an ever more explicit feature of containment even as relations with the U.S.S.R. soured (Coyer,2013,203). Despite Kissinger's attempts to transcend the logic of bipolar containment, the outcome of the opening to China reflected precisely this logic.

It is worth noting that even as the U.S. military perimeter was tacitly extended to include China, the U.S. retained no effective conventional capacity with which to intervene in a Sino-Soviet conflict, leading Kissinger to explore the threat of limited nuclear options or of massive worldwide nuclear alerts as a substitute for conventional forces - effectively using massive retaliation as a means of shoring up hollow military commitments (Terriff,1995,86).

The approach to China is, then, congruent with my model which predicts that under such circumstances , the U.S. should pursue indiscriminate defence at the grand strategic level even as it shifts burdens to allies and partners to limit its grand strategic liabilities.

Process Tracing - The formulation of the Administration's Policy Towards Vietnam And China

Vietnam

Top Down Coordination

Nixon initially envisioned a far more aggressive approach to bringing the Vietnamese to the negotiating table than the one which he eventually subscribed. Indeed, both he and Kissinger agreed to the Duck Hook plan (which would have culminated in the use of tactical nuclear weapons)(Kimball, 1998,164). The plan was eventually dropped after, amongst other things, a substantial intra administration debate with Secretary of Defence Melvin Laird and Secretary of State William Rogers, who both argued that the envisioned approach would fissure domestic support by creating the image of an administration that was escalating the war - providing straw in the wind evidence that appeals to limited liability played a role in the administration's eventual policy choices (Kimball, 1998,164). It is noteworthy, by contrast, that Laird and Rogers' opposition to policies that could be framed as limited and compatible with Vietnamization, was substantially less successful; both men opposed the mining of the Haiphong harbour and the Linebacker II air raids, for example (Randolph,2007,130).

Nixon's attempts to escalate the war to Cambodia, by contrast, saw him initially agree to Laird's objections that liability must be limited; Nixon wished for the ARVN to lead the charge, but eventually decide that U.S. troops would play a key role in the incursions (Hunt,2015,130-161). This result is dissonant with my model's predictions and might be attributable to the fact that Nixon's exaggerated belief that the U.S. would achieve a politically galvanizing victory by destroying the COSVN headquarters made him willing to run the risk of breaking with the focal point of limiting liability. In any case, the fallout from this decision both in terms of intra administration dissent and clashes with the administration's opponents does indicate that, as per my theory, diverging from a focal strategy imposed costs on the administration.

Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that Nixon was sufficiently wary of the risks of breaking with strategic cultural traditions to compromise with Laird and Rogers - particularly in light of the fact that he and Kissinger showed a willingness to circumvent opposition on a number of issues rather than compromising via an integrative negotiating strategy. Indeed, Nixon explicitly noted that the political risks of not convincing Laird and Rogers effectively ruled out the Duck Hook operations (Ladley,2007,31). Hence, this constitutes smoking gun evidence; the need to adhere to convention to secure cooperation was a primary motivating factor in framing the administration's subsequent emphasis on limiting liability.

With regards to the focal point of absolute security, the administration seemed to show broad cohesion around the concept, with Nixon insisting that a withdrawal could not be bought at the expense of abandoning an ally (even a peripheral one) and even administration sceptics such as Laird repeating these claims, whilst defending both the Vietnamization programme and the Linebacker missions before the Senate.

Similarly, the administration rallied around the focal point of absolute security when defending the continuation of aid to the Lon Nol regime in Cambodia, despite intra administration dissent on the matter (Hughes,2015,59). Correspondingly, continued funding for the war effort was defended by Laird by linking the continuation of funding to troop withdrawals and progress in the creation of a competent ARVN (Van Atta,2008,179).

Legislative allies of the administration were similarly able to rally to the arguments surrounding absolute security, so long as the criterion of limited liability was also satisfied by the administration. For example, Senator Dole was able to rally support to shoot down several amendments that would have restricted the funds made available to prop up local allies in Vietnam and Cambodia,

By repeating Nixon's arguments regarding peace with honour, coupled with a defence of the policies on the basis of their limited costs (Volle,2010,169). However, even the administration's legislative allies were mute after the invasion of Cambodia and found themselves incapable of rallying effectively against the Cooper-Church amendment which limited the administration's capacity to use ground forces (although, notably, the

administration and its allies were able to alter parts of the amendment that referred to airpower and military aid) (Haley,1982,30)

Similarly, the administration's extra governmental allies (such as conservative oriented media outlets) rallied to defend policies such as Vietnamization and the Christmas bombings (but not, notably, acts such as the ground invasion of Cambodia) by similar appeals to absolute security and limited liability. Indeed, outlets such as the national review, which offered full throated support of a continued commitment to Vietnam that shifted the onus of the warfighting onto the ARVN, were notably silent regarding the ground invasion of Cambodia (Mergel,2010,46). Clearly, appeals to focal principles secured intra coalition cohesion whereas those strategies of the administration that did not pay heed to these principles did not - in effect satisfying my criteria for a hoop test.

Moreover, conversations between Nixon and Laird would later evince a general agreement that, while Laird had been right regarding Cambodia, operations such as the Linebacker raids and aid to Lon Nol should be continued insofar as, in the event of Congress closing off these options, the administration and its allies would find it easy to rally around the focal point of absolute security to blame the opposition for "losing another country to Communism" - in effect shifting the ball to the Democrats' court and allowing the administration and its allies to rally around the focal point of absolute security (Hughes,2015,50).

Lateral Coordination

To effect lateral coordination between the administration and its legislative adversaries, the Nixon leadership made a number of attempts to use the focal principles of absolute security and limited liability as a heresthetical device with which to cleave Democratic opposition asunder. For instance, in his addresses to the Symington subcommittee, he framed his approach to Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos as being qualitatively different from that of Johnson arguing that his aid-based approach was "...requested, it is supportive and defensive" (Hunt,2015,182).

Equally, he would appeal to the focal point of absolute security with the familiar argument that the U.S. global credibility hinged on its ability to defend far flung outposts and opining that “if the world sees the world’s most powerful nation, the United States acting like a pitiful, helpless giant, the forces of totalitarianism and anarchy will threaten free nations and institutions around the world” (Bochin,1990,61).

The administration’s appeals had the desired effect, with Congress even going so far as to pass an early resolution endorsing the President’s war strategy.

The success of such appeals to absolute security and that the administration could secure the region at a limited cost was sufficient to cause enough conservative Democrats to break ranks with their party over the wording of the Cooper-Church amendment and force the amendments proposers to reword it so as to unequivocally exclude both airpower and military aid from its remit (Haley,1982,31). Congress also passed the Griffin amendment which explicitly endorsed the right of the President to expand U.S. war aims in the region as long as he was able to secure foreign troops who would bear the military burden on the behalf of the U.S. (leading to the amendment being disparagingly dubbed the “Mercenary Bill”). Even generally unpopular actions such as the Christmas bombings (which triggered mass public opposition, particularly among students) saw muted Congressional opposition.

By contrast, the use of ground forces in Cambodia saw Congressional opposition rally around the focal point of limited liability, with opponents arguing that Nixon was bogging the U.S. down deeper in the Indochinese quagmire. The political firestorm that followed the use of ground troops was substantial enough to ensure the revocation of the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, as well as paving the way for the passage of the Cooper-Church amendment, even though dogged rear-guard action by the Republicans saw the latter hollowed out (Zeisberg,2010,189).

The fact that an opposition that had clear electoral incentives to capitalise on public dissent to challenge the administration was nonetheless unable to effectively coordinate its obstruction is evidence sufficient to pass my hoop test. To be sure, it is possible to explain this phenomenon through the logic of a framing argument (whereby Democratic opponents were actively convinced) or as evidence that conservative Democrats were ideationally closer to the Republicans than their own party.

However, if ideological hawkishness were a sufficient basis for explaining the outcome, the fact that conservative Democrats rallied with their party after the ground invasion of Cambodia is difficult to explain. Nor could we explain the outcome through the lens of a genuine belief in both focal principles (and a concomitant framing effect) because initial efforts at curtailing the executive (such as the Cooper-Church amendment) had shown little interest in whether the executive's means were limited or not and only gave way after consistent Republican appeals to strategic cultural principles.

Moreover, the framing argument is substantially weakened both by the testimony of figures within and outside the administration. Nixon, for example, would later remark that the reason he had foregone the Duck Hook operation was not that he feared that the opposition was intrinsically opposed to such an escalation, but because the timeframe of six months between the initial operations and the first signs of political progress would give the opposition too much time to rally around the focal point of limited liability by arguing that the administration was dragging the U.S. deployment out (Ladley, 2007, 31). If purely ideational opposition was an issue, Nixon should have feared immediate opposition regardless, rather than being more concerned with the time available to the Democrats to rally around a narrative. For his part, Democratic Senator Russell (D-Georgia) seemed to agree that the inability to coordinate around a narrative rather than agreement with the President was the Democrats' main problem, bemoaning the fact that "Someone who comes along and says let's clean this thing up cheaply in six month will, I'm afraid, have a significant advantage over someone who says, let's play this along" (Hughes, 2015, 60).

As such, then, there appears to be sufficient smoking gun evidence to corroborate my theory

Bottom Up Coordination

In terms of bottom up coordination, there does seem to be qualified evidence that figures within the administration framed their preferred policies in terms of limited liability to secure coordination. For example, while the administration was debating whether to escalate its commitment to Vietnam, Laird leaked papers outlining the concept of Vietnamization to columnists Robert Novak and Robert Evans - producing a maelstrom of Congressional

interest in the approach (Van Atta,2008,180). Laird then sent memos to Nixon underscoring the Congressional support as evidence of the inherent utility of the policy- securing bottom up coordination along the way (Van Atta,2008,405). Explicitly presenting his policy as one that would satisfy the administration's need for it, seems to have been a useful tool for Laird in his efforts to secure bottom up coordination.

The Opening to China

Top Down Coordination

While the administration's policy towards China saw little intra administration debate due to Nixon and Kissinger's chosen approach of centralising control of China policy - which left much of the administration at the periphery of the process of normalising relations with China - Nixon and Kissinger did have to obtain the support of the wider coalition that underpinned the administration. Nixon, in particular, displayed considerable wariness of a conservative backlash scuppering his demarche to China and thus made a point of underscoring his record as a "tough negotiator". He particularly stressed the fact that he would not compromise the status of Taiwan - leading to protracted negotiations with the Chinese leadership, which resulted in Nixon secretly promising the PRC that the U.S. would not impede a military takeover of Taiwan by the PLA in return for securing a vaguely worded Shanghai Communiqué. Whether Nixon and Kissinger believed that Taiwan was dispensable or not, the stance they took locked them into a policy of dual containment even as they tried to bring China to play a larger role in its region and beyond.

The appeal to the focal point of absolute security (expanding the U.S. defence perimeter whilst maintaining existing commitments) quickly saw the administration's legislative allies rally to it, with even hawks such as Barry Goldwater praising Nixon. Goldwater exclaimed that "we have not given away one single thing to the Red Chinese" and that 'we will uphold our...commitments to the Taiwan government" (Congress and the Nation,1973,893). Similarly, the Republican manifesto of 1972 portrayed China as a regional ally that would

make it possible for the U.S. to sustain its role in the region at a lower cost, which in effect, appealed to both absolute security (in that the U.S. perimeter was not being pruned) and limited liability (as, it was assumed, a powerful new surrogate would play America's role in the region) (Republican Party Platform, 1972). The administration briskly gained the support of hawkish political allies such as Reagan (who would later abet administration policy over Taiwan) by informing Haldemann to stress the utility of China for making the strategy of global containment workable in an era of shrinking defence expenditures (Ladley, 2002, 150).

Additionally, the administration was forced to defend a Two China policy that it did not internally support due to the fact that a failure to do so would see coalitional fissures develop around the focal point of absolute security with Republicans like Ernst Hollingway warning the administration that a failure to maintain all commitments to Taiwan would leave the administration with a "credibility problem" and that he "did not think the Congress . . . would with the sweep of a hand abandon Taiwan. It wasn't that Taiwan was fundamental to national security. It was our credibility in international affairs that was at stake" (Coyer, 2013, 169).

At the same time, the administration would face pressure from figures within its ranks such as James Schlesinger and Michael Pillsbury, who argued that the commitments made to the PRC should be more concrete and explicit. Both men were, doubtless, unaware of the scale of tacit cooperation between the two nations and in effect, utilized the focal point of absolute security to posit that to more effectively defend and utilize China, the U.S. would have to abandon Kissinger's more subtle triangular diplomacy - a policy Kissinger vehemently opposed but slowly had to acquiesce to under Nixon's successor (Coyer, 2103)

The evidence presented, then, passes my straw in the wind and hoop test arguments- to make his China policy saleable to his own coalition, China had to be framed as more than merely a hedge against Soviet expansion but would also have to be presented as a proxy with which to defend an expanded perimeter even as Nixon (and Ford) found themselves committed to a far more expansive commitment to Taiwan than they had desired producing (despite Nixon and Kissinger's own predilections) within a strategy of devolved hegemony.

In terms of smoking gun evidence that the China policy was chosen to appeal to the focal points of absolute security and limited liability, we have Kissinger's recollection that a buck

passing strategy had been considered feasible but was considered too inflammatory domestically – implying that any Soviet gains vis a vis China would be seen as advantageous to Moscow, regardless of long term benefits that might accrue from them and in effect, suggesting that the administration did rule out buck passing due to its lack of resonance with the focal principle of absolute security (Kissinger,2011)

Lateral Coordination

Congressional interest in an opening to China actually preceded the Nixon administration's ascent. Indeed, one of Nixon's major worries was that figures like Senators Mansfield and Fulbright might upstage him by unilaterally pursuing demarches to China (Mansfield had asked the American journalist Edgar Snow, a confidante of Mao, if he might secure a Chinese visa to travel to the PRC). It therefore appears that both the administration and its rivals had anticipated that an opening to China was the most salient policy to pursue in East Asia and were scrambling to beat each other to securing credit for it - a sequence of events that broadly coheres with the way in which a focal point is supposed to operate in the absence of effective communication.

Indeed, during the latter parts of Johnson's administration Mansfield had suggested that China should be seen not as a powerful and dangerous revisionist state but rather as a weak regional power threatened by Soviet aggression (Mansfield,1975,23). This was particularly notable coming from Mansfield who had previously advocated bombing Manchuria in retaliation for China's continuing support for the NVA - and provides some evidence that the instinctive coordination of the President (himself a politician who had built a reputation for taking a hard line on Communism) and his legislative opponents cannot be explained merely by reference to ideological dovishness in the post-Vietnam era. Of course, figures such as Mansfield may have reframed the world in light of the Vietnam experience but, given their continued opposition to the U.S.S.R. (Mansfield's approach to China, after all, was still shaped by a Manichean view of the Cold War) this seems less probable than an explanation built on the assumption that the focal points of absolute security and limited liability acted in tandem to compel coordination.

Nixon, then, was forced to stress the importance of Taiwan in order to appeal to the focal point of absolute security – reiterating that he was a tougher negotiator than any of his Democratic counterparts and would secure an opening without sacrificing existing commitments - thereby backing himself in a corner from which he could not retreat despite later wanting to (Coyer,2013).

The demarche to China won praise from even staunch opponents of the administration, such as George McGovern and Edward Kennedy, who placed a particular emphasis on the fact that the opening to China had been secured without an abandonment of pre-existing commitments (Sutter,1998,44). However, even Congressional liberals typically opposed any sign of wavering on the commitment to Taiwan - forcing the administration to adopt a Two China policy at the U.N. and, implicitly, continuing a policy of dual containment (Coyer,2013).

Conversely, and paradoxically, the administration's opponents also pushed for a more explicit deepening of the security relationship with China. In this, they found allies within the ranks of the more hawkish members of the administration who had long contended that a greater level of military aid to China would allow the U.S. to avoid the costs of retrenchment in terms of a reduced capacity for intervention along the periphery even as it secured the benefits of a peace dividend.

For example, following the publication of an article by Michal Pilsbury to this effect, a wide range of legislators including Democrats such as Mansfield and liberal Republicans such as Robert Taft, urged the Ford administration to commence the sale of dual use technology and military hardware to China - which the administration eventually obliging by selling dual use weaponry and compelling Kissinger (despite his strenuous objections) to encourage allies to sell military hardware to China Coyer,2013,196)(Pilsbury,1977,125). Furthermore, figures such as Senator Jackson and John Ashbrook urged the administration to secure more substantial Chinese efforts to restrain Hanoi and facilitate the American withdrawal from Vietnam (Congress and the Nation,1973,893-4).

There appears, then, to have been substantial coordination between the administration and its legislative opponents with respect to the opening to China, even as the Democrats sought to outflank the administration by simultaneous appeals to absolute security and limited liability in the form of pressure to maintain Taiwan and urging the Nixon and Ford administrations to make ties with Beijing explicit and to secure substantial Chinese support for U.S. policies.

Smoking gun evidence that the need to adhere to the focal points of absolute security and limited liability is provided by a memo from John Sullivan to Mansfield, in which the latter states that given the administration's ability to argue that an opening to China left it better able to conduct policy in the Asia Pacific at a lower cost was all but unassailable, Congressional opposition should be targeted at the procedure and details of the administration's approach and not the substance. It appears clear that an inability to craft a narrative, as opposed to a lack of desire to oppose the administration, was at the heart of its opponents concerns at the policy's inception and in the following years (Coyer,2013,151).

A second piece of smoking gun evidence is provided by Kissinger, who noted that the importance of utilising China to place pressure on the U.S.S.R. was both a reliable basis for securing coordination and a point that rarely had to be made as it was a tacit assumption that spoke for itself - put succinctly, a focal point (Kissinger,2000,765).

Finally, as has been noted earlier, limited evidence exists for bottom up coordination, in the form of efforts by figures such as Pillsbury and Schlesinger to appeal to absolute security in order to secure a more explicit commitment to the PU.NRC(Coyer,2013,194). The available evidence in this area remains restricted to straw in the wind evidence, however.

It would appear then, that the administration's approach to East Asia and the policymaking process that undergird it are broadly congruent with my model's predictions

The Middle East

The doctrine that Nixon had articulated on Guam had been intended, as Kissinger noted, to provide broad philosophical guidelines for the administration's approach to various parts of the world - guidelines that, implicitly, would have to be adjusted to local realities. Nowhere was the difficulty of doing so more obvious than in the Middle East, where the U.S. faced a seismic shift in the regional landscape. The source of this shift was the abrupt announcement that Britain, no longer financially capable of playing the hegemonic role that it had been accustomed to in the region since the late 19th century, had decided to withdraw east of the Suez. The Wilson government's announcement, coming as it did at the height of the Vietnam war, seemed to open another tear in the fabric of containment even as America grappled with the consequences of its own overstretch, causing a despondent Dean Rusk to implore his British counterparts to "for god's sake, act like Britain" (Fain, 2008, 141). The vacuum left by Britain seemed like precisely the sort of geopolitical shift that the Nixon doctrine was built to accommodate sans an increased American military commitment. Consequently, it was decided that Iran and Saudi Arabia would act as Nixon's regional policemen. In practice, this involved the removal of all restrictions on weaponry that was to be exported to the Shah's regime, with the tacit assumption that the Shah would repay this elevation to the status of a regional hegemon in waiting by suppressing local disturbances on America's behalf and in due time, assuming a role akin to Britain's in the Persian Gulf. Nor, it should be said, did this entail a purely passive conception of containment as the Shah was abetted in his efforts to actively destabilise Soviet regional allies such as Iraq, which he did by supporting a Kurdish uprising under Mullah Barzani. Elsewhere in the Middle East, the explosion of tensions between Israel and Egypt in 1973 would see the administration scramble to exclude the Soviets from the conflict (with Kissinger going so far as to put U.S. nuclear forces on alert worldwide) before utilising Israeli military gains and the U.S. capacity to broker both peace and the return of lands claimed by Egypt prior to the Yom Kippur war to force a realignment of Sadat's Egypt in an act of indirect compellance. Effectively, then, the Nixon administration would utilize regional policemen as an active, rather than a passive tool in conjunction with the (substantively hollow) threat of massive retaliation to contain (and if

possible roll back) Soviet influence - a policy of pursuing absolute security via an indirect approach at the grand strategic level.

Finally, the administration utilized a combination of regional proxies and arms sales to small clients such as Jordan to forestall peripheral changes such as the Syrian intervention in Jordan. Jordan was supplied with emergency sales of F-5 Phantoms (augmented by arms transfers from the Shah in his new capacity as a regional policeman) even as Israel was encouraged to provide the Jordanians with air support (which proved unneeded in any case)-providing a clear example of the Nixon doctrine in action and the administration's success in rationalising the scope of America's commitments with the means at its disposal (Yaqub,2007,43) (Dowty,1984,104).

While the policy that the administration pursued was, on balance, a qualified success, it is not clear that from the vantage point of the Nixon administration when it assumed office this was the only policy equilibrium available. One alternative, floated by the British, was a "dual hands of " policy vis a vis the U.S.S.R. in the Middle East whereby the U.S. would act as an offshore balancer intervening only in the event of Soviet conventional revisionism in the region but otherwise abstaining from intervening in the region - a policy that British policymakers assumed that the Soviets would be willing to go along with both in light of the Brezhnev regimes interest in détente and in light of their incapacity for massive conventional revisionism in the region (Alvandi,2014,34). Such a policy certainly had a good deal to commend it, not least of all the fact that any attempt to create an Iranian regional role was sure to stoke tensions between Iran and the U.S. Arab allies who saw the Shah as a dangerous megalomaniac who was at least as much of a threat to the region as the Soviets (Avandi, 2014,34). Moreover, given Iran's limited capacity for absorbing American technology, it is unclear whether Iran ever had the wherewithal to play the role that Nixon and the Shah had envisioned for it. Additionally, such an offshore balancing role would have been compatible with the notion of a wider détente with the U.S.S.R. Similarly, during the Yom Kippur war, the Brezhnev offer of joint intervention and mediation by the two superpowers would have been compatible with such a grand strategy, inasmuch as the two superpowers would have a duopolistic interest in stabilizing the region (or at least key areas of it).

An alternative policy would have been to build bridges with Arab radicals in the way that the Kennedy administration had. Given the economic dependence of Middle Eastern states on the West, it appears that even radical regimes such as the Libyan regime could (and did) accommodate themselves to a *modus vivendi vis a vis* the U.S. - implying that even a victory for Soviet clients did not seriously jeopardize U.S. access to energy resources in the region- rendering victories for them strategically unimportant, if undesirable.

The Nixon administration's decision to widen American aims in the region even as it relied on an indirect and limited approach at the grand strategic level is an empirical puzzle that this section of the chapter will now examine in greater depth.

American Policy Towards Iran

When Nixon, in a meeting with the Shah, reportedly looked the Iranian monarch in the eye and uttered the words "protect me", his required protection was political rather than military. Militarily, it is unclear whether Iran could defend itself against any Soviet invasion of its territory even with substantial infusions of foreign armaments. To the extent that the security of regional allies such as Iran was secured, it was due to the deterrent threat of some form of U.S. intervention (Kupchan,1987,100). Moreover, it is unclear that such a threat was ever likely to materialise - not least because the Red Army was stretched across several fronts, but also because the logistical difficulties of moving an army through the U.S.S.R.'s southern frontiers into the Middle East made any conventional Soviet armoured thrust into the region implausible, if not impossible (Waltz,1981, 49-55). The Iranians were, upon closer inspection, not an obvious candidate for aid to resist external aggression of the sort that the Nixon Doctrine had promised - inasmuch as such aggression was unlikely and, should it occur, Iranian forces would be of little value regardless of the time spent on building them up.

Despite this, however, the Shah's administration would not only receive substantial military aid from the Nixon administration, but this aid would be geared towards creating a credible conventional force rather than, for example, maintaining internal security. Following the Tehran agreement between Nixon and the Shah, the U.S. had effectively removed credit ceilings on weapons exports to Iran, fuelling a series of expensive purchases that included modern platforms such as the F-15 and AWACS - leading the Shah to proclaim that he had access to anything non-nuclear that the U.S. possessed (McGlynn,2013,856-858).

This policy could only be explained if viewed through the lens of absolute security. Given that it was not merely losses in key areas of the region that perturbed American audiences but Soviet gains in brushfire wars such as the Yemeni civil war, it was necessary to have an expeditionary force capable of intervening in such conflicts. Iran, which in theory, dwarfed its neighbours in both size and power was to be that expeditionary force in lieu of a substantive American commitment with the Shah setting himself the rather grandiose objective of assuming not only Britain's naval role in the Persian Gulf but, eventually, a position in the Indian ocean as well (Alvandi,2014).

The realism of these aims notwithstanding, the existence of an outwardly powerful ally who claimed to be ready to assume the role of Britain in the Gulf, soothed political tensions that might have otherwise risen to the fore in the wake of Britain's withdrawal east of the Suez. As Kissinger would later note, a powerful Shah was a "psychological necessity" for many within the U.S.' policymaking elite (Alvandi,2014,100).

In addition to support for the Shah's military build-up, Nixon and Kissinger would, both tacitly and actively encourage his revisionism vis a vis Iraq (a Soviet client) over the Shatt Al-Arab and would cooperate with the Shah's policy of supplying arms and political support to the Kurdish Peshmarga and its leader Mullah Barzani. As H. Saunders would note -supporting Iranian revisionism was seen as a way of punishing Iraq for its pro Soviet orientation, as well as a means of constraining its capacity to be used as a Soviet proxy in the Middle East. Given the weaknesses of Iraq (which was substantially weaker than Iran) it is unclear whether the risk of it being used as a Soviet proxy in the Middle East was ever substantial. Rather, the administration seemed convinced that even remote risks to regional stability needed to be

pre-empted – and evinced a willingness to use regional allies to both pre-empt such challenges and, where possible compel a reorientation of Soviet clients (a pattern which would be replicated during the Yom Kippur war) (Saunders,1987).

Finally, it should be noted that through the Nixon and Ford administrations, the U.S. would not develop anything akin to the Rapid Deployment Force that Carter raised - which meant that, that despite its substantial material commitments to the region, it's capacity to defend regional allies from conventional assault was in many ways hollow and would require the U.S. to escalate to nuclear first use in the event of a war between a client such as Iran and the U.S.S.R. as Kissinger would discover to his horror from the J.C.S (Kaplan,1983,370-371).

To all intents and purposes, the Nixon approach to Iran mirrored the Eisenhower administration's vision of Britain as a regional power that would suppress local contingencies to whose regional role the U.S. would buttress with the threat of early nuclear first use to obviate the regional ally's weakness vis a vis the U.S.S.R.

It is difficult to explain this choice (not least of all because of the dubious credibility of both the Shah and any American threat to initiate nuclear war over the fate of the Shah) without a consideration of the role that strategic cultural principles played in shaping American decision making. The focal points of absolute security and limited liability were visible not only to the Nixon administration but to the Shah himself who would confidently proclaim to an audience of American legislators that the U.S. had three options - accepting Soviet gains in the Middle East akin to those in Yemen, fighting another local "Vietnam" or supporting him so that he might substitute for an American role.

The Yom Kippur War

In the time leading up to the Yom Kippur War, the administration's policy towards Arab-Israeli relations had been one of effectively maintaining stasis. The administration did float a plan

by Rogers that would have seen Israel make a series of territorial concessions - even though Nixon would later admit he had no intention of forcing concessions upon Israel and largely made the proposal to placate sentiment in the Arab world (Morse,2015,29).

When war did break out, it initially surprised the administration (which had had little basis to conclude that the Egyptians possessed the capacity to launch offensive operations) but the response to the war was quickly subsumed within the general tenets of the administration's overall approach to the region. Consistent with the principle of absolute security, the administration did not seriously consider a joint mediation of the conflict with the Soviets. As William Quandt later noted, this had less to do with the U.S. misunderstanding Brezhnev's offer of joint intervention (which, it has sometimes been claimed, was misperceived as an ultimatum) but rather was born of a desire within the administration to set the limits of acceptable Soviet involvement in the Middle East (Stein, Lebow,1994,237)).

Moreover, the U.S. effectively utilized the threat of nuclear escalation to deter a unilateral Soviet intervention in the war, with Kissinger putting American forces worldwide in a state of heightened alert to forestall this outcome (Scherer,1978,4-5).

Indeed, the U.S. had few conventional alternatives to nuclear first use in the event of a Soviet intervention, since the Soviet 5th Fleet had local superiority over the American Navy in the eastern Mediterranean (Goldstein, Zhukov,2004,).

Aside from forestalling a Soviet intervention, the administration's main challenge was subordinating Israeli military strategy to the U.S.' overall approach to the region which, it was decided, would involve ejecting Soviet influence from Egypt. To this end, after initial Egyptian and Syrian victories gave way to an Israeli counter, Kissinger informed the then Israeli defence minister Moshe Dayan that Israel would continue to receive the resources needed to encircle the Egyptian 3rd army, but that under no circumstances was this force (which Kissinger intended to utilize as a bargaining chip) to be eliminated (Stein,1999,91).

Following this, Kissinger would commence his famous shuttle diplomacy vis a vis Egypt and Syria, promising Sadat both the survival of the Third Army and an eventual Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai in return for an alteration of Egypt's posture vis a vis Israel.

The Sinai II agreements (from which the U.S.S.R. would be entirely absent) would commence a process of Egyptian realignment, which would be further solidified by the sale of military equipment such as the C-130 to Egypt under Ford and would reach its conclusion in the abrogation of the Soviet-Egyptian treaty of friendship in 1976 (Hopf, 1994, 176-180).

While this certainly constituted a tactical victory over the Soviets, it has been noted by R. Litwak (1994) that a willingness to undercut the U.S.S.R. in the periphery even as détente was proceeding in the core of the system gave the Brezhnev regime strong incentives to similarly localise détente and contradicted Kissinger's stated objective of reaching a more broad based understanding with the U.S.S.R. regarding both central and peripheral objectives.

While such a policy was compatible with a doctrine of limited competition, it was incompatible with the vision of détente that Kissinger had publicly espoused, insofar as it gave the Soviets strong incentives to separate stability at the core from peripheral revisionism in places such as Ethiopia and Angola which, in turn, gave domestic critics of détente ammunition enough to dub it a failed policy.

The Nixon/Kissinger approach to the Middle East was, then broadly congruent with my model's predictions. Even as the administration retrenched, it sought to utilize regional allies to defend and even expand a broad defensive perimeter whilst utilising nuclear power as the U.S.' tool of last resort much in the way Eisenhower had combined massive retaliation and Britain as a great power proxy, to stabilise the Western foothold in the Middle East.

Process Tracing - The formulation of Administration Policy Towards the Middle East

Iran Policy

Top Down Coordination

Both Nixon and Kissinger's rhetoric as the U.S.-Iran relationship evolved under them, sought to explicitly underscore the fact that a regional bulwark such as the Shah, made it possible to maintain its grand strategic role as a regional leader, even as it retracted its military commitments globally and made no substantive commitment to filling Britain's role in the Gulf. A commitment to Iran, Kissinger stated, would imply a policy of restatement and renewal, not withdrawal (McGlinchey,2014,74). These arguments were quickly reiterated by bureaucracies sympathetic to the policy, most notably the State Department (McGlinchey,2014,75).

Undersecretary of State Joe Sisco would, at Kissinger's urging, produce a national security memorandum outlining the U.S. options vis a vis Iran which included the British proposal for a dual hands-of policy vis a vis the U.S.S.R. before asserting that only a more expansive relationship with the Shah would maintain regional stability - an assessment that was reiterated by the CIA. While this could reflect genuinely held assumptions, it is unclear whether either the CIA or the State department had seen the Shah as a viable regional partner prior to this, and Sisco (the report's author) had previously espoused a more sceptical view of the Shah's utility.

It seems evident that both agencies instinctively coordinated around the assumption that regional stability (rather than the more minimal goal of the emergence of a regional hegemon) was a primary objective and that a regional ally would be needed to bear the burden of meeting this objective at a limited cost (National Intelligence Estimate,1970,34-70) (NSSM66). To be sure, this may be attributed to the domestic costs of fluctuating oil prices in the event of a conflict in the region, for example, but the fact that the administration expected economic volatility to be included within the remit of national security policy, points to an implicit assumption that absolute security was a focal principle around which to coordinate.

Opponents of the policy such as James Schlesinger, by contrast, were forced to frame their objections in terms of limited liability, with Schlesinger initially objecting to the policy outright, before reframing his objections as pertaining only to the size of the force of uniformed technicians in Iran, rather than the policy per se. The fact that figures within the ruling coalition who objected to the policy were both isolated and outflanked provides weak hoop test evidence to my hypothesis. Although it is true that this could be attributed to Nixon's own insistence on cohesion within the administration, the isolation of Schlesinger and critics within the administration persevered into the more open Ford administration and lends weight to the argument that the lack of a narrative left Schlesinger genuinely isolated (McGlinchey, Moran, 2016, 530).

Clearly, there appears to be qualified evidence that the focal points of absolute security and limited liability facilitated intra administration coordination over Iran policy. Of course, this could also have merely amounted to a reflexive application of the Nixon doctrine, but a more minimalistic policy of supplying Iran with the tools it needed for its domestic security (which was, in any case, a greater source of fragility) would also have been compatible with the Guam doctrine. Clearly, an explanation rooted in strategic culture has greater explanatory value in the case of top down coordination over Iran

Lateral Coordination

There seems to have been little Congressional opposition to Nixon's policies on Iran. This paucity of opposition could, in part, be attributed to the opacity of the administration's policies regarding Iran – since Nixon had utilized Presidential directives to fund military exports to Iran on credit rather than deliver it in the form of military aid, which would have been placed under Congressional oversight.

That said, when Congress did exercise its authority to investigate the scope of the administration's involvement with Iran, objections to the policy were not framed in terms of substance - with even staunch opponents of the administration such as Senator Symington arguing that the policy was explicable in light of the "tremendous weaknesses" of neighbouring states that Iran helped remedy. Rather, critics such as Symington and Fulbright framed their objections largely in procedural terms - arguing that the

administration's policy on Iran should have been subject to congressional scrutiny (McGlinchey, 2014, 70-80).

Moreover, even after Congress reasserted its right to information regarding U.S. credit lines to Iran, the sale of technology such as the F-16 and AWACS was approved and was even continued by critics of the administration such as Carter during his own tenure in office (McGlinchey, 2014).

So, there appears to be sufficient evidence of tacit coordination between the administration and its adversaries (even as they searched for procedural justifications to scupper the policy - suggesting that a congruence of beliefs was not a central factor) to pass my straw in the wind and hoop tests, even though smoking gun evidence is absent.

The administration's policy in the Middle East appears to be congruent with the predictions of my model. While little evidence of coordination exists for the case of the Yom Kippur war (given centralisation of policy under Kissinger) an examination of the political processes underlying the approach to Iran provides some evidence that the desire to be seen as adhering to the focal principles of absolute security and limited liability underpinned the administration's approach to the region.

Europe

When Kissinger, somewhat grandiosely, proclaimed that 1973 would be the "year of Europe" he was, to some degree, responding to the widely held perception that the administration's preoccupation with East Asia and the Middle East had left European concerns to occupy a peripheral role. Yet the Nixon administration would, despite this perception, see a number of rather important initiatives within Europe both vis a vis Western Europe and the Soviet bloc. The notion that Europe should play an important role as both a balancer and a bridge between the Soviet bloc and the U.S. had permeated Nixon's thinking for some time. A united Europe had been identified as one of the balancing blocks in Nixon and Kissinger's original conception of a concert of Eurasia, with Nixon reiterating this theme in Congress stating that "the world will be a much safer place and, from our standpoint, a much healthier place economically,

militarily and politically, if there were a strong European Community to be a balance ... between the United States and the Soviet Union” (Nixon,1970,32).

In practice, however, Nixon and Kissinger looked warily at attempts to expand the E.C, preferring to deal with European nations bilaterally and attempting to secure the U.S. a seat in the foreign policy decision making mechanisms of the E.C, arguing that -“as an old ally, the United States should be given an opportunity to express its concerns before final decisions affecting its interests are taken” (Cromwell,1992,84). Despite its misgivings, however, the Nixon administration supported the expansion of the E.C - an outcome consistent with limited liability at the grand strategic level, inasmuch as it created a bloc that might bear some of the political (if not military) costs of containment. Nor can the expansion of the E.C into its southern periphery be seen as merely a *fait accompli* that Nixon was faced with. As MEMCONS of Nixon’s conversations with then Italian Prime Minister Mariano Rumor show, Italy was in dire need of American loans in light of its balance of payments crisis, with Rumor dutifully stressing the value of the transatlantic relationship as being paramount in its importance to Italian foreign policy.

It is obvious that Nixon did possess coercive tools that could be used vis a vis both Italy and other southern European states (which were in similar positions) had he wished to stall European integration. However, having stressed the importance of a united Europe to forming a rational grand strategy in line with the tenets of limiting liability, Nixon was, I will argue, forced to adhere to his own appeal to strategic cultural focal points (Memorandum of Conversation,1974,2).

In tandem, the administration pursued a litany of agreements with the U.S.S.R. aimed at easing tensions in Europe. These agreements included the SALT I agreement, MBFR (mutually balanced force reductions-aimed at reducing the likelihood of conventional escalation in Europe) and the Helsinki accords. What was most notable about these negotiations was the expansion of U.S. aims, largely in response to domestic pressure. For example, the initial Nixon posture of essential equivalence had to be revised after Congressional opposition insisted that the deal include numerical parity between the two nations arsenal (an artificial standard given the rather different nature of the two arsenals). Moreover, although Kissinger

had hoped to separate arms control and confidence building from the Soviet and Warsaw Pact domestic policy and had made some steps in this direction (reducing the budget of entities such as Radio Free Europe, for example) domestic pressures forced them to portray détente as a basis for an open ended transformation of Soviet behaviour and thus, by extension, link the Helsinki accords and CSCE to the internal freedom of Eastern Europe (a position that Kissinger abhorred and which may have scuppered the MBFR) (Tal,2013,1090-1116).

Similarly, Congressional pressure in the form of bills such as the Jackson Vanick amendment forced the administration still further into the territory of linking engagement (in the form of incentives such as MFN status with concessions by the U.S.S.R. on its domestic policies. (Keninger,3008,69-80). Essentially, this amounted to a policy of binding which, pace Trubowitz (2011) I classify as a policy of cheap revisionism.

Perhaps the most notable feature of this policy is how Nixon and Kissinger were, despite their own predilections, forced to expand their initially limited aims in Europe as a prerequisite to making détente domestically feasible.

Militarily, U.S. policy in Europe saw two notable shifts during this period. First, consistent with the notion of limiting liability at the grand strategic level, the U.S. cooperated in the creation of independent British and French nuclear arsenals - something that it had strenuously opposed prior to this period. The U.S. provided the UK with Polaris missiles, despite the NSC noting that this contradicted longstanding policy (NSSM123,1). Simultaneously, secret technical aid was provided to French scientists who were labouring to create the Force de Frappe (with the U.S. somewhat pedantically sidestepping its NPT obligations not to share military information by allowing French scientists to ask their American counterparts yes or no questions) (Gardner,1994,158).

This outcome is consistent with my model, insofar as when a leader is faced with low slack and an emphasis on butter over guns, he has the option of either focusing on select objectives or attempting to devolve duties along an extended perimeter.

The commitment of the U.S. to the latter course of action, conditioned as it was by the logic of absolute security, necessitated some devolution of power to Europe so that absolute security could be bought at a limited cost. In effect, the existing of independent nuclear forces limited liability at the grand strategic level, insofar as the UK and France were now framed as contributing to alliance defence and liable for European security to a degree - even as it added little in military terms, insofar as the dubious survivability of the UK and France's arsenals during wartime.

The second military realignment was the adoption of the Schlesinger doctrine which, in many ways, codified the administration's approach to nuclear weapons in other parts of the world. While in theory a doctrine of limited nuclear use, Schlessinger's emphasis on the massive use of tactical nuclear weapons at the outset of a war, coupled with a lack of a clear threshold with which to draw a distinction between scenarios that justified the use of tactical and strategic nuclear weapons rendered this, to all effects and purposes, a doctrine of massive retaliation. Despite appearances, however, this was effectively a doctrine of limited liability at the grand strategic level, both because nuclear weapons were seen as less expensive than heavy conventional forces and because it was a deterrent doctrine placing a primary at limiting grand strategic costs by avoiding war altogether rather than trying to either limit or win it once it broke out (Burr, 2006, 130).

Nonetheless, a shift back to massive retaliation was viewed as destabilising within the U.S.S.R. with contemporary Soviet writers emphasising the threat that the doctrines improved launch on warning capabilities posed.

Indeed, a good deal of the subsequent Soviet intransigence regarding the continuation of the SALT process can be attributed to this fact (Zisk, 1993, 96)

The administration would develop a policy of attempting to shift both the diplomatic and political costs of European security onto its allies even as it committed itself to a series of rather expansive goals vis a vis the U.S.S.R. Moreover, the military posture it adopted, while consistent with limited liability, was inconsistent with détente. This outcome, particularly given its divergence from Nixon and Kissinger's original vision, constitutes an empirical puzzle

of sorts. In theory, the U.S. could have pursued a number of policies vis a vis Europe from a hands-off policy backed by minimal deterrence (as Robert Jervis would later suggest) or selective engagement where it obviated a general policy of retracting commitments vis a vis core region of the world.

The next section will examine the process of domestic bargaining that produced this curious outcome.

Process Tracing Europe

Top Down Coordination

In terms of evidence from top down coordination, there appears to be qualified evidence for coordination around the focal point of absolute security, with Nixon publicly stating to Congress that to be feasible, agreements such as the MBFR had to be linked to all aspects of Soviet conduct, including allowing cultural and economic links between Western and Eastern Europe (Nixon, 1973). This argument was quickly reiterated by figures such as Kissinger, who insisted that détente was not a series of transactional agreements but the inception of a broader structure of peace within which the U.S. could sustain its leadership role at a limited cost (Litwak, 1994, 10). Aside from the administration coordinating around the rhetoric of absolute security (even as their own internal discussions demonstrated a more nuanced worldview) evidence for top down coordination is limited

Lateral Coordination

When securing congressional support for European policy, Nixon's administration appeared to take a great deal of care to stress both the focal principles of absolute security and limited liability. For example, Nixon would take pains to reiterate how a combination of E.C. expansion and binding agreements with the U.S.S.R. would allow the U.S. to reduce its presence in Europe, while Schlesinger would reiterate these appeals in the military domain—stressing that upgrading the U.S. nuclear capabilities and lowering the threshold for its use would forestall both conventional and nuclear threats (Sagan, 1989, 44) (Nixon, 1973).

These appeals do appear to have secured the coordination of the administration's opponents. For example, Senator Symington, who had threatened to undercut administration policy by proposing a massive withdrawal of American conventional forces from Europe, nonetheless supported the Schlesinger policy, voting in favour of maintaining funding several of Schlesinger's proposed programs in the area of nuclear defence (Keininger, 2016, 58) (Annual Defence Department Report, 1975, 8-10).

To the extent that the administration's European policy did face pushback, it was when opponents could rally around the focal point of absolute security. For example, liberal Republicans such as Senator Javits joined with Democratic members of the opposition to push the administration to secure absolute parity in the SALT I agreements (despite both groups general dovishness) while a failure to push the U.S.S.R. on domestic circumstances in Eastern Europe saw opposition coalesce around legislation such as the Jackson Vanick amendment (Hahnimaki, 2004) (Schulzinger, 1987, 93).

To be politically feasible, then, Nixon and Kissinger's doctrine had to promise not only a limitation of competition but an overarching grand bargain on American terms.

Smoking gun evidence that the administration felt compelled to alter its grand strategy to make it feasible in light of the strictures of strategic culture is provided by a conversation between Nixon and British Prime Minister Edward Heath in which Nixon confessed to Heath that the importance he had to place on policies such as European expansion, the CSCE and Soviet domestic excesses were largely a function of domestic pressures and that, left to himself, he would not have held SALT and the MBFR hostage to these policies (Rosbach, 2009, 153).

It appears that sufficient evidence exists to pass my straw in the wind and hoop tests and provide smoking gun evidence that the need to adhere to strategic cultural focal points of absolute security and limited liability produced two countervailing trends in Nixon's European policy - an expansion of aims and a limitation of America's substantive commitments to Europe. The resulting policy, which sought to maintain and, if possible, expand the remit of the U.S. security perimeter in Europe is congruent with my model and the product of a process of political bargaining that my model would predict.

Rest of The World

This chapter will dedicate a limited amount of space to examining the administration's engagement with its peripheral commitments in areas beyond the remit of the three core regions being studied. In general, as John Lewis Gaddis notes, Kissinger's emphasis on parsing commitments between core and peripheral interests, his commitment to global containment was as absolute as those policymakers that had preceded him. This manifested itself in the form of a commitment to checking and rolling back Soviet influence in far flung outposts such as Angola and engaging the U.S. to construct an ad hoc coalition to supply and support Pakistan during the 1971 Indo-Pakistani war (Kux,1992). As elsewhere, however, Kissinger attempted to co-opt local allies to make substantive commitments to U.S. national security interests on the Periphery with South Africa and Mobutu's Zaire engaged to support the MPLA in Angola while China and the Shah were utilized as a political buffer through which support to Pakistan could be channelled (Sorley,1983,180) (Rossiter,2010,49)

As elsewhere, this approach was characterized by a broad sensitivity to the focal principle of absolute security, with figures such as P. Moynihan claiming that if Angola fell "Brazil could be next" while Senator Clark (who would propose the Clark amendment) would later admit to a "fear of being framed as soft" as a major factor in the way he framed his objections – namely, that he felt that direct military assistance to Angola would drag the U.S. into a war. Framing the objections in terms of limited liability would, of course, play into Nixon's hands insofar as the existence of allies willing to bear the burden, made it easy to appeal to this focal point and circumvent the objections of figures such as Clark (Rossiter,2010,50).

Our brief overview of the administration's peripheral commitments yields the image of a policy and a policymaking process that is congruent with the model's expectations.

Conclusion

When one examines the Nixon doctrine, then, one observes a commitment to three broad strategies- namely binding, devolution and the use of massive retaliation as a deterrent. Despite their own convictions, then, what Nixon and Kissinger had achieved was less a massive conceptual overhaul of U.S. policy than a strategic synthesis akin to that of administrations such as the Eisenhower administration that had operated under similar conditions of low geopolitical slack and a domestic preference for butter over guns. Despite Kissinger's critique of the U.S. open ended commitment to maintain and even expand an oversized defensive perimeter, his own policy would aim to achieve precisely this objective, albeit through regional surrogates rather than the direct application of American military power.

Similarly, the rather sophisticated conception of triangular diplomacy vis a vis the Communist world in which China and the U.S.S.R would be equidistant in their relations with the U.S., gave way to what essentially amounted to an updated variant of containment on the cheap - in which China would assume the role of a regional ally while détente vis a vis the U.S.S.R. soured, in large measure due to a lack of consensus between the superpowers on whether it would amount to a global *modus vivendi* or merely an attempt to set upper limits on the scope and scale of competition between the two powers.

Indeed, the fact that Kissinger would sell détente as an example of the former domestically, even as he envisioned it shaping into a policy of limited containment, meant that the policy rested on a fragile domestic consensus that was built on expectations that détente could not fulfil.... particularly, as Litwak notes, when combined with the Nixon doctrine of aggressive perimeter defence.

This is not to say that the policy amounted to a failure. Indeed, for all the inner contradictions it faced, Kissinger's grand strategy did expand America's influence in key regions even as the means available to the administration were shrinking in light of both the Soviet military build-up and a domestic push to ratchet down both the scale of the U.S.' role in the world and the power of the executive.

However, in light of its inner contradictions, the fact that it was not the only policy available to the administration at this point in time, not to mention the distance between the original Nixon/Kissinger vision and the grand strategy that emerged, the history of détente does present us with an empirical puzzle - one that is most easily explained by viewing it through the lens of the twin focal principles of absolute security and limited liability.

Therefore, the outcome observed is congruent with my model's predictions (collective security/devolved hegemony) and as had been demonstrated, was underpinned by a process in which the need to coordinate around focal points that are constitutive of a liberal strategic culture.

The Grand Strategy of the Eisenhower Administration

The administration of Dwight D. Eisenhower came to power after a nearly two decades of Democratic dominance. Eisenhower's rise, on the back of an economically orthodox coalition that might have just as easily elected his neo isolationist competitor Robert Taft. In many ways, Eisenhower's fiscally orthodox critique of NSC-68 and the overstretch that he perceived it to be driving the United States towards seemed set to produce a grand strategy of restraint modelled on Kennan's original articulation of the strategy of containment.

Eisenhower had been elected by an economic coalition that had emerged in response to the new deal. Corresponding to the traditional Republican electoral geography of the coastal states, the Eisenhower electorate had strong imperatives to favour low inflation and fiscal conservatism over full employment. The growing financial sector on the coastlines as well as competitive export-oriented industries had strong imperatives to favour a stable monetary policy, along with fiscal prudence. Indeed, this coalition had been largely responsible for the adoption of the gold standard at the end of the 19th century.

Simultaneously, however, Eisenhower confronted a world that looked to be becoming less geopolitically stable. The Soviet economy, which at this point was growing at double digit rates, seemed to be vindicating the predictions of economists such as who argued that, over the short term at least, centralised economies could achieve far higher rates of growth than their more liberal counterparts.

The rise of the U.S.S.R. coupled with what appeared to be the terminal decline of the colonial empires of Western Europe in the face of both their own economic troubles and rising nationalism across Asia and Africa seemed to spell a period of acute relative decline for the West.

The Eisenhower coalition appeared to be an archetypal example of an administration with a strong imperative to focus on butter over guns facing low geopolitical slack. It is worth noting that although Eisenhower did not, strictly speaking, invest in butter (in the form of domestic programmes, for example) the fact that his administration felt that cutting defence spending was an integral part of the economic policies intended to ensure domestic stability, enables me to code him as a leader who favoured policies aimed at butter over guns, insofar as cutting spending on the latter was meant to indirectly abet the former aim.

Under such circumstances, as per the table in Chapter 1, leaders can effectively pursue an accommodationist grand strategy, a strategy of selective retrenchment, selective engagement, strongpoint defence and indiscriminate deterrence/ devolved hegemony. An accommodationist strategy would have sought to ameliorate East/West tensions while both selective engagement and retrenchment would have sought to limit commitments to geographically critical theatres with the core difference being that the latter involves enhancing commitments in some theatres at the expense of others, while the former merely involves retrenching from peripheral theatres.

By contrast, strongpoint defence entails selecting core nodes in multiple theatres for defence-effectively trimming commitments within each theatre rather than abandoning specific theatres altogether (although variants of strongpoint defence may also discriminate between regions, mirroring selective engagement).

Finally, we have the option of devolved hegemony/indiscriminate deterrence. The latter approach rests on two pillars - extended deterrence based on alliance commitments to allies whilst utilising allies and local proxies and covert intervention to protect an unspecified defensive perimeter. Effectively, as Gaddis (2005,100) has it, the existence of a commitment is a substitute for substantive military commitments. To the extent that the policy does invest in military means, it is in the form of deterrence by punishment - depending on military instruments that are both mobile and which impose what is dubbed as second order change upon the population of a target state, thereby obviating the need to commit military forces. Examples include the British belief in the build-up to World War II that the threat of strategic bombing of German cities could deter Hitler without the need for a continental commitment.

A policy of indiscriminate deterrence effectively expands a state's security perimeter even as it limits the resources dedicated to it. In this, it broadly resembles a grand strategy of hollow expansion with the operative distinction between the two being that the latter has an overarching goal of systemic change while the former aims at perimeter defence.

As per my model, the Eisenhower administration should have sought a policy of devolved hegemony/indiscriminate deterrence. This, as this chapter will demonstrate, is in fact the policy equilibrium that the administration did settle on.

At this point, it is worth outlining the alternative explanations for the outcome observed. First, one might point to Steven Lobell's argument that fiscally, orthodox coalitions tend to favour devolving hegemony. However, per Lobell's thesis, this fails to occur in the face of an illiberal contender, which is what Eisenhower was facing.

The second hypothesis - that of Jeffery Taliaferro - is that leaders facing the prospect of relative decline tend to take risks on the periphery. While this would explain Eisenhower's interventionism, it would not explain his risk aversion with regards to means.

Finally, one might consider the proposition that Eisenhower's own operational code favoured both efforts to maintain an undefined perimeter and limit liability. While this is partially true

(Eisenhower had, after all, chosen to run to forestall what he saw as Robert Taft's dangerous isolationism) it is less than clear that Eisenhower's personal beliefs were altogether crucial in determining the outcomes observed. After all, Eisenhower had proven himself willing to compromise on a raft of other issues, such as the adoption of the "rollback" component of the Republican critique of Truman. Similarly, he had broadly expressed a belief in the importance of separating central interests from peripheral ones before assuming the Presidency - at which point he performed a volte face, arguing that the global balance of power was so delicately poised that (Eisenhower inaugural address, Public Papers of the President, 1953, 389).

The following sections will outline the contours of Eisenhower's grand strategy and illustrate its congruence with my model before drawing salient conclusions.

The Basic Principles of Eisenhower's Grand Strategy

A central conundrum of the Eisenhower grand strategy was how to, on the one hand, roll back the spending commitments made by the Truman administration after NSC-68, whilst at the same time maintaining (or even expanding) the security commitments that Truman had made.

The answer the administration found, as Nixon later would, rested on two pillars. The first pillar was emphasising the nuclear arm of American deterrence at the expense of more costly conventional forces as part of the administration's shift to the doctrine of massive retaliation. As John Foster Dulles had it, the U.S. would seek to respond to aggression at a time, place and level of its choosing rather than allowing an opponent to dictate the tempo of an interaction. In practice this concept, enshrined in documents such as NSC 162/2 which emphasised that collective security rested on adequate nuclear retaliatory power rather than defence - effectively a doctrine of asymmetrical retaliation against conventional aggression (NSC 162/2, 1953, 19-20). Consequently, spending on programmes such as the Minuteman, Polaris and B-52 was increased substantially (Metz, 1991, 147-150). Parallel spending on conventional forces declined substantially, with overall manpower declining by 600,000 troops largely at the expense of the army and the Navy, while the air force gained both in

terms of manpower and expanded its share of shrinking budgetary allocations (Bowie, Immermann,2000,196).

Overall, the Eisenhower administration would cut defence spending from 14 percent of the American GDP to just over 10 percent over the course of his tenure (Penner,2014,4).

Concurrently, however, the Eisenhower grand strategy aimed to leverage two tools to ensure both that the U.S. could defend an extended perimeter and could, if possible, maintain the strategic offensive. The first was the use of regional policeman, a point articulated clearly in NSC 162/2 and subsequent documents. The former colonial powers of Britain and France would play a core role in the Eisenhower conception of grand strategy, acting as surrogates for America in far flung areas such as Indochina and Malaya. Additionally, the U.S. would shift the emphasis of its aid to small allies from merely maintaining regime stability to creating indigenous military capacity that could be used both locally and in an expeditionary context during regional contingencies.

To this end, the administration inaugurated the mutual security program, a whole of government approach to integrating civilian and military aid geared towards creating competent local forces. For example, in the Philippines, the crux of the effort was the creation of military academies and an educational system capable of creating a competent regional force. Similarly, the administration concluded that shouldering the cost of equipping the South Korean army would work out to about \$300 per soldier - a fraction of the cost of equipping and deploying an American soldier which was \$5000 at the time. Concomitant with this was Eisenhower and Dulles' so called "pactomania" which was the creation of multiple overlapping regional frameworks (typically with a regional great power at its core) as a means of managing local alliances. The utilisation of aid and local allies would serve to substitute for a concrete commitment - even as the administration nominally expanded the scope of America's extended deterrent through a series of bilateral and multilateral commitments.

Finally, the administration massively expanded the scope of its emphasis on covert and psychological warfare. Under Eisenhower, the role of the CIA to engage in what amounted to strategic pre-emption against regimes that appeared to be either on the verge of collapse or

likely to move in a pro-Communist direction expanded substantially, as evidenced by operations to unseat Iran's Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh and Guatemala's Jacopo Arbenz, as well as abortive attempts at subverting the regimes of Egypt, Syria and Indonesia. Moreover, the administration authorized a raft of measures effectively challenging the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe with the publication of NSC 174 authorizing the dissemination of propaganda in Eastern Europe, along with efforts to organize such resistance as was possible to problematize (if not necessarily destroy) the Soviet hold on Eastern Europe (Corke, 2008, 134). To be sure, NSC 162/2 acknowledged that any change in this region had to be nonviolent but in challenging Soviet authority in its own backyard, the administration was in effect opting for a form of "soft rollback".

Paradoxically, then, the Eisenhower administration was expanding the remit of the U.S. Cold War commitments, even as it was attempting to reduce the scope and scale of its security footprint. The grand strategy which emerged combined attempts to limit liability at the grand strategic level by working through covert means, allies and measure short of the direct use of military force and yet simultaneously attempted to achieve absolute security.

The following sections will more fully outline the contours of the administration's grand strategy in the core regions of Europe, East Asia and the Middle East, along with more peripheral regions in the Global South.

The Middle East

The Middle East was in and of itself of marginal significance to the U.S., which did not at the time rely to a substantial degree on Middle Eastern energy supplies. However, stability in the Middle East was of salience to the economic recovery of Europe. As such, the U.S. did have the minimal objectives of maintaining access to the region's energy supplies and ensuring that the U.S.S.R. did not effect control over them sufficient to endow it with leverage over Western Europe. With these aims in sight, the administration could, in principle, have opted for one of several regional policies.

The first option would have been an offshore balancing role centred on Western naval facilities in the Gulf. Within the context of this policy specific regional fluctuations and conflicts would be of little significance so long as they did not threaten to overturn the general balance of power. The U.S. would maintain its ties to Turkey and would, in principle, threaten to intervene in the unlikely event of a Soviet drive for the region's energy but, such an event notwithstanding, would effectively leave regional dynamics to play out as they may.

As Waltz (1981,64-68) pointed out, even nationalist regimes that were anti-Western in their orientation would, in the final instance, need to sell their resources to the West in order to ensure their own economic sustainability.

Moreover, the potency of the nationalism sweeping the region effectively ensured that the regimes emerging across the Arab world would be very unlikely to act as appendages of Moscow. Thus, an offshore balancing posture would have seen the administration create a mobile deployment force to be inserted in the region in the event of a major contingency involving either Iran, Turkey or Saudi Arabia but would see the administration otherwise adopt a "hands off policy". Such a regional strategy would have been consistent with strongpoint defence.

Alternatively, the U.S. could have opted for a grand strategy of buck passing, leaving local powers such as Britain, France and Israel to enact their own policies in the pursuit of regional security and effectively avoiding any form of entrapment in the Middle East. While none of these powers could match the U.S.S.R. on aggregate, their economic and military resources were, by this point, sufficient to provide a regional safety net for Western interests. Such an approach would have been consistent with a grand strategy of selective engagement.

In the event, the administration would, after a period of initial validation, opt for a form of extended perimeter defence that relied on a combination of covert action, regional pact formation and efforts to lock Britain into the role of a regional policeman. The end purpose of this policy was a dual containment of both the U.S.S.R. and Nasser's Egypt, coupled with elements of rollback. To be sure, aspects of the Eisenhower grand strategy in the region did

clash with this imperative (most notably his intervention to roll back the British intervention in the Suez through financial coercion). However, these actions were occasioned by circumstances that were *sui generis*; in the case of the Suez intervention it was Krushchev's nuclear threats, taken seriously by both Eisenhower and Dulles, which served as the cause of their approach to the Anglo-French coalition (Pape,1994,126).

The Eisenhower administration's grand strategy in the Middle East depended upon the creation of a northern tier of states on the periphery of the Arab world that would be integrated within both the newly formed Central treaty organization and the British led Baghdad pact (Ruane,2006,166-199). Central to the viability of this system would be London's continued role in the Gulf, which Washington would support financially. As such, despite initial clashes, the U.S. would support the UK's efforts to put down the Dhofar uprising and supported the Royal Navy's continued presence off Bahrain as a guarantor of the sea lines of communication and the regional order.

The ultimate purpose of this condominium with the region's dominant power was the containment and perhaps rollback of pan Arabism - with the intended effect being to both exclude the U.S.S.R. from the region and to compel its most likely regional ally, Nasser's Egypt, to adopt a foreign policy that was more in line with a strict definition of the status quo. To this end', the two powers would coordinate to defend states that were not initially within the Western security perimeter, with the U.S. prompting the UK to take a role in quelling threats to the nascent Hashemite monarchy in Jordan even as it intervened in Lebanon to uphold the administration of President Camille Chamoun in the face of a military uprising (Blackwell,2008,254).

Finally, at the level of covert warfare and psychological operations, the two powers would adopt a largely pre-emptive posture to potential regional threats. The U.S. and UK would operate in tandem to oust the economically nationalist government of Mohammed Mossadegh in Iran, leading to a restoration of the pro-Western monarchy of Shah Reza Pahlavi. Elsewhere, in the region, the CIA initiated two covert operations aimed at Egypt and Syria respectively - the Omega plan and Operation Straggle - aimed at blocking Egyptian

nationalist propaganda, imposing social and economic disruptions on Egypt and Syria and at least potentially, overthrowing the government of the latter while seriously hampering the operation of the former. As per Eisenhower's strategic model the operations involved close Anglo-American coordination with British officials taking the lead in many cases at the behest of John Foster Dulles (Gorst, Lucas, 2008, 558-565) (Takiyeh, 114-116).

The culmination of these policies was the Eisenhower doctrine, which explicitly constituted an open-ended commitment to inoculating the region from Communist influences.

The administration's approach, then, is broadly congruent with my model's expectations. Despite imperatives to either retrench or parse commitments carefully, the administration combined efforts to maintain or expand its regional perimeter even as it reduced the means at the U.S. disposal - relying instead, on a combination of regional policemen and cheap tools to achieve these expansive ends. Indeed, in this it directly mirrored the Nixon doctrine in the Middle East, which attempted to achieve the same ends under similar circumstances.

Europe

The Eisenhower administration's policies in Europe are similarly consistent with a policy of devolved hegemony. The administration's grand strategy in Western Europe rested on the presumption that the scope of the U.S. commitments to the continent needed to be scaled back even as the nature of its commitment remained fixed or even saw America's strategic ends grow.

Militarily, the U.S. would reduce its commitment to Western Europe by 36,000 troops while those that remained were reorganised around the new pentomic division - a division equipped with tactical nuclear capabilities that was to constitute the first line of defence in the context of the new look. This was coupled with abortive attempts to make European allies commit a greater amount to their own defence and to the conventional defence of central Europe (Dockerill, 1996, 208).

Yet this reduction in means was not matched by a concomitant reduction of the scope and scale of the U.S. strategic aims in Europe. For instance, following the famed interagency Solarium exercises in which the Eisenhower administration generated a series of options regarding its overall strategic posture, it was concluded that it might be feasible to effect some form of neutralisation of a demilitarised but unified Germany - an option that would have been consistent with the administration's desire to trim the sails of the U.S. grand strategy. However, this option was quickly discarded.

Moreover, the administration seemed determined to take the ideological offensive against the Soviet sphere. Examples of this include the administration's abortive attempts to pass a captive nations resolution challenging the legitimacy of the pro Soviet administrations in Eastern Europe. (Gaddis,2005, 153).

In a similar vein, the administration set up the Jackson committee to explore the possibility of subversion behind the Iron Curtain. The committee, after deliberation concluded that the administration should undertake policies that would "be planned to maximize the chance of [Soviet] collapse, but it cannot be safely assumed that this result can be produced for many years even by the best efforts of the free nations. The United States must place its chief reliance on strengthening the free world, while maintaining pressures on the Soviet System" (Lynn Finley,2016,198). The administration did not place much faith in its ability to bring down the Soviet system but nonetheless, hoped that by applying sufficient pressure, it could ensure that Soviet control over Eastern Europe was never absolute. To this end, Radio Free Europe's broadcasts to Eastern Europe commenced, while the CIA attempted to rally dissident groups behind the Iron Curtain.

The contradictions between these two attempted policies became apparent during the Czech and Hungarian uprisings where the administration was, on the one hand, pressured to meet rhetoric with action (not least because its efforts at subversion had at least partially emboldened reformers in each country) but could not - given that the doctrine of massive retaliation was not geared to facilitate limited offensive action.

The Eisenhower grand strategy in Europe appears to be congruent with my model in a way that would be difficult to fully explain without appeal to the variable of strategic culture.

East Asia

The Eisenhower administration had won its election partly based on a critique of Truman's purported overextension in East Asia. By defending peripheral concerns such as South Korea, Eisenhower had alleged, Truman had frittered scarce resources on insignificant ends. The stage, then, seemed set for some type of retreat to an offshore perimeter. Instead, this period would see the expansion and formalization of a substantial U.S. commitment onshore in both Northeast and Southeast Asia as the administration undertook a litany of bilateral and multilateral commitments within the region and committed itself to a hardline form of containment. Here, as elsewhere, the Eisenhower administration would utilize a range of political tools, coupled with its preferred expedient of massive retaliation to ensure that these commitments remained effectively hollow.

The Eisenhower administration's approach to East Asia rested on familiar pillars.

First, in a continuation of the policy pact formation, the administration sought to lock in Britain and France through the mechanism of SEATO -a regional multilateral organization that would see the U.S. lead from behind as Britain, France and to a lesser degree, Australia coordinated regional anti-Communist initiatives.

In Northeast Asia, where no great power surrogate was to be found, the administration extended its defence perimeter by explicitly concluding bilateral defence treaties with South Korea and Taiwan - thereby putting an end to any speculation that Eisenhower would preside over a return to Kennan and Acheson's original formulation of containment.

Undergirding this, as would become apparent during the Quemoy Matsu crisis, was a belief that in the event of an imminent regional conflagration the threat of massive retaliation would suffice as a deterrent whilst under more normal circumstances, allies were to be tasked with defensive operations.

Finally, as elsewhere, the administration held out the hope that psychological and covert warfare might provide a cheap low risk means of taking the initiative, with covert operations against Mao's China being sanctioned along with limited Taiwanese coastal raids.

In Korea, Eisenhower toyed with several options. The central policy issue was how to negotiate a peace with the North that ended the war but allowed the administration to claim victory on issues such as prisoner repatriations - an outcome without which it was likely that Syngman Rhee would claim to have been betrayed. What mattered here, as intra administration deliberations demonstrate, is that the charge of betrayal would have found a receptive audience in Washington. As such, the option of merely freezing the conflict and withdrawing from Korea was effectively forestalled (Cha ,2016,100).

An alternative to complete withdrawal was escalating to deescalate - a short sharp escalation against targets in North Korea and Manchuria coupled with an eventual American withdrawal based on the assumption that sufficient damage to the military and industrial base of the Asian Communists would suffice to render South Korea capable of self-defence. Instead, the administration opted for a combination of coercive diplomacy vis a vis the North Koreans and Chinese, coupled with reassurance vis a vis the South. The threat of nuclear escalation was utilized to compel North Korean and Chinese concessions regarding a ceasefire armistice.

Simultaneously, however, the administration extended a bilateral alliance treaty to Syngman Rhee's government in the South - codifying the American commitment to the South but also binding Rhee insofar as the commitment was predicated on him abandoning all talk of marching north and securing reunification.

As General Clark's instructions put it, "Our willingness to negotiate and enter into such a treaty is subject to receiving the following assurances from Rhee.

A. The Korean Govt will refrain from opposition and agitation against an armistice along the lines proposed by the UNC and use its influence to restrain the Korean population from engaging in such agitation and opposition

B. The ROK will cooperate in the implementation of an armistice agreement C. the armed forces of the ROK will remain under operation control of CINUNC until the U.S. and ROK agree that such agreements are no longer necessary” (Cha,2016,108).

It is not altogether clear why the U.S. could not merely have utilized Rhee’s intransigence as an excuse to exit Korea, given the Eisenhower administration’s imperatives, or why it felt the need to secure stability on the peninsula by entangling its ally in a bilateral alliance. More importantly, why did the administration feel the need to make a commitment to the peninsula that, if enacted, would scupper any hopes it had of reducing the scope and scale of the U.S. footprint?

Part of the reason is provided by internal memos that precede the Eisenhower administration where figures like Carlton George argued that Congress increasingly viewed nuclear primacy as an offset with near inexhaustible possibilities that would enable the United states to defend far flung commitments. Indeed, comments by Congressional Republicans regarding the viability of utilising a fleet of B-2 bombers to deter North Korea indefinitely seem to support this (Dingman,1988,53).

Simultaneously, the administration laboured under the fear that any collapse of the South would be revived at home as a collapse of American resolve - a fact that Rhee was both cognizant of and manipulated by (Borowski,1982,125-130).

A similar dynamic is observable in the administration’s policies with regards Taiwan. The Eisenhower administration faced the dual problem of checking Taiwan on the one hand and forestalling criticism of having lost the U.S.’ last vestige of influence in China on the other. Indeed, without this latter danger, it is unclear why the administration could not have merely withdrawn from any commitment to Taiwan, withdrawing the Seventh Fleet from the Straits and perhaps, catalysing the Sino-Soviet split. Instead, the administration formalised the U.S. commitment to Taiwan in the form of a bilateral defence treaty (Tunsjo,2008,37).

As the Quemoy Matsu crisis would demonstrate, however, the defence of Taiwan and its offshore islands would depend on the incredible threat to resort to nuclear escalation in the face of peripheral provocations such as the Chinese bombardment of Quemoy and Matsu - effectively relying on the uncertainty that the administration would resort to imposing second order change upon its adversaries as a substitute for a military deployment capable of abetting the defence of the island (Tunsjo,2008,37).

Here, as elsewhere, fear of a Congressional revolt in the face of the putative abandonment of an ally was the driving factor in forestalling a withdrawal. This is noteworthy given that there was at this point no treaty or formal commitment compelling the U.S. to treat Chiang Kai Shek's regime as an ally. To be sure, lobbying by the Nationalists played no small role in this outcome but their ability to organise allies effectively within the U.S. relied on a rather open ended definition of security whereby Soviet advances even at the expense of relatively unimportant parties to which the U.S. had no formal commitment were viewed as substantial geopolitical setbacks by opponents rallying around the focal point of absolute security (Cha,2016,58).

To the South, the administration relied on financial support to Britain and France as a substitute for having to make a substantive commitment to the security of Southeast Asia. In the absence of a formalised command structure and given the vast power asymmetries between its members, SEATO effectively served as a mechanism to lock in British and French military power and to legitimise it under the aegis of a multilateral alliance. Even before this system was formalised, after the Geneva accords it existed in a de facto form. For example, the U.S. would subsidise the French war effort in Indochina, eventually shouldering half the financial burden of the French counterinsurgency while playing a similar role in support of the British in Malaya (Franklin,1996,108). Crucially, however, the ability to intervene in support of peripheral interests in Southeast Asia depended upon Congressional support that was predicated upon the administration's ability to appeal to limited liability. When, after the battle of Dien Bien Phu, the administration attempted to secure Congressional support for an attempt to abet the French in Indochina, it was informed that this support was predicated upon the existence of a multilateral coalition- demonstrating the limited ability of

the administration to act when unable to appeal to a strategic cultural focal point (Anderson,1991,26-29).

Elsewhere in Southeast Asia the administration relied on its formula of utilising deniable covert tactics vis a vis regime such as the Sukharno PRC regime in Indonesia. The Sukharno regime, which was viewed as increasingly pro Soviet, drew the ire of John foster Dulles and the CIA which was able to point to a record of prior successes at a low cost to suggest that it should be tasked with nipping the danger posed by the regime in the bud. The CIA, it was argued, could encourage separatist tendencies in the outlying islands of Indonesia and thereby leave the regime in control of a rump state - thereby setting off a chain of events that might eventually eliminate the possibility of Soviet influence in the country. To this end, Dulles set about blocking arms shipments to Indonesia and took a much more pro Dutch stance on issues such as West Irian than had previously been taken by the U.S.

While this latter initiative was eventually moderated by figures such as Ambassador Alison who contended that the U.S. could not appear to be an explicitly pro-colonial power in the region, the broad contours of Dulles and the CIA's approach remained. The administration rallied behind Dulles' plan to overthrow Sukharno and the Third Marine Division was to be redeployed from the Philippines under the aegis of protecting American lives and property but, in practice, to signal support for dissidents within Indonesia (Roadnight,2002,152). Efforts were also made to share liability with Britain and Australia, which were encouraged to coordinate their own aid to the region with that of the U.S.

Cumulatively, then, the administration's policies followed a familiar pattern of maintaining or expanding a broad security perimeter even as it attempted to do so with a light footprint. Where possible, allies were co-opted as regional policeman and where this could not be achieved, the threat of nuclear escalation was utilized as a substitute for substantive commitments. Indeed, this approach directly mirrors that of Nixon and Kissinger, despite often being juxtaposed with it.

The Rest of the Global South

The final part of this chapter will deal with the Eisenhower administration's policies elsewhere in the Global South. The approach taken here broadly echoes the administration's grand strategy in the key regions that have been discussed above.

Covert operations vis a vis regimes seen as pro Communist such as that of Arbenz in Guatemala were carried out with the help of local allies, while the administration would largely lay out the framework for the Bay of Pigs invasion utilising Cuban dissidents that would go into motion under its successor. Elsewhere, the U.S. utilized coercive diplomacy and diplomatic protest to preclude the entry of the U.S.S.R. into an emerging civil conflict in the Congo as it lent support to the government of President Kasavubu in its struggle with opposition from the charismatic Patrice Lumumba (Daugherty, Daugherty 2018,53-55).

Conclusion

The Eisenhower doctrine, then, represented precisely the duality that would be predicted by my model. Despite having a strong incentive to rebalance commitments to core interest, the administration chose to opt for an expansive security footprint that committed it to defending an open-ended list of commitments with diminishing means. The administration's choice of tools, including regional policemen, subversion and deterrence by capital intensive means of punishment - such as nuclear retaliation in lieu of conventional commitments, directly corresponds with my model.

It is worth noting here that this chapter has not carried out the extensive process tracing that was carried out in other chapters, because the Eisenhower administration represents a hard case for my thesis.

As such, mere congruence with my model represents substantial evidence given that there is a dearth of alternative explanations for the approach taken.

Alternative explanations such as those focusing on domestic politics can explain why the administration trimmed the scale of the U.S.' defence spending, but not why it chose to simultaneously expand the scope of the U.S. geopolitical commitments. Indeed, scholars such as S. Lobell who examine the grand strategies of commercially liberal coalitions tend to predict highly selective balancing coupled with retrenchment from select locales, while economically nationalist coalitions are expected to adopt offensive strategies (Lobell,2004)

A second explanation might rest on Eisenhower and Dulles' operational codes and their belief in the indivisibility of central and peripheral gains in the face of a monolithic Communist threat.

However, when viewed in the context of the preceding chapter on Nixon and Kissinger's grand strategy, it is less than clear why the administration should have ended up opting for a grand strategy that directly mirrors that of two leaders with radically differing operational codes. More importantly, different aspects of Eisenhower's operational code might have predicted different policies. For example, Steven Metz (1991,56) argues that Eisenhower's writing on war reflected a belief that the salient conflicts of the future would be general rather than limited conflicts in which victory in core theatres such as Europe over the course of high intensity conflicts akin to World War II would determine strategic success or failure. As such, an analysis based on Eisenhower's operational code might just as easily have predicted a policy of selective engagement in key theatres like Europe and retrenchment elsewhere.

Finally, we might consider the assertion of Taliaferro (2004) that powers anticipating relative decline tend to be risk acceptant in their geostrategic thinking.

While it is true that the U.S. appeared to be facing relative decline in this period, Eisenhower is actually notable for his equanimity in the face of ostensible Soviet gains, privately stating that the purported U.S.-Soviet missile gap was a chimera and pointing to the long-term weaknesses of the Soviet system (Gaddis,2005,150-160)

The Eisenhower administration's grand strategy represents a particularly hard test for my thesis. The absence of an alternative explanation for its policy of expanding the U.S.

security perimeter and adopting a highly expansive approach at the grand strategic level even as it attempted to utilize a combination of indirect means in order to limit the U.S.' grand strategic liability. While the emergent outcome was coherent and successful in some regions, its contradictions became apparent in Europe, particularly in the wake of the uprising behind the Iron Curtain.

Accordingly, the observed outcome is congruent with the predictions laid out in Chapter 1 and further buttresses the argument of this thesis

Devolved Hegemony

The selection of a grand strategy of devolved hegemony by an executive operating under a low slack/butter matrix is certainly understandable. When faced with one or more rising adversaries and an incentive to refocus investment on the domestic sphere, external balancing is a rational response to the twin pressures of managing international risks and achieving domestic aims. Moreover, unlike hollow expansion, devolved hegemony does not necessarily commit a state to the expansion of its grand strategic objectives in any given region. The state may take specific commitments upon itself (for example, Nixon's commitment to defend newly important allies) but it adheres broadly to the aim of perimeter defence- an end to which these commitments are a means.

That being said, several other equally viable alternatives to devolved hegemony exist. A state may choose to buck pass to regional policemen without directly committing to their security – thereby increasing the risk that an adversary will be trapped in one or more draining conflagrations. Alternatively, it may opt for strongpoint defence or selective engagement- reinforcing its position in the regions that matter most to it while cutting costs overall.

Finally, a state may opt for external balancing without assuming the other objectives associated with devolved hegemony such as perimeter defence and soft attempts at rollback. Indeed, given the inherent incompatibility between the latter aims and devolution (insofar as they require the state to, at a minimum, accept the risk that its attempts to reduce its direct

footprint might be scuppered) It is difficult to ascertain the reason for the selection of this specific policy equilibrium without integrating my model of strategic culture into existing rational actor models.

Chapter V

Hollow Expansion - Liberal Polities under a High Slack/Butter Matrix

Under conditions that are amenable to domestic investment as opposed to military expenditure and which offer leaders the geopolitical breathing space to parse their state's grand strategic commitments and reinvest capital in their domestic economies, statesmen under conditions of high slack and who have an incentive to invest in butter over guns, can adopt one of several postures.

- retrenchment
- isolationism
- Buck passing
- Hollow expansion

A strategy of retrenchment would see a state either trim the sails of its geopolitical ambitions in one or several regions or rely on lower cost means of achieving its ends (for example burden shifting to allies). Retrenching states typically engage in what S. Lobell (2018) dubs "target balancing" - placing an emphasis on engaging particularly threatening components of a threat while ignoring other aspects (McDonald Parent, 2011, 11-12)

A more extreme variant of this logic might be a grand strategy of isolationism. An isolationist state might retain the capacity to surge its forces to a wartime posture in a crisis but would largely abstain from military commitments - instead limiting its global engagement to diplomatic and commercial ventures. Policies like the British notion of splendid isolationism that was foisted on a reluctant Lord Castlereagh in the post Napoleonic era best capture this grand strategy.

A state under these circumstances might also rely on a strategy of what B. Posen dubs restraint- effectively buck passing to local allies whilst acting as a "lender of last" resort within

the security context. For example, it has been argued that U.S. allies in East Asia have the capacity to hold their own in local engagements with a rising China, meaning that the U.S. needs not a preponderant force in the region but merely one sufficient to place a “thumb on the scales” of a conflict (Beckley, 2017, 78-119).

Finally, a state under these conditions can pursue hollow expansion - expanding its geopolitical footprint whilst reducing its means. Whilst being counterintuitive, the high slack enjoyed by politicians in the context described ensures that the ensuing Lippmann gap is unlikely to be immediately exposed. Moreover, a politician attempting to fend off criticism based on absolute security whilst ensuring both limited liability is, as per my model, likely to opt for this course.

The Grand Strategy of the Clinton Administration

Upon its assumption of office, the administration of William Jefferson Clinton found itself facing a historically benign security environment. Not only had the final death throes of the U.S.S.R. culminated in its dissolution, leaving the United States the uncontested global superpower militarily, the meteoric economic growth of potential future challengers such as Germany and Japan had started to slow - leaving the United States veritably devoid of a peer in any major domain of national power. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the administration’s overwhelming focus was on remedying the economic malaise that had beset the U.S. at the end of the Reagan/Bush era’s, with the Clinton campaign assuming office on the back of the telling slogan that it was “the economy, stupid” that ought to concern American voters. It would appear that a combination of high geopolitical slack and a strong domestic preference for guns over butter would impel the United States towards a grand strategy that saw it trim its geopolitical sails and reorient its efforts towards providing the American people with some form of domestic “peace dividend” whereby the reduced geopolitical pressure of the post-Cold War environment could be channelled into domestic investments. Indeed, some scholars

such as Michael Mastanduno have argued that it was precisely such a grand strategy that the Clinton administration did pursue - combining a policy of reassurance towards potential adversaries such as Russia and China with economic pressure on recalcitrant allies such as Germany and Japan to liberalise their coordinated market economies along American lines (Mastanduno,1997).

In this chapter, however, I will submit the argument that, far from parsing America's geopolitical commitments, the Clinton administration expanded America's strategic liabilities and pursued highly expansive grand strategic ends, vis a vis both potential great power challengers and smaller "rogue states" in the developing world. Simultaneously, however, the administration attempted to shift the costs of expansion to alliance partners via the mechanisms of multilateral engagement, where possible and by partially devolving its power to regional allies where this expedient was not available.

In Europe, the administration set itself an increasingly expansive set of grand strategic objectives ranging from policing NATO's southern periphery to expanding the remit of NATO to include much of the former Warsaw Pact and eventually, several former Soviet states. This approach was combined with a policy of political intervention vis a vis Russia that aimed to limit the possibility that nationalists such as Vladimir Zhirinovsky would unseat the relatively pliant Yeltsin administration and, in time, would see the administration define areas of Russian domestic politics, such as its ongoing conflict in Chechnya, as falling within the remit of U.S. foreign policy interests. To be sure, the administration did engage in acts of reassurance such as arms control negotiations but given the power asymmetry between Russia and the United States, any symmetrical reductions in nuclear and conventional forces merely enhanced the U.S. strategic advantage rather than mitigating it. Moreover, given its inability to link force reductions to concessions regarded as meaningful by Russia (such as a reaffirmation of the ABM treaty) the administration's concessions to Russia were largely nominal.

It might be possible to categorize the administration's policy in Central and Eastern Europe as a combination of rollback and enmeshment - attempting to simultaneously capitalize on the

imbalance of power that existed between the U.S. and Russia while attempting to integrate Russia in a U.S. led international order through its acceptance of certain binding rules. This combination of policies might be best captured by J. Snyder's concept of "offensive détente" (Snyder, 1991, 46). Nonetheless, the administration was careful to work through multilateral alliances such as NATO, whilst avoiding substantive military commitments to its new allies in the form of repositioning troops - in effect limiting its grand strategic liabilities even as it expanded its grand strategic commitments.

In East Asia, one observes a similar pattern of offensive détente with the administration bowing to its domestic critics by making a series of commitments to Taiwan that had not been seen since the early Cold War, even as it sought to engage China on issues such as nuclear and conventional arms proliferation and trade policy. The 1990s would see Taiwanese President Lee Teng-Hui visit the U.S. to regale sympathetic audiences about his stated aim of delinking Taiwan's future from that of the Mainland - a visit that provoked a series of Chinese missile tests off the coast of Taiwan that culminated in the dispatch of two U.S. aircraft carriers to the Taiwanese littoral. Simultaneously, the Clinton administration would espouse the policy position that greater engagement with the outside world and in particular, the world economy, would fundamentally alter the nature of the Chinese regime and weaken the CCP's hold on power. Whether this rhetoric was believed or not, it certainly held currency in Beijing where the threat of "peaceful transformation" by the U.S. has been cited as a geopolitical threat by a succession of Chinese leaders. Besides, there is little to suggest that the administration did not believe that simultaneously dissuading China from converting its economic power into geopolitical influence, binding it within a web of influence and lending support to internal challengers to the CCP (however minimal and low risk the means used, such as broadcasts by Radio Free Asia and diplomatic condemnation of China's domestic practices) would not eventually produce a more pro-American government in Beijing. Indeed, administration insiders would underscore this causal process as the thread that bound together America's policies in Asia at the time (Harding, 2015). Having set this expansive (and arguably revisionist) end for itself however, Clinton's administration would push allies such as Japan to assume a larger role in its execution – as exemplified by the redrafted 1997 U.S. Japan Defence guidelines which, for the first time in its post-war history, would see the JMSDF

assume an out of area role. As such, the U.S. policy in East Asia was to maintain or even expand its defensive perimeter whilst attempting to limit liability through the expedient of co-opting local “regional policemen” such as Japan and Australia.

Finally, in the Middle East, the U.S. would abandon the U.S. policy of playing the region’s two prospective hegemon, Iran and Iraq, against each other and instead opted for a policy of dual containment - simultaneously attempting to curtail the influence of both powers. Indeed, with regards to Iraq, the ever-expanding remit of Operation Southern Watch (which would see the U.S. effectively patrol a swathe of Iraqi territory up to Baghdad) and the passage of the Iraq liberation act saw the policy transition from one of dual containment to a half-hearted form of rollback. Here, as elsewhere, however, the administration would attempt to secure “buy in” from both regional and extra regional allies. In addition to co-opting its NATO allies Britain and France, Clinton would attempt to abet the construction of a GCC plus two framework including the Gulf states, Egypt and Syria in a regional security system that would explicitly be geared to containing Iran and Iraq.

It is also within the context of efforts to construct this system, I will argue, that one might view the administration’s efforts to broker both an Israeli-Palestinian settlement and an agreement between Israel and Syria regarding the Golan heights - insofar as these long standing issues were viewed as the primary obstacles to Israel’s participation in such a system (Alsultan, Saed, 2017, 79-81). Despite superficial differences, the Clinton administration differed from that of George W. Bush only insofar as it attempted to limit liability at the grand strategic level; the Bush administration would attempt to utilize the RMA to limit the U.S.’ liability at the strategic level.

What emerges is an administration that simultaneously expanded the U.S. commitments at the grand strategic level whilst attempting to co-opt both local allies and multilateral organizations to limit the scope of the American material commitment - an outcome consistent with my model’s prediction of liberal interventionism/cooperative primacy. While the selection of this strategic equilibrium is not inconsistent with the constellation of systemic and domestic imperatives facing the Clinton administration upon its assumption of office, one can think of several potential strategies (such as retrenchment, neo Isolationism and selective

engagement) which were both equally feasible within the context of these imperatives and, should arguably have been more intuitively appealing to an administration seeking an inward “butter over guns” approach.

In the following sections, I will articulate the systemic and domestic imperatives facing the administration, along with the options these imperatives made available to Clinton, before demonstrating how the grand strategy chosen is both congruent with my model and was articulated as a result of the need to appeal to strategic cultural focal points.

Geopolitical and Domestic Constraints Facing the Clinton Administration

As aforementioned, the Clinton administration entered office in a period during which the United States enjoyed perhaps more geopolitical slack than it had at any time since the end of World War II. The U.S.S.R. had dissolved, leaving in its wake a string of weak successor states, separated from the U.S.’ NATO allies by a glaxis of states that had previously comprised the former Warsaw pact.

In East Asia, the meteoric economic rise of China had not yet impelled it to anything approaching peer competitor status, while in the Middle East, the culmination of the operation Desert Storm and the subsequent imposition of a sanctions regime upon Iraq had seen Saddam Hussein’s regime effectively contained while still maintaining its status as a potential bulwark against Iran. While scholars such as Trubowitz (2011) point to the fear of cascading ethnic conflicts or the erosion of the Western alliance as evidence that the Clinton lacked geopolitical slack (or, at the very least, that it cannot be coded unambiguously as one of high geopolitical slack). And yet, starting from realist first principles when judging the level of geopolitical slack a state faces (as both Trubowitz and this thesis do) one typically assumes that only the existence of rival great powers can be deemed to reduce the geopolitical slack available to a statesman.

While Trubowitz(2011) is , I will argue, correct to note that the need to consider the ramifications of developments such as the emergence of alliance fissures or ethnic nationalism, these concerns only existed in a context where the administration knew that its opponents would rally to the focal point of absolute security in order to blame the

administration for not coping with, or pre-empting them. The existence of these possibilities cannot be said to reduce the objective levels of slack available to Clinton, however.

Domestically speaking, the administration had strong incentives to focus on “butter” over “guns”. While it is true that Clinton had won a paltry 43 percent of the popular vote, the fact that the Republican vote had been split by the isolationist Ross Perot suggested the existence of a widespread mandate for an emphasis on butter over guns (Nordlinger,1995,24). Moreover, while the Clinton administration did attempt to break from the politics of the Democratic party’s northern industrial base on issues such as free trade and balancing the deficit in order to cope with the dilemma of governing as a Democrat in an era of Republican ascendancy, this would seem to have given it an even stronger incentive to appease its core constituencies on foreign policy grounds so as to triangulate between opponents and allies (Skowronek,1997).

As such, then, I argue that the administration had four available policy equilibria- neo Isolationism, which would see the U.S. rapidly drawdown its presence in the world, retrenchment and selective engagement, offshore balancing and cooperative primacy. Of the options available, Clinton would opt for the fourth-maintaining and even expanding the U.S. presence in Eurasia even as he sought to secure allied buy in in order to appeal to the focal point of limited liability with regards to his own supporters. The following sections will address the way in which this strategy was articulated and executed in the Middle East, Europe and East Asia respectively.

Europe

Eastern Europe and the Former U.S.S.R.

Despite the administration’s stated aim of fundamentally rewriting the rules of America’s engagement with the states of the former Warsaw Pact and Russia, it is startling to note the

degree to which Clinton felt compelled to continue Cold War policies vis a vis the region, albeit with more emollient public rhetoric than had been adopted by some of his predecessors. It is worth noting at the outset that for the purpose of organization Central Asia is included in the discussion of U.S. policies toward states in the post-Soviet space, given the symbiotic relationship between the U.S.S. R's European holdings and its former possessions in Central Asia.

At the outset, the Clinton administration possessed three possible policy options vis a vis this extended region within the context of its systemic and domestic imperatives.

The first would have been to simply maintain its Cold War position in Western Europe while leaving events beyond the remit of a now united Germany out of its political calculus. This would have entailed shallow levels of cooperation with the post-Soviet states (particularly in the form of aid to abet the process of denuclearization) and would have been compatible with a policy of retrenchment.

Alternatively, some contemporaries suggested that Clinton opt for a policy of "double containment"- remaining entrenched in Europe while using the spectre of a re-emergence Russian power to curtail any move towards independence by either individual European powers or the European community as a whole (Gardner,1994,21)

Alternatively, the administration could have opted to manage the periphery of NATO in conjunction with Russia via the mechanism of the Partnership for Peace framework- a geopolitical condominium of sorts that would have been broadly consistent with a policy of selective engagement - by and large avoiding peripheral management and, where necessary, approaching it in conjunction with the region's major stakeholder.

The approach that the administration did opt was, for all its emollient rhetoric, an extension of the Reagan doctrine. Not only would NATO be expanded to the east, eventually coming to encompass not only much of the former Warsaw Pact but the Baltic States as well, but a series of steps would be taken to deleverage the former Soviet states from Russia's orbit. For example, the administration actively supported the creation of the Ceyhan-Baku-Tbilisi

pipeline as a means of allowing states like Uzbekistan and Ukraine to circumvent Russia's stranglehold on the transport of energy reserves (Marketos,2009,73).

Similarly, the administration supported regional multilateral initiatives such as the GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Armenia and Moldova) grouping so as to coordinate efforts among regional states that feared Russian revanchism- a welcome move for the states in question, in doubt but one that contradicted the administration's stated aim of engaging Russia (Choatev,2013,144-146).

Simultaneously, the Clinton administration took an ambivalent approach to Russia itself. While the administration did engage Russia on a number of issues such as arms control and attempted to abet the Yeltsin administration economically the Clinton administration attempted to define for itself a rather wide-ranging set of objectives vis a vis Russia. In addition to enmeshment in international regimes the administration decided that the government within Russia and its domestic actions fell within the remit of the U.S. national interest. As such, the administration took a particular interest in ensuring the triumph of Boris Yeltsin over nationalists like Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, while its initially hands-off stance on Russian actions in Chechnya gave way to diplomatic interventions backed by economic disincentives (Pokalova,2015,122).

Finally, along NATO's southern flank in the Balkans the Clinton administration pursued a policy of risk preclusion-intervening in ethnic conflicts that precipitated the breakup of the former Yugoslavia on grounds that were explicitly framed in terms of absolute security. For example, Secretary of State Madeline Albright justified the air campaign against Milosevic by utilizing the Munich analogy-albeit to argue that a failure to act would see a series of inter-ethnic conflicts erupt throughout the region (Layne, 1999,9). That said, immense pains were taken to secure NATO buy in and limit the U.S. liability at the grand strategic level" (Washington Post,1993,1).

Cumulatively, the policy amounted to one that Secretary of State Warren Christopher would dub "neo containment". In the following sections, I will demonstrate the congruence between the administration's policies and my model, before tracing the process by which they were articulated.

NATO Expansion

While President Clinton had indicated a willingness to consider NATO expansion from the outset of his Presidency, stating that such a process must represent the culmination of Western policy in the region after meeting with figures such as Václav Havel, there was little initial impetus to expand NATO. Even figures who voiced support for the concept such as Secretary of State Warren Christopher gravitated towards the argument that the NACC should be the primary vehicle for U.S. foreign policy in the region (Clinton,1995 5-6) (Solomon,1998,28).

This position was soon subjected to pressure from figures such as Anthony Lake for more active engagement with Eastern Europe- a demand that was met with objections from the administration's Russia expert Strobe Talbott, who argued that expanding America's orbit eastwards would scupper any hope of renegotiating the terms of the U.S. engagement with Russia. In the wake of this rift, the administration at a principals' meeting in Travemünde initially settled upon the idea that the partnership for peace should take the place of the NACC- a compromise position between Talbott and Lake (who wished to see the administration opt for NATO expansion) (Goldeigger,1997,40-43) (Sharp,1996,154).

At the outset, however, figures within the administration voiced the opinion that the PfP could only be a stopgap solution to be viewed as a prelude to full expansion into Eastern Europe. While Clinton concurred, he was keen to avoid committing to a timetable (Solomon,1998,29).

This started to change between 1993 and 1994, following a pattern of persistent domestic criticism from figures such as Senator Lugar, who criticised Clinton's policy as one of prevarication and delay. This criticism soon found partners within the administration such as undersecretary of state Lynn Davis and Anthony Lake. These figures were joined by foreign critics such as the German defence minister Volker Ruhe, whose stated interest was in

precluding the eventuality that Germany should become the eastern flank of NATO (Solomon,1998,29).

Perhaps the most important catalyst for expansion, however, was the publication of the Republicans' contract with America in 1994, in which one of the Republicans pledges to the electorate was the expansion of NATO eastwards (Goldeiger,1997,62-64). In the wake of this statement, the President would make several statements in favour of enlargement which, though vague, were seized upon by proponents of expansion such as Richard Holbrooke to argue that this was now the official administration policy, and that plans for expansion should commence.

Indeed, even initial opponents of expansion such as Strobe Talbott would, over the course of this period become enthusiastic advocates of the concept, with Talbott arguing that expansion should encompass not just the first Warsaw pact states being considered as potential members (Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia) but the Baltic states as well, describing Russian fears of geopolitical encroachment as "neuralgic" (Brands,2008,208).

Having lurched to a position whereby it was committed to expanding NATO, however, the administration was keen to stress that no troops would be deployed on the territory of former Warsaw Pact states, and that it would eschew the deployment of nuclear forces to these territories- although it would not accede to a Russian request for a written commitment stating as much (Tsygankov,2012,1987). Moreover, administration sponsored studies made the claim that the emphasis of NATO would be to build the internal capabilities of the states being considered for

What emerges, then, is a strategy whereby the administration expanded the U.S. formal defence perimeter without expanding either capabilities or altering force deployments to meet the probable threats that should arise from this commitment. In a manner akin to what Gaddis dubbed the "hollow deterrence" of the Eisenhower era's pactomania, credibility was to be a substitute for substantive commitments. In effect, then, the administration was operating on a strategic deficit-committing to more than its existing or planned capabilities would sustain.

The results are broadly congruent with my model's predictions. More importantly, it is difficult to explain them through the lens of any other framework. From a purely realist perspective, it is unclear how an expansion to the east amounted to an aggregation of the U.S. or NATO's power. Rather than adding to the U.S. security, it attenuated the nation's military strength by frittering it on peripheral missions. Indeed, even offensive realism (a theoretical framework that should be particularly amenable to explaining a state's decision to expand its sphere of influence) falls short in this regard - as its theoretical tenets would have predicted that in the absence of the power imbalance that existed on the continent during the Cold War, the U.S. should have retreated to an offshore balancing role (Mearsheimer, 2001,50). Nor, for example, can the neoclassical realist balance of risk models of scholars such as Taliaferro (2004) explain this expansion insofar as the framework utilized by these models would imply that states tend to expand in the periphery when statesmen are in a frame of losses - a frame that cannot necessarily be applied to the government of a state still basking in its victory in the Cold War.

Finally, domestic explanations for this policy are indeterminate. On the one hand, arguments that the Clinton administration had incentives to expand NATO in order to avoid losing the vote of ethnic Polish and eastern communities to the Republicans has some merit. However, given that voters had evinced a strong isolationist sentiment in the build-up to Clintons elections, and given the effort that would eventually have to be put into convincing the Democrats' northern constituencies that NATO should expand, it is unclear why the domestic costs of a failure to expand were viewed to outweigh the benefits of doing so (Goldeiger,1999,81).

More importantly, such an approach cannot explain the willingness to expand without adequate means. If Clinton was, in fact, simply attempting to placate his domestic critics, why did he not also accede to a force structure akin to Colin Powell's proposed which would have allowed him the means to both underpin this expansion and further outflank his Republican adversaries on the issue of defence?

Instead, I will argue that while domestic politics was in fact the driving force behind NATO expansion, it was the ability of the constituencies backing the project to successfully appeal

to the focal points of absolute security and limited liability that was the primary impetus driving the evolution of the administration's policies regarding NATO.

Process Tracing the Decision to Expand NATO

Top Down Coordination

From relatively early in its tenure, the Clinton administration made a number of appeals to the focal point of absolute security that would later hamstring Clinton and his inner circle when they deliberated whether to expand NATO. In a speech holding forth on the administration's national security strategy National Security Adviser Anthony Lake would contend that America could no longer define security in traditional terms, and that its security lay in expanding its security perimeter while ensuring that rogue non-democracies were kept "Isolated.... diplomatically, militarily, economically technologically" (Lake,1993). Democratic enlargement, then, was to be the vehicle by which the U.S. could preclude adverse changes in the international order. Crucially, this was not identified as an end in itself, but as a means to precluding a plethora of risks that might envelop the world should the U.S. not take a more active role in managing the peripheries of its traditional theatres of operation.

Relatively soon, Lake's views were echoed by an internal study at the State Department by Ronald Asmus and David Larrabee entitled *The Twin Arcs of Crisis* which argued that the cascading and unpredictable effects of volatility beyond its borders meant that NATO needed to take a more expansive role in Post-Soviet Eastern Europe. The study was quickly circulated around the administration by both Lake and undersecretary of state Lynn Davis - illustrating (albeit as straw in the wind evidence) the ways in which proponents of expansion rallied to the banner of the argument for absolute security (Asmus,2002,122). Nor, importantly, need we assume that these rhetorical appeals were motivated by a genuine belief in absolute security. Lake, for example, was a committed Wilsonian who often stated that expansion was an end in itself rather than a means to an end (Goldeigger,1997). Nonetheless, the policy was framed as one aimed at risk preclusion.

Notably, critics of the policy such as Strobe Talbott avoided directly attacking the appeal to absolute security, instead contending that the partnership for peace should be adopted as a

stopgap solution until Boris Yeltsin's position in Russia had been shored up. While scholars such as Goldeigger (1997) argue that Talbott intended to utilize this argument to eventually kill the prospect of expansion the fact that he could not challenge the policy head on is further straw in the wind evidence of the focal point of absolute security in action.

Similarly, opponents of the policy such as General Shalikashvili and the officials at the Pentagon (who had expressed a deep scepticism of the value of expanding NATO-in line with a more general desire to avoid assuming unnecessary commitments) framed their opposition in terms of limited liability- with Shalikashvili contending that new partners had to be transformed into states that could satisfactorily provide for their own defence and that "before we can't talk about expansion, we ought to have something like.... The partnership for peace, the development of a relationship between the partners and the alliance that would bring them closer to us in a meaningful way, that would allow them to become more like us" (Dreifus,1995,1).

In a similar vein, then Defence Secretary Les Aspin questioned the utility of expansion at the time but conceded that NATO would need an out of area presence and would thus need to eventually expand (Lasas,2010,89). Similarly, then administration Security Adviser Charles Kupchan argued that the American people would not accept the expenditure of blood or treasure in Eastern Europe (Kupchan,1995,1)

These objections were outflanked by the production of estimates by the NSC claiming that the initial costs to the U.S. in monetary terms would not exceed 1.5-2 billion dollars and that troops would not be stationed in new territories - a claim that was repeated to recalcitrant legislative allies within the Democratic party (Goldeigger,1997,100). Effectively, the only way in which opponents of expansion within the administration could rally against the policy was by appealing to the focal point of limited liability and when this option was removed, the appeal to both absolute security and limited liability achieved substantial top down coordination both within the administration and between the administration and its legislative allies.

Smoking gun evidence that the utility of appealing to these focal points is provided in the testaments of former opponents of expansion within the ruling coalition regarding why they

had altered their course. For example, Democratic Senators such as Russell Feingold (D-NJ) Richard Durbin (R-Ill) and Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) would recount in interviews the sense that they lacked a counternarrative with which to oppose expansion- an argument echoed by other opponents of expansion such as Michael Mandelbaum (Goldeigger,1997,144-145). It appears clear that the administration was cognizant of the fact that serious opposition could only congeal around the focal point of limited liability with one insider noting in an off the record interview that the administration's "main priority was to keep costs down to reassure Congress... There was a strong political imperative to low-ball the figures." (Barany,2003,18).

Lateral Coordination

As noted earlier, conservative opposition to the Clinton Administration's foreign policy rapidly congealed around the focal point of absolute security , with figures ranging from Senator R .Lugar (who accused the administration of allowing policy to be "held hostage by Russia") to former Republican national security heavyweights such as Henry Kissinger and James Baker all appealing to the notion that a historic opportunity to lock in the advantages of the post Cole War environment had been presented by the possibility of NATO expansion (Brinkley,1997, 110-127)(Song,2016,76).

The opposition of figures such as Kissinger and Baker (statesmen noted for both their restraint in parsing ends and means and a relatively hardnosed realpolitik view of the world) is particularly noteworthy as straw in the wind evidence that the focal point of absolute security was being utilized as a coordination device by administration opponents rather than merely emerging as a function of sincerely held beliefs.

Furthermore, while figures such as Lugar had good domestic reasons to support expansion (given the number of ethnic Poles in his constituency) these same figures were quite willing to coordinate with the administration on trade policies that their constituents opposed - raising the question of why this issue in particular was regarded as an especially fruitful basis on which to attack the administration (Shaw,2012,1).

The rest of the Republican party similarly rallied around a full-throated endorsement of expansion, with the policy assuming a place in the aforementioned contract with America. It

is particularly interesting that a party that had had its primaries rocked by isolationists such as Pat Buchanan, before seeing the right-wing vote split by Ross Perot would rally around an even more expansive notion of America's role in the world. To the extent that the policy (having been adopted) faced any criticism, it was from figures such as Jesse Helms who wanted to ensure that a future NATO would represent an expansion of the U.S. security perimeter and not an empty collective security organisation devoid of a mission, reiterating the need for an assurance that "NATO is first and foremost a military alliance" - a demand which meant securing an explicit promise that Russia would have no part in NATO. This assurance was provided by figures such as Strobe Talbott in Senate hearings, whilst the framing of criticism in terms of absolute security and a continuation of the Cold War policy of defending (or even expanding) an onshore perimeter reflects the salience of this focal point to the party (Rodman,2003,72).

The inability of Republican critics to effectively outflank Clinton on the NATO issue and perhaps as importantly, the inability of an isolationist voice to emerge within the party was, in many ways, a reflection of the fact that the party had painted itself into a corner with its own advocacy of absolute security.

As Congressman Bob Smith (R-NH) put it to Republican rebels "You may be shooting Clinton, but you are hitting Reagan" (Asmus,2002,256)

Smoking gun evidence for the need to rally around the focal point of absolute security is provided by NSC Staffer James Rosner, who recalls then majority leader Newt Gingrich confiding in him that any effort to expand the "blue blob of democracy" that represented America's security perimeter could not be effectively opposed even by those Republicans who wanted to (Brinkeley,1997,118).

Finally, in terms of bottom up coordination, the effective dominance over the narrative exerted by figures such as Anthony Lake, Richard Holbrooke and Lynn Davis, coupled with the rapid coordination between them and an initially ambivalent President illustrates a general, albeit gradual convergence of all the layers of government around the focal point of absolute security. Indeed, Lake explicitly argued for the policy in terms of appealing to this focal point

- arguing to the President that this would help recover the votes of conservative Democrats (the so-called Reagan Democrats) (Goldeigger,1997,26).

The process of policy evolution regarding NATO expansion broadly conforms to the expectations of my model.

Russia/Formal U.S.S.R.

In the wake of the Soviet Union's breakup the Clinton administration was, in Henry Kissinger's memorable formulation, faced with the same conundrum that confronted the Allies after World War I – namely, where to draw the line between locking in the fruits of victory and enmeshing the vanquished state into a new international order (Kissinger,1994,140). Figures within the administration such as Strobe Talbott argue that Clinton evinced a genuine desire to integrate Russia into the global economy and the new, Western dominated international order (Talbott, 2002,94). However, policies such as efforts to influence the domestic politics of Russia, coupled with the expansion of NATO largely contradicted this aim.

Like the allies, the Clinton administration vacillated between a punitive and lenient peace - on the one hand, offering Russia the financial support it needed to avert a domestic economic catastrophe whilst on the other, expanding the remit of U.S. security policy in a manner that was all but sure to provoke a nationalist backlash within Russia. While scholars such as J. Gaddis have contended that the administration was simply not cognizant of the innate contradictions within its various policies, the fact that these contradictions had been raised within intra administration debates suggests that the existence of bureaucratic silos cannot be viewed as the major driving force behind this policy of half-hearted containment coupled with an equally inadequate form of engagement (Gaddis,2009,3) (Goldeigger,1997).

In addition to the expansion of NATO, the administration mounted a series of challenges to Russian influence within the remit of the former U.S.S.R. with the formation of the GUUAM

grouping in the wake of the signing of the Budapest Memorandum (Schadlow,1996,282). As then National Security adviser Sandy Berger had it, the underlying rationale behind the grouping was that influence in the post-Soviet security complex preceded Russian sensibilities (Schadlow,1996,282) (Johnson,2001,19). Nor can this be readily attributed to the desire for democracy promotion, given that recipients of aid such as Ukraine's Leonid Kravchuk were not particularly liberal or reformist in their outlook. Rather, the dual fears of a Russian resurgence and domestic ethnonational fuelled a policy that effectively saw the U.S. attempt to build informal influence in the former Soviet space.

Simultaneously, as has been mentioned earlier, NATO expansion was explicitly based on the assumption that a resurgence of Russian power was a threat to Europe, with the CBO arguing that expenditures on NATO should be directly linked to Russia's military spending. The expansion of NATO did include the creation of a NATO Russia council but the lack of influence that Russia possessed in this framework was laid bare during the Balkan wars where, as one scholar suggested, the NAC's authorization of the use of force in Kosovo served as a major turning point for Russia's relationship with the West, underscoring its powerless role inside the alliance" (Smith 2006,5).

On the issue of arms control, despite the administration's best intentions, it could not make meaningful concessions to Russia. The effort to initiate talks on START II floundered on a number of issues - most notably, the Russian condition that limitations on MIRVed missiles such as the SS-18 should be matched by a commitment not to test national missile defences on the part of the U.S. and a reaffirmation of the ABM treaty - concessions that could not be made in the face of Republican opposition (Clunan,2009,180).

Moreover, as nuclear weapons (particularly tactical nuclear weapons) were more central to Russia's national security strategy than that of the U.S., arms control negotiations served the purpose of ratifying the U.S. strategic advantage, rather than making concessions to Russia (Brannon,2009,39). Elsewhere, the administration looked to Russia to curtail its nuclear exports and exports of strategic technology to states such as India and Iran (Brannon,2009,39) (Cordesman, Seitz,2009,109).

Finally, although Russia was embedded in organizations such as the OSCE and G-8, the remit of the U.S. national interest vis a vis Russia began to slowly expand as membership within these organizations came to be predicated not just on foreign policy but domestic behaviour. For example, Russia's assault on Chechnya, though initially treated as a domestic affair by Clinton, came slowly to be viewed as having international significance. In the build-up to the Russian assault on Grozny, the administration supported the delay of both IMF and Exim bank loans to Russia, whilst also organizing an explicit condemnation of Russia's campaign at the OSCE (McFaul, Goldeigger, 2003, 273-276). Additionally, support in the form of loans was explicitly predicated upon the triumph of figures such as Yeltsin over ultranationalists like Vladimir Zhirinovsky, with the Clinton administration even going so far as to dispatch consultants from his own campaign to abet Yeltsin's re-election, over objections from advisors such as Lake, who cautioned that being seen as intervening in the Russian electoral process was strategically unwise (Goldeigger, McFaul, 2003, 154).

Demonstrably then, the administration's policy towards Russia combined elements of deterrence, coercion and enmeshment in an often contradictory way. This outcome is broadly consistent with my argument that a liberal strategic culture should lead to the creation of an ever-expanding security perimeter in the search for absolute security.

With reference to process tracing, evidence pertaining to the formulation of administration policies towards Russia are broadly consistent with my hypothesis. For example, the notion that any backsliding in Russia's domestic institutions would be seen by domestic critics as evidence of geopolitical failure was evident in interviews by Goldeigger (1997) who claimed that Clinton feared that Republicans might rally around the argument that "Reagan defeated Communism and Clinton brought it back" should a red/brown coalition of nationalists and Communists take control of Russia. Moreover, the administration rapidly converged on the notion that the Russian campaign in Chechnya was evidence of Russia backsliding into a policy of revanchism and required a response - with even peripheral figures such as Larry Summer joining the fray to lobby for economic penalties (Goldeigger, McFaul, 2003, 277). The pervasive fear that domestic changes within Russia, no matter how disagreeable to American sensibilities, constituted a geopolitical failure that the administration's adversaries would

rally around, broadly reflects a tacit acknowledgement of the existence of a focal point of absolute security.

At the level of lateral coordination, initial failures to respond to Russia's action in Chechnya saw Republicans rally around the focal point of absolute security, with figures such as Jesse Helms contending that the significance of Russia's campaign in Chechnya was not merely within the realm of human rights but constituted a geopolitical threat. Helms, along with Senators such as Trent Lott contended that the Russian campaign was "a brutal assault on the core values of the OSCE. "These military operations weaken each day the credibility and reliability of arms control treaties that are a cornerstone to international peace and stability." (Cohen,1999,1).

In the wake of this claim, politicians like Helms were able to quickly link obstructionism on domestic issues to the administration's perceived inaction on Chechnya (McFaul, Goldeigger,2003,279). While this likely amounted to political opportunism, the fact that a violation of the focal principle of absolute security alerted opponents to the fact that they had a pretext for obstructionism and, by extension, forced a change in the grand strategy of the Clinton administration coheres with what one might expect to see should a focal point be in operation.

Finally, despite bipartisan support on the issue of arms control, Republicans refused to ratify the START II treaty due to an unwillingness to concede ground on the issue of ABMs- instead passing the NMD Act which compelled the administration to commence inquiries into the feasibility of a national missile defence system and scuppered the possibility of substantial arms control (Thielmann,1999). It is noteworthy that Republican legislators cohered around this objection based on the principle of absolute security even in the absence of a strong base of support for the NMD among their own voters who showed a strong preference for arms control as a mechanism by which security should be increased – thereby demonstrating both the reflexive need to adhere to a focal point under uncertainty and the intra elite nature of focal point based bargaining (Gallagher,2015,9).

The Balkans

The Clinton campaign had made a point of criticizing the Bush administration's purportedly weak handling of the ethnic conflicts that were wracking Yugoslavia. Having inherited office, however, the administration was faced with the risks of continuing the existing tranche of policies (and being attacked for failing to adhere to the focal point of absolute security) and the danger of failing to limit its liabilities in the Balkans. As will be demonstrated, the administration on the one hand sought rather expansive goals in both the Bosnian conflict and the ethnic fighting that erupted in Kosovo, whilst attempting to limit liability at the grand strategic level by securing NATO buy in - thus ensuring that the ground troops used to stabilise both warzones following the end of relatively cheap limited coercive bombing campaigns, would be primarily European in origin.

Bosnia

On the campaign trail, the Clinton had heavily criticised George H.W. Bush for his purported lack of leadership with respect to the conflict between Serb loyalists and Bosnian separatists (Martel,2006,203-204). Having arrived in office, however, Clinton took a relatively risk averse approach to altering his predecessor's course, with the initial policy of "lift and strike" (lifting an arms embargo on Bosnian rebels and engaging in limited coercive bombing of Serbian positions) producing limited pinprick strikes against Milosevic's forces that were largely symbolic in nature (Drew,1995,149-152).

Moreover, the administration made it clear that securing NATO buy in and a commitment that the bombing campaigns would be carried out on behalf of NATO was a prerequisite to any intensification of the bombing of Serb positions - a position the U.S. allies acquiesced to at a special council of NATO's foreign ministers held in London in 1995 (Power,2003, 417). The combination of this buy in and the massacre at Srebrenica led to Operation Deliberate Force, Joint Endeavour and Joint Guard - NATO led bombing campaigns in which the U.S. provided the bulk of the airpower but, operating as it was under the aegis of NATO, was

neither singularly responsible for the outcome and was not bound to provide the bulk of stabilization forces should they be needed. As Admiral Owens had it, “Our view was that the Europeans should be the ones to take it forward - that any peacekeeping operations should be done by the Europeans. So, you really needed them as part of the air campaign...” (Recchia,2015,134-135).

The successful culmination of the campaigns and the de facto partition of Yugoslavia that they attained was followed up by the creation of the IFOR (Implementation Force) to which the U.S. made an initially sizable contribution of 30,000 men that was nonetheless reduced over the course of a year to 10,000 troops as IFOR gave way to a European led SFOR (Stabilization force) in Bosnia (Daldier,2000,142-143). The remit of the U.S. troops deployed was narrowly circumscribed in a number of ways, with the administration committing itself to reductions in the scope of the deployment within 12 months of its commencement and excluding actions like reconstruction from the remit of troops work (Recchia,2015,138).

Kosovo

The pattern of activity by the Clinton administration in the wake of fighting between the KLA and Serb militias in Kosovo largely mirrored its approach in Bosnia – namely, one of expanding the U.S. security perimeter while attempting to limit liability by securing allied buy in. Initially, the threat of airstrikes produced a ceasefire agreement in October 1998 that however, quickly broke down (Daaldier, O’Hanlon,2000,45-48). Following the breakdown of talks at Ramboulet, the Clinton administration was able to secure NATO approval for bombing missions in Kosovo. The air campaign waged was largely slow and ineffective, not least because of the rather selective target lists produced by intra alliance bargaining between the U.S. and its allies regarding appropriate Serb targets for the campaign (Clark 2001,213). Indeed, given the minimal size of the contingents provided by other NATO powers, the U.S. decision to subject itself and its air forces to the lengthy process of intra alliance bargaining is an empirical puzzle, unless understood through the lens of the need to limit liability in subsequent stabilization operations (Recchia,2015,155).

Despite the limitations placed on its power, the U.S. felt the need to seek a complete Serbian withdrawal, as opposed to either freezing the conflict or carrying out symbolic air raids before

washing its hands of the conflict. The fact that the Clinton administration sought fairly maximal political concessions from its opponents even as it attempted to limit the public and military liability to itself of engaging in the campaign coheres with my model's predictions.

As the campaign ground on, a wider target set was eventually agreed on as it became clear that the alliance faced the potential humiliation of being defied by Milosevic (Cordesman,2001,27). The intensified bombing produced the desired results, with a Serb withdrawal from Kosovo precipitating de facto moves towards independence. In the wake of Milosevic's capitulation, as my model would predict, the administration took pains to ensure that the KFOR, the ground force tasked with stabilising Kosovo, would be almost entirely European, with the U.S. supplying 10 percent of the troops deployed (Cimbala. Forester,2010,134).

Process Tracing the Balkan Campaigns

Top Down Coordination

Proponents of a broader administration role in the Balkans were quick to frame the Balkan conflicts' significance within the framework of absolute security, with Albright arguing that the possibility of conflict contagion in the event that the U.S. could not intervene in an area of no historical interest to it, meant that the conflict was "not a localized issue" and that "we are treating this area as a peripheral security interest. History suggests that it is a more central issue". (Recchia,2015). In a similar vein, Secretary of State Warren Christopher contended that 'the stakes for the US are to prevent broadening that conflict to bring in our NATO allies and vast sections of Europe and perhaps a World War' (Danner,2000,63).

By contrast, critics such as Colin Powell attempted to stymie the odds of an intervention by maintaining that the conflict risked becoming "another Cyprus" whilst arguing (in a manner consistent with his doctrine) that should the U.S. decide to commit forces, it should "go in heavy"- that is to say, avoid engaging in the sort of gradualism that would characterize the

conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo (Memorandum for Record PC meeting,1993). In a similar defence, Perry noted the possibility of Congressional support evaporating in the face of a protracted conflict (Recchia,2015,123).

As Leon Fuerth recounts, critics like Powell and Perry had to avoid the argument that the U.S.' credibility was hanging in the balance and instead, argue a case based on limited liability - one that was outflanked after NATO buy in was secured (Recchia,2015,175) (Soderberg,2005,82-90).

Accordingly, critics (particularly those within the military and Pentagon) slowly began giving way to the arguments of civilian interventionists on the condition that NATO and the UNPROFOR could be co-opted for post stabilisation operations in both regions. Moreover, the military acceded to a policy of limited air strikes - despite this violating the Powell doctrine (Woodward,1996,261).

Smoking gun evidence that this coordination was produced by a need to adhere to the focal points of absolute security and limited liability is provided by interviews with former Pentagon officials, with one stating that in the wake of Albright's arguments relating to credibility, "at some point we realized we were going to lose this argument and that we had to start thinking of the next step" (Recchia, 2015).

At the level of lateral coordination, we observe a similar coordination of administration critics such as Bob Dole, around the focal point of absolute security. Dole argued that the administration's vacillation over the Balkans had terminally weakened the U.S. image of resolve and had, concomitantly, opened the door for future transgressions by rogue states. In a similar vein, Richard Lugar argued that a failure to defend NATO's peripheries raised questions about the value of the organisation itself and could produce cascading effects as far reaching as its dissolution (Recchia,2015,175). That said, Congressional funding for extended stabilisation missions was largely withheld by many of the same critics of the administration's policies. As General Kerrick remarked, "Congress would say things like 'Yeah, we should do something about this' but they were very reluctant to commit forces, so they

would say ‘Who is going to pay for this? How long are they going to be there?’” (Recchia,2015,137).

The Balkan interventions then provide limited (albeit incomplete) evidence of a process of bargaining that centred around the focal points of absolute security and limited liability, as well as an outcome that is directly congruent with my model’s predictions.

The Middle East

The administration’s policy in the Middle East represented a fundamental break from past American policy in the region by its proponents. Instead of limiting itself to the narrow goal of containing either Iran or Iraq with the help of the other, the U.S. would opt for dual containment of both regimes.

As Martin Indyk, the administration’s expert on Middle Eastern affairs commented, the purpose of U.S. policy was now to “counter both the Iraqi and Iranian regimes. We will not need to depend on one to counter the other.” (Indyk,1994,13). Significantly, advisors such as Anthony Lake made it clear that the culminating point of containment would be some form of rollback, asserting that, “The regimes in Baghdad and Teheran are weaker and increasingly on the defensive. Slowly but surely, they are beginning to realize that there is a price to pay for their recalcitrant commitment to remain on the wrong side of history. This is not a crusade, but a genuine and responsible effort, over time, to protect American strategic interests, stabilize the international system and enlarge the community of nations committed to democracy, free markets and peace. It is still very much in our power to prevail.” (Lake,1994,45-46).

Evidently, administration policy toward Iraq would be predicated on the notion that “the current regime (in Iraq) is a criminal regime, beyond the pale of international society and, in our judgment, irredeemable.” (Indyk,1994,11-12). Sanctions against the economy of Iraq would be predicated on an internal change in the regime, with Madeline Albright declaring in 1997 that “Saddam Hussein’s regime would never be peaceful” and that “only a change in the Iraq’s government could result in a change in U.S. policy” (Litwak,2007,132).

The administration also signed into law the Iraq Liberation Act, which placated domestic critics who argued that it was not committed enough to the goal of regime change by allotting funds to Iraqi dissidents. To be sure, it isn't clear whether these efforts were intended to be substantive, but they nonetheless committed the Clinton administration to a position of no compromise with the regime (Henriksen,2017,149

Simultaneously, air power enforced operations such as Operation Northern and Southern Watch circumscribed Iraq's control over its own territory. Coercive bombing was also the chosen tool with which to confront any Iraqi intransigence in the face of the international arms inspection regime, as demonstrated by operation Desert Fox.

That said, the U.S. took pains to co-opt local allies such as the GCC states as well as NATO partners such as Britain and France. A combination of appeals to NATO allies under the aegis of UNSCR 688 and regional sanction vis a vis the GCC did not necessarily furnish much of the combat power, but it did both reduce political liability for future escalation and lock in the involved states into U.S. regional policy (Thompson, 2009,94-95).

As Sandy Berger said, "the strategy we will pursue is to contain ...in the short to medium term ...and work towards a new government in the long term" (Litwak,2007,135). The U.S. was thus pursuing an expansive, even revisionist regional goal whilst attempting to limit its liability at the grand strategic level by securing multilateral buy in – an outcome consistent with my predictions.

Moreover, many of the progenitors of the more hawkish elements of this grand strategy (such as the Republican Senators who forced Clinton's hand on the Iraq liberation act) framed their arguments in terms of the focal points of absolute security and limited liability, with Helms arguing upon the passage of the Act that, "the day may yet come when we are dragged back to Baghdad. I believe that day may be put off, maybe even averted, if we help the Iraqi people help themselves" (Smith,2017,100).

East Asia

The administration's policies in East Asia are similarly congruent with my predictions and in large measure, mirror the approach taken in Europe. In the wake of the collapse of the U.S.S.R. the U.S. had several options vis a vis China: pre-emption, containment, engagement and hedging.

I argue that the approach that Clinton took (often dubbed deep engagement) effectively amounted to a form of soft containment coupled with enmeshment - a policy with revisionist ends but which required modest means.

First, the U.S. commitment to Taiwan was reaffirmed, with Prime Minister Lee Teng Hui's visit to Washington (Ross,2003,235-240). The visit, coupled with Clinton's dispatch of two air craft carriers to East Asia following Chinese missile tests off the coast of Taiwan, were seen by many within China as evidence that the PRC was to be contained within the "First Island Chain".

Simultaneously, the administration sought Chinese concessions on issues such as arms sales in the Middle East (particularly the sale of Silkworm missiles to Iran) and the proliferation of nuclear technology. The latter issue was linked to the possibility of U.S. theatre missile deployments in the absence of Chinese concessions on the issue (Lampton,200, 281-284).

Perhaps most importantly, however, the Clinton administration explicitly linked the liberalization of China's economy to the liberalization of its society. The integration of the Chinese economy into the global market, it was argued, would drive the PRC towards a form of "peaceful evolution" - a process that would be abetted by the U.S. albeit using low risk means such as diplomatic pressure and the dissemination of information through channels like Radio Free Asia (Tow,2001,201-205) (Scobell, Nathan, 100). While arguably more rhetorical than real, the very commitment to a policy of eventual regime change in Beijing had very substantial ramifications for both Chinese security policy (which was predicated on the assumption that this was, indeed, the culminating point of U.S. grand strategy in the region) and the ways in which the two nations could engage.

Having set a rather broad ranging set of goals for itself, the administration chose not to match its broad ambitions with substantive forces. Instead, the administration's emphasis in East

Asia was on burden shifting, with allies such as Australia and Japan being urged to take on a greater share of regional defence. This was typified by the revised U.S.-Japan defence guidelines of 1997 which specified that a contingency in Taiwan was within the remit of conflicts in which the JMSDF could intervene (Berofsky, 2012, 241).

A similar (albeit more tacit) arrangement was sought with Australia with regards to the South China Sea.

Cumulatively, the administration's policies amounted to a combination of coercion, deterrence and enmeshment coupled with efforts to limit liability at the grand strategic level - a strategy of questionable coherence but one that is consistent with my model's predictions regarding a grand strategy of liberal interventionism/cooperative primacy.

Conclusion

It would appear, then, that the Clinton administration provides historians and strategists with an interesting puzzle – namely, the question of why an administration might simultaneously retrench militarily and expand the nation's grand strategic objectives in almost every key region of the world. As has been mentioned above, neither realist nor innenpolitik theories adequately explain the outcome while theories that synthesize the two leave us with a list of plausible outcomes for an administration facing Clinton's circumstances but with few determinate predictions.

By adding the concept of a liberal strategic culture to existing models, one can quite adequately explain this otherwise puzzling behaviour without compromising the model's parsimony or core assumptions.

The Grand Strategy of the Obama Administration

The 44th President of the United States inherited a foreign policy from his predecessor that most commentators agreed had exposed the United States to geopolitical overstretch. The Obama campaign had romped to victory in part on the back of pledges to end the unnecessary “wars of choice” that the Bush administration had initiated in Iraq and to reorient the U.S. toward “nation building at home”. Simultaneously, the U.S. was, it appeared, in the throes of an imminent decline in its relative power on the global stage. The global financial crisis of 2008, some suggested, had only catalysed a development that had been unfurling since the opening of China’s economy to the West under Deng Xiaoping -namely the ascent of China and a relative decline in America’s geopolitical heft both in East Asia and globally (Shambaugh,2013,25-30).

Nonetheless, the U.S. enjoyed most of the core structural advantages it had secured at the end of the Cold War - an all but unassailable homeland, an exponential military advantage over emerging peer competitors and the centrality of the dollar to the global financial system. Indeed, some of these advantages were even enhanced by the global financial crisis. For example, as Eswar Prasad notes, the demand for U.S. dollars and Treasury bonds actually rose as the financial crisis unfurled, with capital seeking a safe haven currency - a role for which the dollar is nonpareil (Prasad,2014).

Similarly, the quantitative and qualitative edge of U.S. forces had been eroded by the rise of regional peer competitors to be sure, but the U.S. still retained a military advantage that is likely to hold for decades even if Chinese military spending converges with that of the U.S. in real terms as early as 2025 (as the IISS estimates it could, assuming current rates of growth) given the entrenched advantages offered to the U.S. by decades of having the world’s largest military expenditures (Cordesman, Holly,2015,123)

Hence, the Obama administration represented one with high levels of geopolitical slack and a strong partisan incentive to trim the sails of America’s grand strategy. Within the contours of the strategic and domestic constraints described above, the Obama administration had several strategic options available to it.

Firstly, the administration could have opted for some combination of isolationism and collective security. This grand strategy, often propounded by figures like C. Layne would have implied abrogating American treaty commitments, ending present military commitments and engaging in a rapid drawdown of the U.S.' geopolitical footprint abroad. The grand strategy would not exclude the possibility of working with likeminded nations on issues of collective security such as terrorism or the management of the global economy but would emphasize neoisolationism rather than collective security.

The second strategic option available would be offshore balancing. This grand strategy would entail the U.S. not disengaging entirely from existing commitments but making two fundamental alterations to its strategic posture. First, the U.S. would attempt a rapprochement with regional adversaries, effectively attempting to create diplomatic triangles between its regional allies and rivals-each of which would, it is assumed, be closer to the U.S. than to each other. This would not entail the dissolution of military commitments to key regions of the world, but a parsing down of the circumstances that might trigger American engagement.

Within the rubric of this grand strategy, the U.S. would look with equanimity at regional volatility and would only engage in the event of a conflict that would fit K. Holsti's definition of a "system altering conflict" i.e. one that had the capacity to fundamentally alter the regional balance of power. Moreover, the means utilized would typically be niche capabilities such as airpower and naval capabilities rather than more costly ground commitments. The central guiding principle of offshore balancing is not the avoidance of instability per se, but mitigating its effects and ensuring that, in the event war occurs, the offshore balancer is able to dictate the peace. A related, albeit different form of retrenchment would imply a shift to a buck passing posture. Like offshore balancing, buck passing involves a willingness to shift the burden of checking regional aggressors to local actors – the difference between the two strategies is largely one of degree rather than of principle.

At the more hawkish end of the spectrum, the administration had the options of selective engagement and what S. Lobell dubs punishment. A policy of selective engagement would imply the recognition that certain peer competitors warrant the retention or even expansion

of a nation's existing military commitments in a given region. However, in order to render this expansion of a nation's geopolitical footprint compatible with economic constraints (particularly in the face of a domestic impetus to retrench) the policy of selective engagement requires retrenchment in peripheral regions so as to secure a build-up in core regions without altering the nation's overall expenditures. An example of such a policy would be Britain's retrenchment from Northeast Asia and the Americas to focus on a build up against Wilhelmine Germany prior to World War I (Kupchan,1994,34-35).

A policy of punishment, by contrast, would imply adopting a range of costly coercive measures against a specific rival so as to deter others. While measures describing punishment (ranging from trade warfare to pre-emptive war) are typically costly, they are compatible with the imperatives of a domestically oriented partisan base to the extent that they can be justified as facilitating retrenchment safely across multiple regions in the medium term. Strategists facing an incentive to reorient a nation towards domestic "butter" considerations (such as Spain's Count Duke Olivares) have found punishment an appealing option (Lobell,2006,84).

Finally, the administration had the option of what Barry Posen dubs liberal primacy. This strategy would entail a policy of indiscriminate containment, deterrence or even rollback of regional rivals, albeit with greater cooperation from regional actors, multilateral institutions and a greater emphasis of military and political means that would entail limited liability at the grand strategic level (such as sanctions, military gradualism using air and sea power and diplomatic pressure). As may be recalled, it was this grand strategic choice that the Clinton administration opted for in the early 1990s under a comparable constellation of geopolitical slack and domestic constraints.

Like the Clinton administration before it, the Obama administration would opt for a grand strategy of liberal primacy - maintaining or even expanding existing geopolitical commitments even as it attempted to lower the costs and risks of maintaining these commitments by externalizing responsibilities to local allies.

In each of the three core regions that have constituted the primary spheres of U.S. interest, the Obama administration would assume geopolitical responsibilities in excess of those it had inherited from its predecessor, even as it attempted to lower the costs of the U.S.' footprint

abroad - effectively producing the sort of “hollow expansion” demonstrated during the Clinton years. Although the administration entered office with a strategic vision that seemed congruent with the concept of selective engagement, insofar as it entailed scaling back the U.S. engagement with the Middle East while focusing on a “pivot to Asia” that would see the U.S. hedge against the power of a rising China, by the end of its tenure the Obama administration had assumed fresh commitments across the Middle Eastern and European theatres, whilst the expansion of its grand strategic ends in the Asia-Pacific was not matched by a concomitant expansion of the means dedicated to this theatre. To be sure, events that the administration could hardly control (such as the rise of ISIS or the crisis in Ukraine) drove this shift but the administration had a gamut of strategic responses available to it when reacting to these events.

The way in which the administration adjusted to these events and the tacit reversion to a grand strategy of liberal primacy despite both its own stated intentions and the existence of geopolitical slack sufficient to allow it to forgo this choice, renders this administration a particularly “hard case” for my model to pass. The congruence between my model and the grand strategic outcome observed here, moreover, demonstrates the predictive power of a model of strategic culture based on a theory of focal points.

In the Middle East, an initial withdrawal from Iraq gave way to a resumption of direct U.S. involvement in the country, coupled with an intervention in Syria following the emergence of ISIS - albeit one that was underwritten in large measure by local actors such as the Arab league and the Kurdish YPD and Peshmarga. Simultaneously, however, the U.S. led a regional coalition to contain Iran, the prime beneficiary of any rollback of ISIS influence in Iraq, through a form of active containment that saw the U.S. underwrite a GCC intervention against the Iran backed Houthis in Yemen, coupled with support for regional actors such as Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states that sought the ouster of the Iranian allied Assad regime in Syria.

The Obama administration thus found itself lurching towards a posture of “dual containment” vis a vis both Iran and ISIS reminiscent of the approach taken by the Clinton administration in the 1990’s towards Iran and Iraq - a posture directly incompatible with a grand strategy such

buck passing which would have seen the U.S. allow regional actors to act as counterweights to one another and take a disengaged view of fluctuations such as the rise of the Houthis in Yemen.

To be sure, the demands of counterterrorism might still have required U.S. action in the region (not least of all to prevent Western recruits reaching ISIS and then returning to their home nations). However, as Ian Shapiro notes, the possession of a territorial base by terrorist organisations can be met with a combination of territorial containment (preventing people from crossing over into terrorist strongholds) and periodic disruption of training camps and sites through airpower in a manner akin to Israel's doctrine of "mowing the grass" vis a vis the Gaza strip. In principle, then, ISIS could be both contained and retained as a bulwark against Iran much as Saddam Hussein had. Alternatively, the administration might have pursued a broader rapprochement with Iran aimed at rolling back ISIS and acceding to an Iranian sphere of influence in regions such as Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Lebanon. Such a posture would have been consistent with offshore balancing given that Iran's conventional weakness hardly rendered it a contender for regional hegemony (even if the U.S. would likely have had to target balance against specific Iranian capabilities such as its potential nuclear arsenal). The U.S. approach, however, was to engage Iran on the narrow issue of sanctions relief in exchange for an end to its nuclear proliferation, even as it enacted a policy of rollback against Iran across the region. Moreover, having acceded to this policy, the Obama administration would rely heavily on regional allies such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the Gulf states - therewith attenuating its control over the course of events.

Simultaneously, the Obama administration would involve itself in an intervention to effect regime change in Libya which, as will be demonstrated later, was framed explicitly in terms of absolute security whilst attempting to limit liabilities by shifting burdens to both NATO allies and regional actors such as Qatar.

Lastly, the administration would attempt, like the Clinton administration before it, to broker progress on the issue of Israeli-Palestinian relations as a prelude, it was hoped, to integrating Israel along with Egypt into a GCC +2 format that would serve as a regional counterweight to Iran and a springboard for the projection of American power in the region.

With regards to America's other ongoing regional conflict in Afghanistan, the Obama administration combined a half-hearted troop surge with an effort to shift burdens to both NATO allies and local forces whilst slowly straying from its initial promise to focus less on nation building than on counterterrorism.

Cumulatively, then, the administration's policies in the Middle East amounted to one compatible with the concept of liberal primacy and structured around the same contours as that of the Clinton administration before it.

In Eastern Europe, the administration's policies were similarly steered towards a policy of liberal primacy by pressure to adhere to the twin focal points of absolute security and limited liability. An initial effort to reset relations with Russia gave way to a policy of de facto rollback on the Russian periphery, particularly following the fall of the government of Viktor Yanukovich in Ukraine in 2014. Here, as elsewhere, however, an expansion of the U.S. geopolitical ends in areas such as Ukraine, Georgia and the Balkans was combined with an effort to shift primary responsibility for policy execution to the nations of the E.U whilst the administration remained resistant to expanding its military footprint in Europe to meet the needs of even existing geopolitical commitments such as the defence of the U.S.' Baltic allies. Effectively, then, the administration's policies in Europe saw the U.S. engage in a pattern of "hollow" expansion roughly comparable to that of the Clinton era.

Finally, in East Asia, the administration would follow a pattern of behaviour inconsistent with the envisioned "pivot to Asia" but broadly consistent with my model's predictions. Faced with the choice of assuming an offshore posture, engaging in a deterrent build up whilst retrenching elsewhere and maintaining (or even expanding) existing commitments whilst attempting to shift burden to local allies, the administration opted for the third choice.

The administration would end existing policies of "strategic ambiguity" over territorial disputes such as the Senkakus, engage the U.S. in simmering disputes such as those over the South China Sea and maintain traditional commitments to Taiwan and denuclearization on the Korean peninsula.

Additionally, the U.S. would counterintuitively, adopt a policy of “soft containment” vis a vis China through initiatives such as the TPP and efforts to discourage allied participation in China led organizations such as the AIIB – a policy that contradicts the initially stated strategy of hedging, which would imply military containment coupled with accommodation on issues such as an economic sphere of influence.

In military terms, however, the U.S. did not alter the scope and scale of its commitments to the Asia-Pacific, even as it adopted a forward military posture in the form of Airsea Battle (and its successor, the Joint Concept for Access and Manoeuvre in the Global Commons).

Instead, consistent with my model, the Obama administration focused, like the Clinton administration, on encouraging local allies such as Japan and Australia to assume a share of defence burdens and on encouraging the “Look East” policy of its emerging strategic partner, India.

Finally, in the realm of defence spending, the administration presided over modest cuts to the U.S. defence budget. While these cuts were not as drastic as has often been claimed by President Obama’s more strident critics, they were incompatible with a grand strategy that effectively saw the U.S. expand its grand strategic ends.

Effectively, then, the Obama administration’s grand strategy evolved from selective engagement to liberal primacy much like that of the Clinton administration before it. As will be demonstrated more fully in the following sections, the need to adhere to the twin focal points of absolute security and limited liability effectively compelled this evolution - despite both geopolitical incentives and the President’s own strategic beliefs - rendering this case a particularly strong test of my argument.

The Obama Administration’s Grand Strategy in the Middle East

As has been noted above, the Obama administration’s policies in the Middle East differed from those of its predecessor more in the realm of means rather than ends. Although the

administration initially appeared to be presiding over a retrenchment from the Middle East consistent with selective engagement (and inconsistent with my theory) with its withdrawal from Iraq, its policies in the region quickly ratcheted towards the equilibrium position of liberal primacy that the prevailing strategic culture would allow.

The basic security problematique facing the administration in the Middle East was less the rise of a peer competitor and more the emergence of Iran as a prospective regional spoiler, coupled with the ongoing issue of terrorism.

Compounding the issue, the Arab spring of 2011 would shine a light on the fragility of the regimes of key regional actors such as Egypt.

The Obama administration's approach to the region would, most assumed, be shaped along the contours outlined in the President's pivotal speech in Cairo - a speech that had effectively promised both relative American disengagement from the Middle East and a repudiation of the doctrine that military intervention could rebuild regional societies. The grand strategy that it eventually settled on, however, would involve the administration setting itself far more expansive targets.

First, the administration would set itself the objective of supporting internal changes within the region militarily in Libya and diplomatically in Egypt. Secondly, the administration engaged in a broad effort to contain and in places roll back the power of Iran which had, following the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, emerged as a key regional actor with a sphere of influence stretching through Iraq and Syria to southern Lebanon. The administration's strategy vis a vis Iran would involve a combination of indirect containment in Yemen and rollback in Syria, typically through reliance on local actors such as the GCC states.

Simultaneously, a combination of asymmetric means such as the Stuxnet virus and an internationally coordinated sanctions regime were utilized to first stall, and eventually roll back, the nascent Iranian nuclear programme. Concomitantly, the administration maintained or expanded existing sanctions regarding elements of Iran's ballistic missile programme - a policy which, pace Robert Pape, I code as economic warfare (sanctions aimed not at securing political concessions but rolling back a target state's military power).

Cumulatively, the combination of rollback, containment and limited engagement (on issues such as denuclearisation) is consistent with a policy of active containment and by extension, the focal point of absolute security.

Simultaneously the administration ceded a substantial degree of control over regional initiatives in Syria and Yemen to allies such as Saudi Arabia - effectively surrendering political control over the outcome in exchange for the ability to limit liability at the grand strategic level.

Following the rise of ISIS, the Obama administration effectively adopted a dual track policy of rolling back ISIS territorial holdings in the Middle East even as it continued to oppose the group's natural regional adversary, Iran, on other issues - effectively producing an emergent strategy of dual containment coupled with half-hearted rollback which was a veritable repetition of the Clinton administration's regional strategy.

The final plank of the administration's Middle Eastern policy was an effort to secure a durable peace in the U.S.'s other ongoing war in Afghanistan. While the administration had several options for achieving this end - the most obvious being scaling down U.S. objectives to the level of maintaining the Karzai regime's hold on Kabul itself along with the infrastructure to launch counterterrorist initiatives along the Afghan-Pakistan border, the administration would eventually assume a nation building posture whilst attempting to leverage local forces, regional partners and NATO allies to limit the scope of America's own commitment to the country.

Collectively, then, the administration's policies in the Middle East align with a grand strategy of devolved hegemony. In the following section's the congruence between the key components of the Obama administration's grand strategy and my chosen model will be more fully examined.

Iran

As has been noted above, in Iran the Obama administration faced a rival that was in the ascendant regionally but did not have the capacity to overturn the regional order. In conventional terms, the Iranian Navy was outspent by its counterparts in the GCC even without the prospect of American intervention while the Iranian army had not improved significantly on the force that had faced Saddam Hussein in the Iran-Iraq war. The Iranian military had developed proficiency and certain niche capabilities in the area of anti-access area denial (particularly SRBM's) but the tasks to which these tools could be set such as a hypothetical blockade of the straits of Hormuz were likely to be components of a deterrent strategy rather than a militarily compelling approach (Cordesman, 2010, 10-15).

Nonetheless, the Iranian regime had developed the capacity to project its influence through the region through the use of sub conventional means (in particular its support of sympathetic Shi'a militias such as Moqtada al Sadr's Mahdi army in Iraq and Hezbollah in Lebanon).

Moreover, the Iranian regime's longstanding pursuit of a nuclear breakout capability had left the regime with the capacity to conduct its proxy wars more aggressively under the protection of a nuclear umbrella. The Iranian regime had, in fact, successfully demonstrated the capacity to act as a regional spoiler with a sphere of influence, even if it was not and still is not a prospective regional hegemon.

Within this geopolitical context and in light of its own domestic imperatives, the Obama administration had several policy options available to it. Consistent with a policy of offshore balancing, the administration could have, in theory, opted for a "hands off" posture towards regional developments that did not portend the rise of Iran as a regional hegemon. To be sure, the U.S. might need to maintain the capacity to credibly signal that it might intervene regionally in very specific circumstances (such as the rise of an Iran supported insurgency in the Shia dominated east of Saudi Arabia) and might well feel the need to buttress the counterinsurgency capabilities of regional allies but, beyond this, it would have little cause to intervene in the region's politics.

Alternatively, the U.S. might have engaged in what Tang (2000) dubs a policy of hedging - maintaining or upgrading its commitments to the region whilst not attempting to

actively contain or reverse Iranian gains. Indeed, rising Iranian power might well have increased the level of leverage that the U.S. had over its allies and by extension, the excessive erosion of this power would not necessarily serve the interests of a power such as the U.S. which depended in large measure on its ability to maintain a local alliance network in order to influence regional affairs. Offshore powers, then, can usually welcome the rise of continental competitors which, by their existence, raise local demand for the support that the maritime power might provide.

As Gladstone would note with regards to the British position in the Americas at the turn of the 20th century, the destruction of French continental power in Canada “...so infinitely lauded, killed dead as a mutton our best security for keeping the American Provinces” insofar as it had deprived the Colonials of the primary rationale for seeking British protection (Narizny,2007,208).

A policy of reflexively opposing increases in Iran’s regional influence cannot be assumed to be simply a natural or mechanical response to structural incentives.

Alternatively, the U.S. might have “target balanced” against specific Iranian capabilities even as it acted as a buck passer in other areas. Efforts to roll back the Iranian nuclear programme (either by sanctions or through targeted air strikes) could be combined with an overall posture of buck passing to regional allies (Lobell,2018).

Ultimately, at the more hawkish end of the spectrum, the U.S. could, in principle, have opted for a strategy of punishing a rising contender through limited warfare (aimed at targeting the strategic infrastructure of organisations such as the IRGC and Iranian military) or fostering insurgencies among Iran’s myriad ethnic minorities as a form of asymmetrical retaliation against Iran (Pollack et al,2011). While some of these options (particularly proxy wars) seem to have been a priori, strategically infeasible the possibility of adopting a policy of punishment was broadly feasible.

The final policy option, which the administration did opt for, was a policy that might be dubbed active containment. Consistent with the principle of absolute security, the Obama administration actively sought to contain or roll back Iranian influence in several peripheral regions such as Yemen and Syria, albeit whilst attempting to shift liability at the grand

strategic level to regional partners. In Syria, the administration demanded the departure of the Iran backed Assad regime and abetted regional allies to take a more active role in building Syria's opposition. Moreover, the U.S. would substantially increase the supply of arms to allies such as Saudi Arabia before and during the GCC led intervention in Yemen - effectively pursuing a policy of indiscriminate containment indirectly at the grand strategic level (Youssef,2014).

To this end, the administration would set up the Foreign Military Sales Procurement Office to expedite sales to the GCC states and initiate annual GCC leadership summits at Camp David with the objective of coordinating the policies of the GCC states on issues such as the adoption and deployment of missile defences in the Persian Gulf region to counteract the strategic influence of Iran's ballistic missile program. Effectively, then, it would appear that the administration set itself a range of very expansive goals vis a vis Iran - eroding its conventional deterrent and rolling back its regional sphere of influence, even as it relied upon local actors to shoulder the burdens of the policy. This is consistent with a policy of liberal primacy which, as per my model, should see the U.S. limit liability at the grand strategic level.

Simultaneously, the administration created a multilateral sanctions regime aimed at compelling the Iranian regime to make concessions apropos its nuclear programme. While this policy was compatible with several grand strategies, the administration was careful to frame it in terms that rendered it a subcomponent of a grand strategy of active containment rather than hedging or offshore balancing. The administration took pains to stress that it was not linking the deal to a wider rapprochement with Iran and that the eventual adoption of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action which saw the P-5 +1 countries roll back sanctions in return for Iranian concessions in the sphere of nuclear policy, would not see the U.S. alter its broader policies towards the region. Nonetheless, any specific concessions (such as the administration's tacit acceptance of the legitimacy of the Iranian regime) typically did meet with domestic criticism with opposition groups showing particularly strong coordination on what they framed as President Obama's weak support for Iran's anti-government protestors following the controversial Iranian Presidential election of 2009-10. Following this, Republicans such as Senator James Lankford (R-Oklahoma) observed that "The administration

is still held hostage to its own deal, worried that Iran will back out of the deal if the U.S. doesn't do everything Iran wants it to and I think we will see that to the very end with this administration," (Siegel,2016,1).

Moreover, a perceived failure to pursue a positive agenda vis a vis Iran (as opposed to merely satisficing) was alleged by administration insiders as well, with Hillary Clinton claiming later to have pushed for a harder line vis a vis Iran's regime regarding its internal repression (Clinton,2014,89).

The need to adhere at least minimally to the nostrum that internal reform of an adversary was central to a lasting peace did, it appears, cause the Obama administration's State department to announce sanctions on the IRGC, the Basij and the Iranian police in response to their role in human rights abuses. This decision was incompatible with the initial strategy of pursuing a compartmentalized agreement with Iran whilst abstaining from conflict regarding other issues, but was consistent with the need to adhere to the focal point of absolute security (even as the US relied on limited means such as sanctions as their policy instruments of choice) (Fayazmanesh,2013,293).

Finally, with regards to Iran's existing and prospective conventional capabilities, the U.S. attempted to contain or erode existing Iranian conventional platforms. Despite Iran's initial instance, the U.S. refused to link a waiver on sanctions related to Iran's conventional ballistic missile programme to the nuclear negotiations. Indeed, the U.S. would expand and extend several sanctions related to Iran's conventional missile program (Maloney,2016,1). Similarly, the U.S. opposed the purchase of S-300 SAM batteries from Russia by Iran - eventually prevailing upon Russian leaders to halt the sale (Rogin,2010,1).

Collectively, then, U.S. policies towards Iran amounted to a policy of rollback with expansive goals that encompassed rolling back Iran's local sphere of influence, curtailing and eroding its conventional deterrent and placing the domestic policies of Iran within the remit of what the U.S. might consider a national security interest. In large measure, however, the administration attempted to outsource this policy of containment to regional actors (a point

that will be more fully demonstrated in the sections on Syria and Yemen) and relied heavily on local multilateral groupings such as the GCC and Arab League - effectively adhering to a policy of qualitative multilateralism and the use of low cost tools such as sanctions that are consistent with an indirect/limited liability approach at the grand strategic level.

Syria

When protests against the regime of Bashir Al-Assad morphed into a violent insurgency in 2011, the Obama administration was faced with the unwelcome choice between involving America in a conflict that might see its hopes of retrenching from the Middle East dashed and on the other hand, facing accusations of disengagement and weakness in the event that the administration did not take a hard enough line against the Iran supported regime in Damascus. When considered in light of systemic and domestic imperatives, the administration had several plausible policy options on Syria.

First, it could adopt a posture of neutrality vis a vis the conflict that would have involved engaging in some form of arms embargo to the combatants - an outcome that would likely have seen the Assad regime triumph in the absence of support from local American allies. This option would be broadly consistent with both offshore balancing and engagement - insofar as it would have sent a message to Iran that while the U.S. was willing to act to contain specific Iranian initiatives (such as its nuclear programme or its capacity to coerce the Gulf states with conventional missiles) it was willing to acquiesce to Iran's role as a regional power.

Alternatively, the U.S. had the option of diplomatic condemnation backed by little substantive action - a policy that would have aimed to avert domestic criticism without involving the U.S. in the Syrian imbroglio.

A third policy option available to the administration was that chosen by Israel – namely, conflict containment which would have made pre-empting the spread of Syrian arms to

organisations like Hezbollah and equipping regional allies to contain any instability within Syria the U.S.' primary goals.

Fourthly, the administration could engage in a host of coercive measures both directly and indirectly in order to compel the Assad regime to make specific concessions to the opposition. This policy, floated by scholars such as K. Pollack, would have involved directing the creation of a regional coalition to arm Syria's opposition and create an army capable of forcing the Al-Assad regime into a power sharing arrangement (Pollack,2014).

Lastly, the administration had the option of attempting a regime change either by the direct use of force or by indirect means such as arming proxies. This approach, particularly when it relied on regional allies to assume the bulk of the political and military risks of articulating a Syrian strategy, was more congruent with the focal points of absolute security and limited liability - even as it committed the administration to a grand strategy of active containment in the Middle East that was at odds with its initial strategic aims.

Despite the President's initial hesitation in involving the U.S. in a complex and evolving strategic conflict, much of the administration rapidly rallied around the focal point of absolute security, with figures such as CIA Director Leon Panetta and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton marshalling the argument that failure to stabilise Syria would produce cascading instability in the region Panetta (Clinton 461-65) (Panetta 2014,449-450). Similarly, critics both within and outside the ranks of the government formed a loose coalition around the focal point of absolute security with legislative opponents such as John McCain and Lindsey Graham rallying with former administration officials such as Anne Marie Slaughter to publicly argue for some form of American intervention to force the Assad regime to step aside. Typically these arguments were framed around the concept of absolute security – specifically, the notion that unless the Assad regime was removed and the U.S. could dictate the terms of any post-war Syrian peace process, the root causes of regional instability would remain and metastasise into more dangerous forms (Abrahams,Glaser,2014) (Slaughter,2012). Effectively, these arguments took the form of appeals to the precautionary principle.

In response to this top down and lateral coordination by both allies and adversaries alike, the administration took a host of measures to both signal rhetorically that it was committed to the removal of the Assad regime and to do as much towards achieving this end as it could, short of involving the U.S. directly in the country. Assad, it was declared, must depart from his role as President before any meaningful talks on a post-war settlement could begin (Reuters,2015,1).

To this end, the U.S. set about “hardening” Syria’s neighbours such as Jordan and Turkey - deploying F-16 fighters along with 2200 ground troops to the former and patriot missile batteries to the latter. The effect of this decision was to inoculate these countries against any form of Syrian retaliation for their support for various Syrian rebel groups. To be sure, the process of hardening could have been compatible with a more modest policy of containing the conflict but, had this been the case, it is likely that U.S. troop deployments would have been coupled with demands that its beneficiaries avoid escalation against Syria (Chollet,2016,149).

Moreover, the U.S. would increase the volume of its arms supplies to actors such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar during this period, with the administration allocating 500 million dollars to the training of select rebel groups in Qatar and Jordan during this period (Chollet,2014,150). Additionally, the types of weaponry that the U.S. was willing to commit to the field demonstrated an intent to inflict serious military losses on Assad’s forces, rather than merely a token commitment as some allege.

First, through actors such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar and later overtly as part of its final Defence Appropriations Bill, the Obama administration allowed Syrian rebel groups access to platforms such as shoulder launched anti-aircraft MANPADs and Milan anti-tank missiles - equipment with direct military utility against the fixed wing and armoured components of Assad’s forces which gave them a tactical edge over the Syrian opposition (Washington Times,2016).

Consequently, the charge laid out by scholars such as C. Dueck (2016,200) that the administration's commitment to Syria was merely salutary does not pass muster. To be sure, consistent with my theory, the administration eschewed potential direct applications of U.S. power (such as the creation of a no-fly zone) and did not, much to the chagrin of its critics, order direct military intervention following the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons. However, those who code the Obama administration as a retrencher ignore the fact that he still felt compelled to facilitate substantive and militarily efforts by regional allies to arm a cornucopia of Syrian opposition groups - this despite strong data showing a strong public consensus behind a policy of retrenchment, with 58 percent of Americans surveyed in 2011 arguing that the U.S. should eschew foreign commitments to "do more at home" (Pew,2011).

Instead, consistent with my theory, the administration opted to expand U.S. security interests within Syria (which had previously been non-existent) whilst simultaneously limiting liability by relying on local allies to drive the Syrian policy-even at the cost of eschewing American control over the outcome.

The rise of ISIS in parts of western Syria in 2014 altered the details of this policy but not its guiding assumptions. The Obama administration committed itself to a policy of dual rollback while simultaneously arming the anti-Assad opposition and relying heavily on the Kurdish YPD, backed by American airpower, to roll back ISIS.

Although the latter strategy resembles Rumsfeld's approach to Afghanistan, the participation of an ad hoc coalition of NATO allies such as Britain and France along with several regional actors allowed the U.S. to scale back the scope of its military commitment - rendering the policy indirect at the grand strategic level (Cutler,2017,117). Thus, the administration was able to conduct the campaign against ISIS at a relatively marginal cost of 14.3 billion dollars over the span of 4 years (Department of Defence,2018).

Altogether, then, the policies articulated and executed by the Obama administration in Syria broadly follow a pattern expected of an administration forced to adhere to the twin focal points of absolute security and limited liability.

Consistent with my model, the administration actually expanded the U.S. grand strategic ends in the region, even as it scaled back the remit of the U.S. direct military commitment to the region.

Iraq

In Iraq, the Obama administration's strategy initially centred around a desire to withdraw whilst maintaining a skeleton force of 10,000 troops to help buttress the Iraqi military. In the face of Iraqi hesitation to sign a status of forces agreement, however, the administration was content to preside over a rapid withdrawal of American forces from Iraq - a move aimed at placating a Democratic electorate that had been promised retrenchment from the Middle East, according to critics (Dueck,2016,100).

Following the emergence of ISIS and the rout of the Iraqi army by the group in Mosul and Fallujah in 2014, the administration returned to Iraq, pursuing a strategy that relied heavily on the use of U.S. airpower coordinated by special forces forward operators against ISIS whilst simultaneously relying on the Iraqi and Peshmarga units into which these operators were embedded in order to seize and hold territory.

The U.S. set itself the following objectives in Iraq:

1. Build a more inclusive, multi-sectarian government in Iraq and securing a post-Assad political transition to a more inclusive government in Syria that will help prosecute the campaign against ISIS.
2. Deny ISIS safe haven.
3. Build Partner Capacity, along with allies, in Iraq and Syria.
4. Intensify intelligence collection.
5. Disrupt ISIS's finances.
6. Counter ISIS's messaging campaign.
7. Disrupt the flow of foreign fighters.
8. Humanitarian support for those displaced by the conflict.
9. Protect the homeland (Edelman, McNamara,2017,155)

To this end, the U.S. pressured the Incumbent President Nouri Al-Malki to vacate office in favour of a more moderate and less sectarian leader in Haidar Al-Abadi. Effectively, the

Obama administration was committing itself to simultaneously rolling back ISIS in Syria and Iraq, even as it committed itself to rolling back the Iranian sphere of influence in both countries.

Nonetheless, the administration was keen to emphasise that it would not be initiating a ground war in Syria and that this would be a locally led effort with the President stating, “I won’t commit our troops to fighting another ground war in Iraq, or in Syria... It’s more effective to use our capabilities to help partners on the ground secure their own country’s futures.” (Knickerbocker,2014).

In addition to a reliance on local allies to provide the primary impetus on the ground, the U.S. relied, as previously mentioned, on a combination of NATO partners and GCC states to share both the costs and political liability of an anti-ISIS campaign – thereby spreading risks at the grand strategic level (SUSRIS,2014).

Yemen

In Yemen, the U.S. effectively found itself supporting a GCC campaign in a peripheral state that directly contradicted some of its previous strategic aims in the country by, for example, creating a power vacuum that Al-Qaeda in Yemen could fill. The rationale for backing the GCC intervention in Yemen rested on the domino logic typical of appeals to absolute security seen over the course of the period studied. The rise of an Iran backed Houthi regime in Yemen, it was assumed, would precipitate instability in the Shia dominated east of Saudi Arabia. Apart from the fact that GCC states had proved capable of adroitly crushing such instability when it arose in Bahrain, for example, the assumption that a Houthi regime barely in control of its own country could export revolution was dubious at best.

Nonetheless, consistent with its grand strategy, the administration attempted to secure absolute security on the cheap - sending 45 Intelligence advisors to aid the GCC force dispatched to restore the rule of President Hadi with targeting data. In addition, the U.S. approved consistent increases in arms sales to Saudi Arabia, the coalitions lead actor, after it became apparent that a Saudi war against Yemen was a likelihood, with sales topping 90.5 billion dollars’ worth of equipment, in addition to which the administration replaced the

PGMs which the coalition was expending on targets in Yemen (Blanchard, 2017,16). Finally, the U.S. Navy was deployed to ward off any attempts by Iran to disrupt the coalition's activities off Yemen.

It is not clear whether the indirect U.S. intervention could be framed as a response to geopolitical changes. That it was viewed as an intervention (rather than just a continuation of existing U.S. policies of arming regional allies) is evident in the testimony of CENTCOM's commander General Lloyd Austin, who confirmed to the Senate that U.S. actions constituted an intervention and should thus be guided by a clearer strategic rationale -something that he believed had not been articulated by either the U.S. or the Saudi government yet (U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing,2017).

The administration's messaging adhered to the focal point of absolute security, with Assistant Secretary of State Blinken framing the U.S. intervention in terms of the objective of sending a deterrent message to "the Houthis and their regional allies"- an oblique reference to Iran which, it was claimed, would be emboldened by the emergence of a pro-Iranian regime in Sanaa (Reuters,2015,1). It is also dubious whether the emergence of a weak ally more likely to act as an albatross around the neck of the staggering Iranian economy as opposed to a geopolitical threat really represented anything more than a very marginal increase in Iranian influence in the region.

In a similar vein, the administration's critics initially rallied around the focal point of absolute security – either alleging that the administration needed to do more to support the GCC in Yemen (as Senators McCain and Graham would) or contending that the supposed emollient of the JCPOA had emboldened Iran to attempt a wider assault on the regional order. This is noteworthy, given that both McCain and Rubio would later criticise the Trump administration for what they dubbed unconstrained and excessive weapons sales to Saudi Arabia - suggesting that the logic of alliance maintenance or Saudi lobbying cannot be deemed a sufficient cause with which to explain their criticism (McCain, Graham,2015) (Fang,2015) (Wolfgang,2017). Instead, whatever the motives of the President's opponents, their opposition only appears to have become meaningful when it could coalesce around the focal point of absolute security.

The administration appears to have been able to use appeals to absolute security and limited liability to secure bipartisan support for its policies towards Yemen from an otherwise obstructionist legislature - with a bill to defund military aid to the GCC on account of the humanitarian casualties being inflicted in Yemen failing in the Senate by a margin of 26 to 11 (Barett,2016).

Libya

The administration's response to the spread of Arab spring protests to Libya similarly illustrates the Obama administration's evolution from a posture of retrenchment to one of hollow expansion. The administration effectively committed itself to a doctrine of humanitarian intervention to preclude the risks attendant in the violent civil wars that attended challenges to authoritarian rule in the region.

Faced with a nascent civil war between the regime of Moammar Gadaffi and a rebellion that had developed around a nucleus of mutinous military units in the east of the country, the administration chose to seek U.N. sanction for a limited no fly zone which would eventually evolve into a no drive zone and, finally, into an air campaign aimed at ejecting the Gadaffi regime from Tripoli.

To achieve this objective, the coalition led by the U.S. gradually expanded the remit of its operations from preventing a regime takeover of Benghazi and potentially, the subsequent slaughter of civilians that was expected to ensue should Gadaffi's forces retake the city. Now the main emphasis of coalition operations would be efforts to degrade and destroy core elements of Gaddafi's security apparatus such as the 32nd "Khamis" brigade (one of the few heavily armoured units in Gadaffi's army which was manned by loyalists and placed under the control of Gadaffi's son Khamis). Similarly, coalition airpower played a key role in facilitating rebel breakthroughs in battles such as Adjabiya, where coalition airpower both facilitated a rebel breakthrough and targeted fleeing regime forces, which represented a clear break from the U.N.S.C mandate obtained. Finally, the U.S. and its allies would conduct an expansive air campaign against Gaddafi's command and control facilities in Tripoli (Zenko,2016) (Fahim,2011).

Notably, the administration opted to rely upon both multilateral legitimization from the U.N. in the form of UNSC 1973 and the legitimization of regional multilateral institutions such as the Arab League, coupled with support from a coalition of NATO allies which conducted 90 percent of the sorties against regime targets (Sanger, 2013, 346-348). To the extent that the U.S. was involved, it was through the provision of niche capabilities such as predator drones, along with aircraft such as the A-10 Warthog later in the campaign as coalition stockpiles of munitions were eroded.

The administration's policies toward Libya directly accords with a policy of liberal primacy which differed from that of the previous administration largely through its use of different grand strategic means such as multilateral legitimization and coalition warfare as opposed to the unilateral use of force. Like the Clinton administration in the Balkans, the Obama administration had preferred to expand the remit of the U.S. national security interests in order to pre-empt regional instability whilst relying on multilateral coalitions to ensure that the U.S. "led from behind" - thereby limiting both reputational liability and costs.

Nor could this choice be deemed to be predetermined - remaining neutral or limiting coalition objectives to the protection of Benghazi itself were all plausible alternatives to an intervention aimed at the maximalist goal of regime change even as it attempted to limit the scope and scale of the U.S. involvement. Nor can it necessarily be argued that allied pressure rendered limited options or neutrality inoperable. Allies such as France had taken a hawkish stance on Libyan regime change but others, such as Italy, were weary of joining a coalition to topple a leader who was viewed as a useful trading partner and bulwark against illegal migration from north Africa. Indeed, Silvio Berlusconi only joined the coalition after the U.S. made its stance on Libya clear. Similarly, allies such as Norway actually withdrew from the coalition after the remit of its mission was expanded (Alhadeff, 2016, 128). It would appear, then, that there was enough intra-European dissent to make the argument that the Obama administration was pulled towards an intervention by its allies implausible.

The rhetoric by which the campaign was legitimized and rationalized by administration insiders, moreover, was predictably linked to the concepts of absolute security and limited liability. For example, President Obama would claim in a public justification of the conflict that an absence of U.S. leadership would signal a collapse of U.S. credibility in the region (Chollet,2016,145). This argument would be repeated by Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes who stated that “If we were to sit this one out...it would send the message to the world that the U.S. isn’t really serious about leadership” (Chollet,2016,156)

Nonetheless, the administration, like Clinton in the Balkans, was keen to emphasise that the U.S. “would not put boots on the ground” and “would not put ground troops in Libya” and would seek to “transfer responsibility to our allies and partners” - eschewing even a minimal post-war role and all but ensuring the emergence of a chaotic post-war order in which rival militias, backed by different regional powers such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Qatar vied for control of the country (Widmaer,2015,150).

Afghanistan

Afghanistan represented an interesting case for the Obama doctrine. On the one hand, the country had been identified as a necessary area of U.S. interest but on the other, the failure to produce a viable government in Kabul after years of nation building made the Afghan government, whose President Karzai was privately derided as the “mayor of Kabul” due to the very limited writ of the government outside the capital, a case in point for the President’s campaign slogan that “nation building should start at home”.

Several strategic options suggested themselves. First, consistent with an overall policy of retrenchment and with many of the President’s own stated preferences on the campaign trail, the U.S. should leave enough troops in the region to secure the Karzai government’s hold on Kabul and eschew nation building in the rest of the country. Instead, the emphasis of campaigns would be counterterrorism, with the use of technology such as drones, coupled with a network of special forces bases used to launch systematic raids on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region. This posture was so risk free that it could be maintained over an

extended (and perhaps indefinite) period in a manner akin to the Israeli doctrine of periodically “mowing the grass” along its extended frontier (Sanger, 2013, 140).

The second option endorsed by figures such as General Stanley McChrystal was a substantial troop surge of around 40,000 troops aimed at destroying the infrastructure of the Taliban across several provinces before handing off to Afghan forces.

The option opted for by the administration amounted to a compromise position. While the U.S. did surge in Afghanistan, it did so with only 30,000 troops (Marsh, 2014, 180-185). Moreover, the administration announced that the withdrawal of the troops being surged to Afghanistan would begin within a year - a difficult decision to square with purely strategic imperatives as the announcement gave the Taliban ample reason to assume that time was on its side. Moreover, the surge would be combined with an increased emphasis on counterterrorism. As Hastings (2012:135) argued, “In the end, Obama attempts to split the difference—he gives the military the troops they want but tells them they need to leave sooner than they’d like to. He thinks this asserts his authority and proves that he hasn’t caved. The Pentagon reads it another way: he gave us what we wanted”.

However, the question of why splitting the difference was a reasonable choice remains. Politically, the administration had a strong mandate for withdrawal; indeed, many of the timetables it set were fixed in fear of being seen as violating this mandate. Part of the answer is that military officials were able to form partisan coalitions in the legislature, as well as intra administrative coalitions with sympathetic figures such as Secretary Clinton and Secretary of Defence Robert Gates based on the focal point of absolute security. Essentially the argument was that an Afghanistan left to fester would only resume its role as a hotbed of regional instability (US Congress, Senate Committee on Armed Services 2009) (Marsh, 2014, 180-185).

Furthermore, the administration pushed NATO allies to increase their own troop commitments to Afghanistan so as to lessen the political and military burdens borne by the United States. Finally, 17,000 troops were committed to the task of training Afghan forces for counterinsurgency operations. Crucially, while these alterations shifted the burden of political and military liability to local actors, they represented an eschewal of the narrow objective of

counterterrorism and a renewal of the Bush administration's emphasis on nation building - although with efforts to shift liability to local actors and international coalitions (Bugeja,2014,145).

Clearly, then, the Obama administration's Afghan strategy with its combination of maximalist ends with efforts to narrowly circumscribe the liability of the U.S. in the theatre is broadly congruent with my model, as is the process of bargaining that produced it.

Cumulatively, the Obama administration's policies in the greater Middle East are congruent with my model. Rather than retrenching, the administration actually expanded the strategic involvement of the U.S. in the middle east even as it relied ever more heavily on a combination of regional policemen, local allies and multilateral institutions to limit liability at the grand strategic level.

Eastern Europe/Russia

As with the Middle East, the Obama administration, initially poised to preside over a process of retrenchment from Eastern Europe, merged with some form of accommodation of Russia as a regional power. Such a stance would make fairly obvious strategic sense, despite the accusations of naivete levelled at it by critics such as Dueck (2016) inasmuch as retrenchment from the Soviet periphery represents a vital first step in any policy of rebalancing American power towards the Asia.

Moreover, as W. Wohlforth noted - Russia, with its long land border with China and its sphere of influence in Central Asia which is increasingly vulnerable to Chinese encroachment represents a natural component of any coalition to eventually constrain the rise of Chinese power in the East. Ensuring that Russia did not feel the need to view the West as a primary geopolitical threat would, it would seem, be central to any policy of selective engagement, offshore balancing or buck passing - all three of which would call for the U.S. to concede to Russia a sphere of influence in what remains of the CIS.

Initial administration policies did seem to point in the direction of such an approach. For instance, the administration scrapped its predecessors' planned missile defence system in Eastern Europe, opting instead to leave the defence of Europe from Iranian missiles to platforms such as Aegis destroyers that could be deployed in the eastern Mediterranean. In a similar vein, the U.S. and Russia signed a new START treaty while the U.S. aided Moscow diplomatically in its bid for WTO membership. In return for this cooperation, the U.S. received Russian support in the UNSC regarding a no-fly zone over Libya, along with Russian cooperation in the six party talks on North Korea's nuclear programmes and the U.N. backed sanctions against the regime in Pyongyang (Misher,2009).

It is not clear that this trading of quid pro quo concessions is, strictly speaking, an accommodationist strategy but it is somewhat inconsistent with my model.

Perhaps more consistent with my model, it is this period of U.S. – Russian relations that saw the greatest level of domestic coordination against the President's policies regarding Russia. Legislative opponents such as Senator McCain would try to scupper the ratification of START while those Republicans who could be framed as “soft” on President Obamas engagement with Russia such as Senator Lugar (who had a history of support for arms control) would later describe the experience as being akin to “wearing a political albatross” (Homan,2016,100) (Carafano,2010).

The degree to which the Obama administration ever did offer asymmetric concessions to Russia is unclear, moreover. The START treaty, for example, did not include two of Russia's key demands - an explicit acknowledgement of the linkage between offensive and defensive weapons platforms and the inclusion of conventional “global strike” capabilities such as strategic bombers and cruise missiles, which Russia fears might constitute a conventional counterforce capability, within the ambit of the treaty (Monaghan,2016,670) (Woolf,2017,120).

By late 2011, however, the administration had, in any case, begun to abandon a policy of limited engagement with Russia. Russia's construction of a Eurasian Economic Union was framed as a threat by Hillary Clinton, who cast the project as a new iteration of the Soviet

Union stating that “We know what the goal is and were going to look for ways to slow down or stop that” (Levine,2015,214). Moreover, a combination of the unexpected expansion of the administration’s war aims in Libya (which left Russian leaders feeling that they had been lied to by the U.S.) and the decision by the administration to head off potential domestic critics by expressing deep concerns about democratic backsliding in Russia (thereby exacerbating Russian fears regarding Western interference in Russia’s domestic politics) all pulled the administration inexorably towards a policy of active containment (Radio Free Europe,2011) (David, 2017,175) (Goodenough,2011).

The transition to a policy of active containment really emerged in 2014, however, following the fall of the Yanukovich government in Ukraine. The administration immediately took an active role in encouraging the integration of a post Yanukovich Ukraine with the West. Following the Russian annexation of Crimea and the initiation of a conflict in the Donbas, the administration initiated a round of multilateral sanctions in coordination with its E.U partners. The ends set for Ukraine (a country which had previously not been within the ambit of any American treaty) included a full Russian withdrawal from Crimea, coupled with an OSCE monitored ceasefire in Donbas. Notably, primary responsibility for policy coordination and execution was outsourced to local powers - particularly Germany - thereby satisfying the criteria of an indirect approach at the grand strategic level (Larson 2018,2). The administration also started the process of delivering nonlethal aid to Ukraine’s army (Pfifer,2015). Elsewhere on the Russian periphery, the administration demurred on resuming its predecessor’s drive for Georgian membership of NATO, but it did nonetheless sign a bilateral strategic partnership with Georgia, coupled with the creation of a NATO-Georgia council - a tranche of policies that represented at least a partial rollback of Russian influence in a region within its “near abroad” (Nixey,2010,153).

Notably, however, the administration failed to bolster deterrence in territory NATO already protects – namely, its exposed Baltic flank. Despite engaging in exercises with Baltic militaries through the decade NATO committed a single brigade to Baltic defence on a rotation basis. This was well short of the estimated seven brigades needed to guarantee conventional deterrence in the Baltics and left the region at risk of having its capitals overrun within 60

hours of a prospective conflict with Russia Berryman,2011,236) (Shlapak, Johnson,2016-1-8) (Carter,2015).

It appeared that the Obama administration adopted a policy of challenging Russian pre-eminence in its post-Soviet periphery in regions where the U.S. had no treaty commitments; even the oft cited Budapest memorandum merely obligated the U.S. along with the other co signatories to respect Ukrainian sovereignty, not defend it.

Simultaneously, however, the U.S. eschewed substantive military commitments to existing allies and attempted to shift the onus of policy engagement with Russia to local allies.

This represented a pattern of “hollow expansion” consistent with the spirit of NATO expansion in the 1990s under the Clinton administration and is broadly congruent with my model’s predictions.

East Asia

Although engagement with East Asia was meant to be the centrepiece of what was presumed to be an Obama doctrine of selective engagement, the shift to liberal primacy in other regions meant that the Obama administration’s policies in this part of the world were often not underwritten by substantive commitments. This is not to say that the administration was devoid of regional successes. Far from it. The negotiation of the Trans Pacific partnership and diplomatic reengagement with U.S. partners in East Asia represented substantial (if, in the former case, transient) successes. However, the rather expansive goal of embedding the U.S. both militarily and politically in the Pacific for the next century was not quite achieved. Instead, the administration opted for what amounted to “hollow expansion”.

It is worth noting that the Obama administration’s stated aim of deep engagement with the Pacific was not the only strategic option available to it. One model of engagement, broadly congruent with offshore balancing, would see the U.S. rely on what some scholars identify as the nascent balance of power in the Asia-Pacific. As an argument within this framework, China is far less powerful vis a vis its neighbours than aggregate comparisons of economic size might suggest. The absence of credible Chinese power projection capabilities in areas such as amphibious warfare, coupled with the technological defence dominance of the strategic

situation in the Asia-Pacific in which A2AD capabilities such as SRBMs and submarines can jeopardise the safety of larger, more expensive platforms means that even the survival of a seemingly overmatched Taiwan in the face of a Chinese onslaught is likely with or without U.S. intervention (Beckley, 2017, 78-104).

Therefore, it is argued, the U.S. can disengage from its forward presence in Asia and limit its military engagement to helping local allies build credible A2AD capabilities. While the U.S. might in theory be required to intervene in certain contingencies (for example, if an ally was genuinely overmatched) it would be with low cost tools such as SLBMs, launched from the safety of the second island chain and aimed at “tipping the balance” in an ally’s favour.

A second alternative would be a policy of selective containment in strategic areas such as Northeast Asia and, perhaps, the South China Sea coupled with accommodation on issues like Taiwan and human rights – effectively a strategy of hedging.

Thirdly, the administration had the option of prevention. While this seems unthinkable, it is historically the case that powers anticipating a rapid relative decline in power have historically opted for military pre-emption. Nor is it obvious that nuclear weapons alter this calculus fundamentally.

If, then, the option was excluded from the set of possibilities a priori it is, I will argue, as a function of the need to adhere to the principle of limited liability (Levy, 2011).

The posture that the U.S. assumed would, as has been noted above, best be described as hollow expansionism that saw the U.S. expand its grand strategic and operational goals in the region even as it relied on coalition building efforts to render these goals feasible in light of its own inability to commit sufficient resources to the region. Militarily, the U.S. adopted a posture in the form of Airsea Battle (later renamed JDAM-GC) which would commit it to pre-emptive strikes against mainland targets in order to pre-empt the deployment of Chinese A2AD capabilities. The policy, however, was not underpinned by substantive increases in either the naval forces deployed to the region or the production and deployment of platforms such as the B-2 and its successor which would be core components of any operational

doctrine based on deep penetrative strikes at the outset of a conflict. Moreover, as T.X Hammes notes, the doctrine invokes risks that makes it inoperable at lower levels of escalation or even a limited regional war. Operationally, the doctrine functions in a manner akin to Eisenhower's massive retaliation in which a threat of untrammelled escalation substituted for a substantive commitment (Hammes,2013).

Simultaneously, the U.S. expanded the remit of its commitments in the region - clarifying that the Senkakus were covered by the U.S.-Japan defence treaty, conducting FONOPS to challenge China's island building in the South China Sea and encouraging the PRC to ratify the UNCLOS (Valencia,2017).

The U.S. also upgraded its bilateral ties with South China Sea claimants such as Vietnam, whilst encouraging ASEAN to act as a cohesive unit in producing a dispute resolution mechanism in the region. Whilst the decision to contain China's expansionism might seem to be an axiomatic art of any pivot to Asia, the strategic logic underpinning engagement with the South China Sea disputes is somewhat unclear.

Ultimately, the ability of China (or any other power) to control the South China Sea depends not on the possession of specific islands but upon its ability to project preponderant naval forces to the region. Whether the U.S. remains capable of deploying preponderant force in the region or not, the ability of the PRC to win diplomatic jousts over miniscule islets and reclaimed islands is tangential to this outcome (Holmes, Yoshihara,2014) (Kleine Ahlebrandt,2015, 110-115). The commitment to the South China Sea dispute effectively amounted to the assumption of a new strategic responsibility without either a clear rationale or sufficient means.

On the issue of Taiwan, the Obama administration continued the existing policy of upgrading the islands defences - selling the Ma Ying Jeou government the F-16 fighter, amongst other platforms. This sale, coming as it did on the back of a U.S.-China joint communique on the two sides' mutual respect for each other's "core interests" (a stance which China mistakenly took to imply as acceding to Chinese wishes regarding Taiwan) and coupled with a visit to the

U.S. by the Dalai Lama together with renewed U.S. pressure on China over human rights related issues, represented a break from the relatively emollient policies of the Bush administration, which, as noted earlier, was compelled to engage due to its commitments elsewhere (Christensen, 2015,100).

In addition to direct commitments, the use of economic containment in the form of the TPP was an important component of the administration's grand strategy vis a vis China. While not exclusively geopolitical in its origins, the TPP did face the PRC with either being shut out of East Asian trade or having to alter its political economy drastically to gain entry (Christenses,2015,100). Indeed, this geopolitical logic was explicitly articulated by the President who noted that the TPP would ensure that the U.S. and not China, wrote the rules of regional order in the 21st century (Bradley, 2016).

Finally, the U.S. opposed Chinese regional initiatives such as the AIIB and worked diplomatically to try to ensure that allies such as the United Kingdom did not join (Watt, Lewis, Brannigan,2015).

Cumulatively, the U.S. policies towards East Asia amounted to a continuation of the Clinton administration's policy of socialising China into a U.S. led order. The policy set itself expansive grand strategic ends that were far too broad (and amounted to containing China in far too many domains) to be compatible with either hedging or offshore balancing. To be sure, China was engaged on specific issues such as the six party talks regarding North Korea's nuclear arsenal but in general, political engagement was somewhat secondary during this period (Christensen,2015,98). In the absence of a substantive increase in the U.S. military commitment to East Asia, however, an emphasis was placed on facilitating coordination with and between burgeoning regional partners such as India, Australia and Japan.

Broadly speaking, then, the combination of a forward posture and expansive grand strategic ends with an effort to limit the U.S. regional liability through an increasing emphasis on

regional allies renders the Obama administration's policies largely compatible with a grand strategy of liberal primacy.

Defence Spending

This chapter will examine the defence spending of the administration. While the defence cuts presided over by the President were not nearly as drastic as alleged by his more strident critics, they are, when viewed in the context of his expansion of the U.S. strategic aims across several regions, consistent with a policy of hollow expansion. Cuts to procurements delayed the procurement of the F-35 and B-2 replacement - two platforms deemed vital to the effective execution of Airsea battle (Biddle, Oelrich, 2016, 7-8) (Boon, 2010, 529).

Similarly, the army saw its size and the scope of its duties trimmed. On the personnel side, the active Army would decline to 490,000 soldiers, down from the current 562,000 - a reduction of 72,000 (13 percent). Similarly, the active Marine Corps would decline to 182,000 persons from the current 202,000 - a reduction of 20,000 (10 percent) (Panetta, 2012).

Simultaneously, the administration would adopt a "win hold win" posture with regards to regional conflicts analogous to Les Aspin's selected posture in the 1990s. While these policies would have been compatible with some form of retrenchment or offshore balancing, they are difficult to reconcile with an increasingly large strategic footprint without incorporating strategic culture into our considerations.

Conclusion

The Obama administration, then, would find itself gradually drawn from a policy of retrenchment and selective engagement towards one of liberal primacy analogous to that of the Clinton administration under similar circumstances. Across three regions, the administration either maintained or expanded the objectives that the power of the United States would be utilized to seek, even as it surrendered control over the process of attaining

these objectives to regional policemen as part of a policy that Larson (2016) dubs “outsourced diplomacy”. The administration, moreover, represents a particularly hard case for my thesis given that it was presided over by a leader who had not only entered office with a strong domestic imperative to retrench, but seemed to show a personal conviction in the notion that overstretch threatened to erode the sinews of the U.S. geopolitical influence.

Yet, in the Middle East and the post-Soviet space, two regions where it appeared that the U.S. could drastically draw down its presence at veritably no risk to itself, the administration found itself defending an ever expanding threat frontier, as nations to which the U.S. had no security commitment were added to the ambit of its security interests on the basis of images of cascading crises and the dangers of failing to defend intangible “rules of the game”. Caught between the Scylla of absolute security and the Charybdis of limited liability, the administration did not increase its substantive military commitments even to geopolitically exposed existing allies.

Similarly, in the Asia-Pacific, the pivot saw the U.S. define its interests in expansive terms even as many of the substantive components of the pivot only partially materialised. Here, as elsewhere, it appears that the Lippman gap was to be filled in the medium term by greater coordination with regional surrogates.

Cumulatively, the administration’s policies amounted to an attempt to achieve preponderance across several regions even as it relied on a web of surrogates, multilateral institutions and regional groupings to achieve this end - an outcome consistent with the behaviour of an administration operating under the constraints specified by my model.

The Paradox of Hollow Expansion

As the two cases above illustrate, the behaviour of a liberal polity under a matrix of high slack and an incentive to invest in butter leaves us with an empirical puzzle. A framework such as

that of Trubowitz (2011) would predict some form of retrenchment, either in the form of parsing down strategic commitments or shifting burdens to the state's allies. Yet the form of retrenchment sought by liberal states in this matrix is peculiar, inasmuch as it involves an expansion of the state's grand strategic commitments, even as it reduces the scope of its military means and shifts burdens to allies and multilateral institutions.

While one could argue that the availability of allies makes it possible to pursue these contradictory objectives, a commitment to these allies and institutions, even if hollow, poses the risk of entrapment. Indeed, this risk is exacerbated by the fact that, should the state have to actively involve itself in a conflict, it will lack the means to do so. Notably France and Britain, which expanded the remit of their commitments to eastern Europe without a concomitant military strategy to defend it in the interwar years, faced exactly this conundrum.

Nor does a simple compromise between hawks and doves suffice to explain the outcome observed. As Oatley demonstrates, a purely rational actor model of Hawk/Dove negotiations should see marginal adjustments rather than major strategic shifts.

As such, rational actor models can only explain the outcome observed without becoming theoretically degenerative if combined with a formulation of strategic culture as a set of focal points.

Epilogue

While it has not been explored over the course of my thesis, a brief comparison of my findings with the grand strategies of other liberal states, as well as states with different strategic cultures is germane

A cursory glance through the history of liberal states illustrates that my model is applicable to, and can provide grounds for reinterpreting, other polities with liberal strategic cultures. For example, British and French interwar policy can broadly be understood through this lens. Why, one might ask did Britain and France commit to the security of the newly independent states of eastern Europe without building the offensive continental capabilities to intervene in their defence?. As Henry Kissinger notes, if intervening was not an objective then staking Britain and Frances credibility on indefensible outposts and then being forced into humiliating climbdowns when hitler violated these red lines made little sense. Instead, Kissinger argues, if Britain and France had no intention of defending eastern Europe then encouraging a Soviet and Nazi scramble for this region would have represented the wisest choice- a bait and bleed strategy.

Instead both Britain and France utilized the high slack of the 1920's and early 1930's (when Germany had not fully reemerged) to engage in hollow expansion. Both countries had butter oriented coalitions for most of this period in the form of the left wing Cartel des Gauches in France and a series of fiscally orthodox conservative governments in the U.K. Both states avoided charges framed in terms of absolute security by extending commitments to Eastern Europe in lieu of actual substantive commitments. Moreover, as Charles Kupchan notes, elites in Britain demonstrated a pervasive fear of losing credibility on the periphery of the International system (Kupchan,1994,134-135). Unlike Kupchan, however, I argue that what is viewed as an overly cooperative policy in the core was not so much a strategy as a passive

response to the bluff of hollow expansion being called (Nere,2000,111). The “little entente” like NATO’s eastern appendages today, were an indefensible outpost imposed by the political consideration of a fear of being attacked domestically on the basis of absolute security. That said, politicians in both states also took pains to assure their publics that in any war that did break out they could limit liability- in the case of France by drawing on colonial troops and in Britain’s case by a reliance on strategic bombing (Pape,1994,20) (Kupchan,1994,222). Both ideas (that colonial troops could represent a cheap reserve army and that airpower could bring an opponent to its knees) were a substitution of wistful thinking for a credible military buildup.

As the custodianship of the United States passes to the administration of Donald Trump perhaps one of the more atypical presidents of recent memory with a raft of rather unconventional foreign policy views, my thesis is subject to a hard test. Given the Trump administration’s stated interest in military investment I code it as an administration with a preference for guns. Moreover, while the U.S. power position has eroded over the last decade, it remains the world’s single most powerful state- thus I code the administration as having moderate/high levels of slack. Interestingly, during the campaign Trump seemed to signal support for a policy of both investing in guns but retrenching from commitments- in effect the internal balancing sans commitment approach that I identify as one of the alternatives for a leader under this matrix. The one exception to this pattern was the Asia-Pacific, where Trump promised a more hawkish China policy. As Patrick Porter points out, however, the president has had to deviate from his intended grand strategy in the face of substantial partisan and bureaucratic pushback. In the face of bipartisan opposition, any attempts at a rapprochement with Russia have crumbled, being replaced with a policy of arming Ukraine and enhanced sanctions. In addition, the U.S. has reinstated the 4th fleet which had the Cold war purpose of containing Russia in the Baltics. That said, the single biggest commitment that might play a meaningful role in deterrence on NATO’s eastern flank- namely the placement of a sizable U.S. conventional force in the Baltics has been avoided. As such, the Trump administration has, despite the president’s inclinations, enhanced the level of pressure placed on Russia without a substantial increase in means used- an outcome that is consistent with Primacy’s emphasis on absolute security coupled with limited liability at the strategic level. In the middle East, the administration appears intent on rolling back Iran’s

sphere of influence- withdrawing the U.S. from the JCPOA and reinstating sanctions. In East Asia the administration has maintained and built on the policy of freedom of navigations operations in the South China Sea and has also attempted to roll back Xi Jinping's make in China 2025 policy framework which aims at giving the PRC the lead in a range of strategic technologies. (Porter, 2018) The full court press, in multiple policy domains, coupled with the avoidance of major substantive changes to the U.S. military posture seem to accord with a liberal primacists emphasis on indiscriminate expansion coupled with limited means at the strategic level. The administrations more hawkish policy on offensive cyberwarfare, coupled with its use of unilateral rather than multilateral sanctions amount to a direct approach at the grand strategic level coupled with an attempt to utilize limited cheap tools at the strategic level (National Cyber Strategy 2018).

This is not to say that there are not areas of the Trump administration's grand strategy that are not dissonant with my theory (for example its emollient approach to North Korea despite initially harsh rhetoric) and, unlike the Bush administration it has not opted for the use of a light footprint military force as part of its grand strategy. That being said, the congruence with my model and the level of coordination achieved by bureaucrats, legislators across the aisle and members of wider policy networks around both absolute security and limited liability seem to provide preliminary evidence to buttress my hypothesis

Conclusion

In its first chapter, this thesis set out to accomplish three objectives – namely:

- 1) Demonstrating that reconceptualising strategic culture as a set of focal principles allows the concept to be grafted on to rational actor models without rendering them degenerative.
- 2) Illustrating this argument by demonstrating the theoretical extension provided to models of strategic choice such as that of Trubowitz (2011) by incorporating the concept of a "Liberal Strategic Culture".
- 3) Laying the touchstone for a "varieties of realism" approach to studying the interaction between domestic and systemic interests utilising culture as a vital transmission belt between

the two. Such an approach might well lend the study of grand strategy the theoretical extension offered to the field of economics by P. Hall 's (2000) "varieties of capitalism" model which similarly served as a bridge between unit and system level theories.

The thesis has broadly accomplished all three objectives. As has been demonstrated in previous chapters, the grand strategic decision-making of the Presidents considered over the course of this study is congruent with my model's predictions and, moreover, in depth process tracing of the administrations' decision-making calculus' demonstrates an acute desire to adhere to the focal principles of absolute security and limited liability as a means of outflanking anticipated domestic opposition. In the following conclusion, I would like to briefly restate the central findings of the thesis, articulate its utility by comparison to other theoretical frameworks that might purport to explain part, or all of the findings observed and then briefly outline the scope for further research within this area.

Liberal Primacists

Under combinations of high geopolitical slack, and strong incentives to invest in guns over butter, states typically have a range of incentives. This can encompass what T.V Paul dubs "hybrid" grand strategy of domestic investment in armaments coupled with initiatives aimed at diplomatic reassurance, selective expansion conquest and what I dub liberal primacy.

The first of these options would entail investing in one's military power even as the power in question aimed to offset the diplomatic and geopolitical upheaval that such an expansion of national military capacity might cause by a carefully calibrated policy of reassurance towards other major powers. An example of such a strategy might be Otto von Bismarck's attempt to couple efforts to satisfy his "iron and rye" coalition of military and agricultural interests through, amongst other things, heavy internal balancing - even as he trimmed Germany's geopolitical sails abroad, embedding the country within a framework of treaties of mutual reassurance aimed at offsetting any balancing reaction to growing German power.

By contrast, a policy of selective expansion would commit to expanding the state's geopolitical footprint substantially in certain key locales even as commitments elsewhere are either maintained at pre-existing levels or trimmed. An example of such a policy might be Walter Lippman's proposed strategy of building U.S. forces in Central Europe sufficient to push the Red Army out of its Eastern European land bridge whilst ignoring Soviet advances in what Lippmann regarded as peripheral regions of the world.

A policy of conquest, by contrast, would call for a great power expanding across multiple locales and expending substantial resources in order to do so. Examples of such policies abound with the grand strategies of Napoleon and Hitler most noteworthy among them.

Finally, a policy of liberal primacy would entail the expansion of geopolitical influence across multiple locales, even as the means committed to each locale at the strategic level were selected from a range of cheap (and often insufficient) alternatives. Of course, what represents a cheap tool is, to some degree, context dependent (for example the use of force is cheap at the periphery but highly risky at the core) but the principle of utilising limited tools to seek expansive ends is assumed to be a constant feature of a liberal strategic culture.

Consistent with my hypothesis, the test case for an administration operating within this paradigm (the administration of George W Bush) opted for a policy of liberal primacy. Perhaps more importantly, in depth process tracing eliminated the possibility that internalised norms or beliefs could account for this outcome. Indeed, garnering the reluctant acceptance of the policies by members of the administration who remained unconvinced of their utility (such as Colin Powell) and the explicit recognition of the need to appeal to the focal principles of absolute security and limited liability in order to secure a domestic consensus (as evidenced by the administration's response to Eric Shinseki's testimony) represent strong evidence that the administration selected its grand strategy on the basis of its capacity to be framed in terms of the twin principles of absolute security and limited liability.

Hollow Expansion

Under conditions of a domestic preference for investments in butter over guns, and substantial levels of geopolitical slack, states typically have four strategies to choose from: retrenchment, isolationism, selective engagement and what I dub “hollow expansion”.

The nature of the first two strategies is somewhat self-explanatory with retrenchment entailing some combination of shifting burdens to allies and multilateral institutions and reducing a state’s grand strategic footprint in terms of its military spending. Selective engagement, by contrast, observes a state maintaining its commitments in regions where a burgeoning great power might emerge, whilst pruning commitments in other regions of the world. A policy of “hollow expansion” describes an attempt to expand a state’s influence across multiple regions of the world while attempting to shift the burden of underwriting these commitments to actors such as allies or multilateral institutions. Typically, this might occur even as a state attempts to shift investments from military expenditure to other enterprises.

Why might a state opt for a policy that is, *prima facie*, an incoherent one? An answer might be provided by T. Oatley’s model of domestic bargaining between hawks and doves over the scope of military expenditure. Invariably, as Oatley demonstrates, doves are forced to accede to the demands of hawks in the wake of a geopolitical shock. Conversely, in order to head off any criticism, doves need to pre-empt geopolitical shocks even as they cut budgets - indeed, doing so may be a prerequisite to cutting defence spending. Excluded from Oatley’s model, however, is the definition of a shock. For example, he identifies the North Korean invasion of South Korea as one such shock which spurred a change in America’s posture regarding defence spending. Yet, why should the invasion of a state that had been explicitly excluded from the U.S.’ defence perimeter by Dean Acheson have constituted a geopolitical shock?

I argue that the definition of a shock within a liberal polity can only be understood within the context of the focal point of absolute security. If any volatility, both peripheral and central can be framed by domestic opponents as a potential geopolitical shock, the statesmen attempting to prune budgets need to head off both minor and major international fluctuations. Concomitantly, however, they need to appeal to the focal principle of limited liability, in order to head off criticism from their own constituents. It is from the need to adhere to both focal principles that the policy of hollow expansion should emerge.

The two-administrations cited as tests of this hypothesis (that of Presidents Clinton and Obama) demonstrate behaviour that corresponds with my hypothesis. Moreover, the selection of the Obama administration (which took power on the basis of an explicit pledge to retrench) provides a particularly strong test for the hypothesis and eliminates the possibility that post-Cold War exuberance might suffice as an explanatory variable.

Preclusive Defence

A state operating under conditions of low geopolitical slack and with substantial incentives to invest in guns might opt for one of three policies: pre-emption, Internal balancing, selective engagement and preclusive (or local) defence.

The first of these policies involves the highest risks, but also offers the state an opportunity to rectify (often conclusively) geopolitical trends that seem to be working against it. An example of a pre-emptive grand strategy is Dale Copeland's study of German strategic decision-making before the World War I, which illustrates that while the risks of action may be substantial, a combination of the risks of inaction and a domestic incentive to push for a hard line may impel policymakers to opt for pre-emption.

Alternatively, a state might opt for internal balancing without external commitment which, as previously cited, Bismarck's Germany opted for; the policy in question is feasible under

conditions of both high and low slack. Or again, the state might opt to increase the scale of its commitments in core locales - a variant of selective engagement.

Another option, outlined by S. Lobell, is a grand strategy of punishment- aimed at dedicating substantial resources to defeat contenders across multiple locales - a policy best represented by that of imperial Spain as it declined. Finally, a state might decide to defend against (or even roll back) opponents across both central and peripheral locales as per a policy of preclusive defence.

The policy of preclusive defence outlined by Edward Luttwak is consistent with both absolute security and limited liability for two reasons. Its expansive scope renders it consistent with the focal point of absolute security while its emphasis on cost cutting defensive measures (from fortifications, to deterrence by punishment and the use of tools such as subversion) render it compatible with limited liability. Indeed, proponents of preclusive defence might argue that the defence of peripheral interests allows the state to save resources that might otherwise have to be expended on salvaging more vital interests.

Consistent with my thesis, both Republican and Democratic Presidents operating under conditions of low geopolitical slack and strong incentives to expend on guns opted for policies of preclusive defence. At the core, this took the form of deterrence by punishment - utilising asymmetries such as the U.S. nuclear and naval advantage to craft strategies aimed at compelling the U.S.S.R. to withdraw from any prospective invasion of Central Europe through a policy of targeted escalation. At the periphery, a combination of tools from strategic airpower to the use of non-state proxies were used to maintain an expansive geopolitical footprint at a minimal cost.

Devolved Hegemony

Under conditions of low geopolitical slack and an incentive to invest in butter, leaders typically have a limited set of options. They can refocus resources from core to peripheral regions (selective retrenchment); expand to more defensible frontiers (conservative imperialism); prune their interests in each region in which they are involved whilst maintaining a multi-

regional presence (strongpoint defence); or maintain (or even expand) their geopolitical commitments while attempting to buck pass to allies (which I dub devolved hegemony).

This latter policy accords with the principles of absolute security and limited liability for evident reasons. Typically, a power devolving hegemony might extend deterrence to regional allies (for example in the form of nuclear deterrence) whilst maintaining few substantive commitments on the ground. Instead, regional allies are expected to cope with regional fluctuations - allowing the state to achieve the ends of perimeter defence even as it reduces the means. In many ways, the policy resembles hollow expansion but for its emphasis on system maintenance as opposed to transformation.

The two cases chosen, although both of Republican administrations, allow us to control for a number of explanatory variables. First, the cases encompass an economically orthodox Presidency and an economically nationalist one - therefore allowing us to control for arguments such as that of Lobell which treat domestic coalitions as sufficient to explain this strategic outcome. Moreover, the sample of two Presidents with operational codes geared towards parsing central from peripheral interests, makes this a “least likely” outcome - strengthening the predictive validity of my thesis.

Case Selection and Potential Alternatives

The selection of my cases allows me to control for several alternative explanations of the outcomes observed. First, the utilisation of several Presidencies that were operating from positive assessments of future geopolitical and domestic trends such as those of Kennedy/Johnson and George W. Bush allows us to control for J. Taliaferro’s balance of risk theory based explanation of geopolitical overstretch at the periphery.

Similarly, explanations rooted in domestic institutional structure such as those of Mesquita and Silversson produce expectations directly contrary to the outcomes observed. Rather than

focusing on core national interests and avoiding peripheral commitments, as the authors predict democracies should, my cases demonstrate a consistent unwillingness to parse core and peripheral interests on the part of Presidents across circumstances, party and coalition type.

With regards to previous integrative work on systemic structure by Trubowitz (2011) and Narizny (2007) the thesis does not so much supersede this work but rather refines it, giving existing models greater determinacy and illustrating why culture is a central variable that predicts whether leaders can form and maintain a domestic coalition to buttress their chosen grand strategy.

Finally, the within case process tracing demonstrates the utility of conceptualising culture as a set of focal principles as opposed to internalised belief (pace A.I Johnston) or mere context (as per Colin Gray).

As for the argument that the U.S. is *sui generis* and the selection of one country as the source of all my cases opens the possibility that idiosyncrasies of the U.S. rather than a broader liberal strategic culture could be the underlying cause behind my observations, there exist two theoretical correctives to avoid misapprehending the relevance of my results due to this possibility.

Firstly, as Walt notes, utilizing theoretical foundations developed using other countries allows us to control for local idiosyncrasies. Thus, for example, the application of theoretical categories developed in studies of European diplomacy, and their resonance with Middle Eastern politics, allows Walt to escape the argument that the Middle East is *sui generis*. While my theory of a liberal strategic culture has been developed independently within my thesis, I have drawn on a number of pre-existing strategic theories of limited liability and the indirect approach (notably those of B.H Liddell-Hart, Andre Beaufre and Azar Gat) in order to derive the strategic categories needed to elaborate my hypothesis. Additionally, the concept of trading states having distinct forms of strategic behaviour has been previously noted by theorists such as R. Rosecrance, although he does not elaborate this point. The connecting

thread of these theories is that they were produced within a European context and, in particular, with an emphasis on Britain's strategy as a maritime power.

The use of theoretical categories developed with an emphasis on a different context to develop my own hypothesis allows me to control for certain idiosyncrasies. To be sure, certain theoretical categories (such as perimeter defence) were developed using the examination of the U.S. own strategic behaviour. In this case, the thesis is open to the allegation of double counting and the possibility of state level idiosyncrasies causing behaviour.

However, as A. George and T. McKeown note, the element of double counting is often a feature of initial theory building and testing, and its effects can be accounted for by discounting the results as being probabilistic before their application to other contexts - a central part of the Bayesian logic that underlies process tracing. Consequently, even those parts of the hypothesis that are open to the allegation of being *sui generis* have a prognostic utility. As a whole, however, the hypothesis is sufficiently robust to weather the argument that it is hindered by the focus on one country.

The robustness of the findings from the U.S. is further aided by the fact that in several regards, it represents a "hard case" for my theory of a liberal strategic culture.

Firstly, the objection from offensive realists such as J. Mearsheimer that strategies of limited liability such as offshore balancing are a product of geography is relatively untenable in the case of the U.S.

While my own thesis treats geography as a formative factor in the creation of a liberal strategic culture (insofar as liberal states tend, as R. Rosecrance notes, to be maritime thalassocracies) my theory directly conflicts with alternative theories that treat the stopping power of water as a direct cause. Central to the argument regarding the stopping power of water is the case that maritime states need to focus economic resources and manpower on naval forces and, as a consequence, cannot maintain large standing armies (insofar as maintaining both a dominant naval and land force is unfeasible).

Secondly, the difficulty of projecting power across water bodies enforces a degree of strategic forbearance, according to Mearsheimer, who builds his theoretical premise upon the conduct of the British Empire. The U.S. represents a hard case with regards to both of these premises.

Unlike Britain, by the end of World War II, the U.S. retained the capacity to maintain both a dominant land force and dominant naval power. Furthermore, following the collapse of the U.S.S.R. the U.S. unequivocally maintained dominance in both areas - thereby voiding the premise that strategies of limited liability are enforced by a maritime power's second rate status on the land.

As noted by R. Aron, the "salience of geography" is a function of the ability of contemporary technology to cross it. This is important as the insularity of a maritime state, assumed by Mearhsiemer, is contingent rather than objectively given. Given that by the end of the second world war strategic bombers and naval forces, soon to be followed by ICBM's, rendered traditional maritime barriers non-existent (a point noted by, among others, P. Nitze in NSC-68) the salience of insularity is significantly lower for the U.S. than a liberal polity such as Britain during the 19th century.

Consequently, the presumed security provided by insularity is less relevant within the U.S. case - making the perseverance of a liberal strategic culture and its attendant strategies of indirect approach unlikely, should Mearsheimer's hypothesis hold.

Indeed, as C. Layne notes, improvements in maritime forces coupled with the innovation of air transport achieved across the span of the 20th and 21st centuries renders it eminently feasible for a strong maritime power to sustain the supply of forces in continental Eurasia. Consequently, the assumption that forbearance is induced by the difficulty of sustaining large armies across a maritime barrier long held by offensive realists is rendered inapplicable to the U.S. (particularly in the context of later administrations).

The U.S. thus represents a "hard case" for examining the impact of a liberal strategic culture.

Finally, the case of the U.S. contains several important within case variations that allow us to account for the two remaining alternative hypotheses.

The argument that institutions impose strategic restraint, advanced by F. Zakaria, can be controlled for using the Tillian argument that war, and immense geopolitical threat, impose “shocks” that incentivize the alteration of institutions to enhance the centralization of power around the executive.

Consequently, the newly empowered executive has significantly less of an incentive to pursue a policy of strategic restraint. The adherence to strategies of limited liability and the indirect approach following a geopolitical “shock” (such as the launch of sputnik or the terrorist attacks of September the 11th) would represent the fact that my model passes a “tough test” that allows it to differentiate itself from institutional theories.

To be sure, each event did encourage both the limited centralization of power and the adoption of expansive strategies but, as I will demonstrate, the need to limit liability and the awareness of a limited mandate for extraction by the state still played a central role in the decision making calculus of the respective “post shock” administrations studied, even as they pursued expansive grand strategic goals - a contradiction usually resolved by limiting liability at the theatre/operational level.

The final alternative hypothesis stems from the sociological theory of Ulrich Beck. Specifically, Beck, among others, have posited that sociological transformations that followed the transition to postmodern economies has transformed liberal polities into risk societies characterized by a high degree of reflexivity and an emphasis on risk management. Building on this, scholars such as C. Coker have posited that risk societies have adopted a strategic consensus based around hedging against risks rather than attempting their elimination - a hypothesis that has certain similarities with my own theory of a liberal strategic culture.

Given that my cases span two Kondratieff waves of economic innovation (the industrial and I.T revolutions), the U.S. exists within my study as both a modern and postmodern economy. The retention of hedging strategies based around limited liability before the post-industrial era thus weakens alternative sociologically rooted hypotheses. This renders the U.S. a particularly usable case as, alone among the liberal polities, it has retained the rank of a first-rate power during both the industrial and post-industrial eras. By contrast, European liberal

polities retained this rank only during the former period while extra European liberal polities (such as India) cannot be classified as post-industrial “risk societies” despite potentially qualifying for great power status.

Consequently, findings from the study of the U.S. are particularly robust and thus compensate for the use of a single country. This stems from the fact that the U.S. represents a singularly “hard case” for my theory of a liberal strategic culture to pass.

Congruence Between the Model and Observed Outcomes

In the table below, I summarize the congruence between my models predictions and the outcomes observed

Table 4- Summary of Results

Administration	Congruent Outcomes	Dissonant Outcomes
Bush	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Handling of Iraq and Afghan campaigns - Attempted NATO expansion, bilateral relationship with Georgia - Missile Defence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engagement of China
Kennedy/Johnson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Laos, Vietnam campaigns - Bay of Pigs Invasion - European Flexible Response 	
Reagan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interventions in Angola, Afghanistan Cambodia Nicaragua El Salvador - Adoption of follow on forces attack, offensive naval posture in Europe 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic Defence Initiative 	
Nixon/Ford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Iran and China relationships - - Perimeter defence in middle east, east asia and Africa - Helsinki Accords, Taiwan Policies (policies chosen despite the administrations desire for flexibility) - Schlessinger Doctrine (which I code as massive retaliation by other means) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SALT - Limited economic engagement of the U.S.S.R
Eisenhower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Massive retaliation - Expansion of alliance network - Colonial policemen 	
Clinton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NATO expansion - Balkan conflicts - Political intervention in Russia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The integration of China into the international economic order
Obama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Syria indirect intervention - Ukraine conflict - Libya intervention - Yemen support for Saudi coalition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compromise with Russia over EPAA

By and large, my model demonstrates a good track record of congruence with observed outcomes in most cases. In some instances, such as the Obama and Clinton administrations

grand strategies, facets of each administrations grand strategies fail to align with the models predictions making these cases somewhat more ambiguous. However even in these cases roughly 80 percent of the outcomes observed align with my model. As such the model has, by and large, a good predictive record.

Room for Further Research

In my theory, Chapter I outlined three grand strategic paradigms, only one of which has been explored here for reasons of space and time. Future research into strategic culture might look at other cultural paradigms, as well as assess the impact of culture in dimensions other than the trade-off between absolute/relative security and expanded/limited liability. Moreover, if the research has demonstrated that culture can be formalised in a manner consistent with rational choice models, its integration into formal models of strategic choice along the lines already achieved by A. Grief amongst others in the field of economics might represent a rich vein for future research

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