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**INTERNATIONAL STABILITY THROUGH NUCLEAR
PROLIFERATION: RETHINKING THE REALIST
NUCLEAR PEACE PROPOSITION**

(Master Thesis)

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Master Thesis Abstract

The collapse of the Soviet Union, not only marked the end of the Cold War, but also resulted in demise of the Nuclear Peace Proposition. With the absence of one of its key prerequisites, namely bipolar world order, the once prevalent in the academic circles structural realist idea that nuclear deterrence successfully promotes international order, fell into oblivion. Despite of repeated attempts by structural realists to revive the notion that nuclear proliferation plays a crucial role in establishing long-term international peace and stability, both contemporary proponents and critics of deterrence strategies disregard the relevance of the Nuclear Peace Proposition, due to a variety of reasons. This research paper engages the ongoing scholarly debate on the applicability of the theory of nuclear peace to the present-day international sphere and seeks to add to the contested topic by proposing the Nuclear Peace Proposition to be disassociated from bipolarity and instead analyzed through the prism of a newly developed model of power allocation, defined as multi-level polarity. Built upon the classical model of multipolarity, multi-level polarity transcends the parochial outlook on proliferation that exclusively revolves around globalism and envisions two distinct layers of nuclear dissemination. It is on the basis of this innovative approach towards the structure of the present-day international sphere that the capacity of the theory of nuclear peace to decrease interstate conflict is both qualitatively and quantitatively investigated.

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Introduction

The Nuclear Peace Proposition, also described as the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis, a term introduced by Robert Rauchhaus (University of California), refers to the notion that nuclear proliferation plays a crucial role in establishing long-term international peace and stability. Grounded in the ideas of the structural realist school of thought about the nature and functioning of the international realm, this notion rose to prominence at the height of the Cold War, as it arguably provided the most compelling answer to the “how possible” question regarding the observable absence of major military confrontation between the United States (US) and the Soviet Union (Rauchhaus 2009, 258-259). Attributing the relatively peaceful US-Soviet relations in the period to the employment of nuclear deterrence-oriented national security doctrines of the two great powers, coupled with the apparent symmetrical allocation of power in the international system, the claim of the structural realists, also referred to as neorealists, that nuclear proliferation is inherently a peace-promoting factor, has been a central topic of discussion in the inter-paradigm debate (The Second Great Debate) that dominated the academic sphere of IR during the 1970s and early 1980s (Waltz 1981, 1-2). Still, with the de-escalation of the ideological dispute, and the subsequent collapse of the USSR, marking the conclusion of the Cold War, the structural realist theoretical paradigm and its arguably most influential idea, namely the Nuclear Peace Proposition, fell into social oblivion (Maoz and Russett 1993, 627). The perceived obsolescence of this once prevalent mainstream IR theory is commonly ascribed to its own incapability to recognize and adapt to the alterations that have occurred in the international realm and in turn its failure to establish a revised theoretical framework, one that can account for the coexistence of peace and asymmetrical distribution of power.

Since the turn of the century distinguished proliferation optimists, such as Kenneth Waltz, one of the most renowned scholars in the field of political science and commonly acknowledged as the founding father of neorealism, have repeatedly attempted to revive the Nuclear Peace Proposition (Quackenbush 2010, 741). Yet, their efforts have been met with fierce criticisms. On the one hand, there is the debate between advocates and opponents of deterrence, which regardless of their stance deny the present-day applicability of the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis. Contemporary proponents of deterrence theory, prominently represented by Frank Zagare and Marc Kilgour, affirm that strategies based on deterrence are undeniably capable of promoting the perseverance of the status quo. Nonetheless, they disregard the

relevance of the Nuclear Peace Proposition on the grounds that it wrongfully presupposes a specific kind of shared normative understanding of rationality among the actors in the international arena (Zagare and Kilgour 2000, 285). Critics of deterrence, like Robert Jervis, insist that deterrence is futile and therefore, neither conventional, nor nuclear strategies of containment are capable of promoting peaceful interstate relations (Jervis 1982, 3). On the other hand, there is the juxtaposition between structural realists, who are supportive of the idea that nuclear deterrence has the capacity to foster interstate peace, and proliferation pessimists, whose concerns are most notably expressed by the organizational theorist Scott D. Sagan (Stanford University). Sagan does not directly attempt to discredit the neorealist Nuclear Peace Proposition on the basis that there is no empirical evidence to support it, but rather insists that the nuclear deterrence model proposed by Waltz is bound to fail, due to the fact that it incites a self-perpetuating cycle of uncertainty in the form of the security dilemma (Waltz and Sagan 1995, 48-49).

Despite that all of these critiques have undeniably expedited the demise of structural realism and subsequently the theory of nuclear peace, as pointed out by Rauchhaus, neither is aimed at examining whether the Nuclear Peace Proposition is actually theoretically or empirically accurate. Not only that, but an alternative model for justification of the observed international stability during the Cold War is yet to be presented (Rauchhaus 2009, 262). As a result, although it is undeniable that the Nuclear Peace Proposition in its current form is incapable of tackling the prevalent in IR “how possible question” in regard to contemporary interstate relations, one can assert that the theory is not as irrelevant as perceived, but instead in an urgent need for revision.

Research Question, Sub-questions and Justification

My primary field of interest being structural realism and the effects of nuclear proliferation, it is necessary to disclose that I have previously scrutinized the potential of nuclear weapons to promote international stability. Yet, because of theoretical ambiguity and improper methodological design of the empirical analysis, my envisaged revised model of the Nuclear Peace Proposition, ultimately fell short. Therefore, this thesis paper presents itself as an excellent opportunity for an in-depth reexamination and justification of the theoretical underpinnings of the proposed amendment to the existing notion. Building upon the extensive scholarly literature on this subject matter, the key purpose of this research is to present a new

alternative type of power appropriation, namely multi-level polarity, and investigate whether the Nuclear Peace Proposition can decrease interstate conflict when applied to it.

The model of multi-level nuclear polarity differs from Waltz's theory of nuclear peace in several distinct aspects. The original Nuclear Peace Proposition, as envisaged by Waltz is exclusively reliant on an overarching relatively equal distribution of power, creating high degrees of certainty in the international sphere. This power symmetry, which characterizes the bipolarity of the realm, is achieved through what the scholar articulates as vertical nuclear proliferation (Waltz 1981, 1). Vertical nuclear proliferation stands for the embrace of strategies based on nuclear deterrence and the expansion of the nuclear arsenal of two great powers that dominate the realm (Waltz 1981, 1-2). Maintaining the willingness of states to pursue and successfully establish a nuclear deterrence doctrine, my revised model of the Nuclear Peace Proposition, in contrast to that of Waltz, builds upon the theoretical reasoning that not only certainty, but also excessive uncertainty in the realm can promote international stability. This uncertainty derives from the model's increased emphasis on not only vertical, but also horizontal proliferation, meaning the spread of nuclear weapons among states. While it can be inferred that multi-level nuclear polarity is a merely another name for a classical multipolar nuclear structure, this is not the case. Although the model is at its core is based upon multipolarity, it is, in fact, a redesigned and inherently more complex form of multipolarity, which is arguably specifically tailored to account for the contemporary dynamics of the international sphere. This is achieved by moving away from the parochial outlook on proliferation that revolves exclusively around globalism and incorporating two distinct layers of nuclear dissemination – regional and global. It is due to my layered approach towards scrutinizing the effects of nuclear weapons in a multipolar system that I define my model as multi-level nuclear polarity.

Considering the brief account of my proposed model, the central research question of this master thesis is as follows – can multi-level nuclear polarity successfully diminish interstate conflict and, thus, be used as an effective tool for promoting international peace and stability? Because of the extraordinary intricacy of this inquiry, the thesis is constructed as to reflect three sub-questions, whose answers resolve the underlying research puzzle. Firstly, considering that many have made the argument that deterrence-oriented security strategies are prone to failure, is nuclear deterrence susceptible to the same flaws, or does it supersede these deficiencies? Secondly, with the exception of bipolarity, why are the other established models

of power allocation within the realist paradigm, namely unipolarity and multipolarity, deemed inhospitable to the idea of nuclear peace? Thirdly, multi-level nuclear polarity being at its core based upon a multipolar power structure, can it positively affect and in turn be even considered more effective in promoting peace and stability compared to the others?

Methodological Approach

In order to present a compelling argument on the significance of the spread of nuclear weapons and the proposed revision to the original hypothesis, this study is divided into a number of sections. As deterrence plays a central role in the theory of nuclear peace, firstly, I examine the contested in the scholarly field of IR topic of deterrence and more precisely, what are the grounds that dictate whether a national security strategy based on (nuclear) deterrence can be considered effective or ineffective in promoting order. Next, assuming a structural realist point of view, I provide an in-depth critical analysis of the ongoing dispute among advocates of the Nuclear Peace Proposition and proliferation pessimists. In the third section of the thesis, I deconstruct the neorealist paradigm of the three classical archetypes of power distribution, these being unipolarity, bipolarity and multipolarity. This deconstruction is essential, as it allows for a comprehensive definition of my proposed alteration to the theory of nuclear peace. After that, I explore the theoretical underpinnings of the idea that not only certainty, but also excessive uncertainty, induced by multipolarity, can positively affect international peace and stability. Thereby, since multi-level is a more intricate form of multipolarity, due to its leveled approach towards nuclear proliferation in the international sphere, I justify why it has the capacity to uphold the established status quo. In the following section, I empirically test the concept of multi-level nuclear polarity. This is done by employing a Large-N comparative case study design, the purpose of which is to analyze whether the introduction of nuclear weapons in the chosen cases has diminished, exacerbated or made no significant impact on interstate conflict. Lastly, as a conclusion of the master thesis I discuss the findings of the quantitative findings, thus, confirming or falsifying the presumed significance of multi-level nuclear polarity.

Deterrence as a Strategic Defense Doctrine

Once detached from any particular time and space, a strategy of deterrence can be defined simply as “the use of a threat (explicit or not) by one party in an attempt to convince another party to maintain the status quo” (Zagare 2006, 116; Quackenbush 2010, 741). Nonetheless,

characterized as an underlying prerequisite for achieving nuclear peace, the concept of deterrence is perceived as being intrinsically interconnected with the prevalent during the period of the Cold War structural realist Nuclear Peace Proposition (Quackenbush 2010, 741-742). Because the neorealist underpinnings of deterrence are often pointed out as the culprit for the concept being denounced in the academic field of IR after the turn of the century, contemporary advocates of deterrence theory, prominently represented by Zagare and Kilgour, assert a distinction should be made between what they describe as “classical” and “perfect” deterrence game (Zagare and Kilgour 2000, 5). Others, such as Jervis, condemn this differentiation by affirming that deterrence as a containment strategy is inherently futile and thus, incapable of promoting peaceful interstate relations (Jervis 1982, 3). On these grounds, it can be inferred that both proponents and critics of deterrence argue against the capacity of a nuclear deterrence game to preserve the status quo, an assertion that I ultimately disagree with. Therefore, in order to evaluate the significance and impact of the Nuclear Peace Proposition in contemporary times, it is necessary to investigate the presumed effects of conventional and nuclear deterrence.

From an IR perspective, a non-cooperative deterrence game can be described as a situation where defenders and challengers of the status quo are unable or unwilling to work together to achieve a higher payoff and, in turn, as already mentioned in the introductory paragraph, the former employ coercion in order to convince the latter to maintain the established order. While the roots of the idea of deterrence can be traced back to the Age of Enlightenment, the origin of what scholars define as “modern” deterrence theory is often associated with the American nuclear strategist and defense secretary adviser William Kaufmann, who coined the term in 1956 (Quackenbush 2010, 741). According to Kaufmann, in order for any kind of deterrence to be successful in persuading potential revisionist states from adversarial confrontation, and thus be an effective strategic defense policy, status quo powers are required to fulfil three key determinants (Kaufmann 1956, 7-8). Although the strategist does not explicitly define these determinants, they can be delineated as, firstly, the possession of a compelling military force, secondly, the capacity to inflict a non-reciprocally costly blow on the attacker, and thirdly, the ability to persuade the aggressor that the retaliatory threat will be undoubtedly realized. Being developed in the 1950s and exuding an implicit link to neorealism and the utilization of nuclear weapons as an integral prerequisite for a strategy of containment, contemporary advocates of deterrence theory distinguish between “classical” and “perfect” deterrence game (Quackenbush 2010, 744). Analogously to Kaufmann’s

conceptualization and in line with the ideas defended by the structural realist paradigm, namely that states are rational actors, whose goal is survival, the classical deterrence game presupposes that conflict is always the worst possible outcome, especially when an unforeseen escalation can bring an all-out nuclear war and subsequently mutually assured destruction (Quackenbush 2010, 746).

Yet, Zagare and Kilgour maintain that the classical game model is “flawed, both empirically and logically,” on the grounds that such a deterrence strategy presumes a challenger will always concede if status quo powers have nuclear capability. According to the scholars, what neorealists do not account for is that in case the defenders fail to persuade the challenger, as state rationality is assumed to exhibit a normative character, it would be logical for status quo powers to concede, as the only other option would be to engage in an all-out nuclear war (Zagare and Kilgour 2000, 6). Therefore, Quackenbush concludes that, despite of the outlined by Kaufmann prerequisites being at play, as “a nuclear attack invites one’s own destruction, the threat to choose to do so is not believable, and is thus not credible” (Quackenbush 2010, 746). In order to address this drawback in the structural realist “classical” deterrence game, Zagare and Kilgour’s “perfect” game model, while taking as given the notion that states are rational actors, does not presuppose that rationality is a normative concept shared by all. Instead, from their viewpoint, it is constructed on the basis of the actor’s preferences (Zagare and Kilgour 2000, 66). Furthermore, the two academics affirm, since rationality is constructed, subsequently military confrontation is not necessarily the least favorable outcome and always to be considered irrational (Zagare and Kilgour 2000, 285). Nonetheless, by further extending the logic outlined above, one can certainly make the claim that it would be false to deduce that concession is the only rational outcome for nuclear capable status quo defenders, who are challenged by an actor with revisionist aspirations, especially if the attacker does not possess nuclear bombs. The assertion that there is a likelihood of revisionist actions against nuclear capable defenders to diminish stems from the fact that in a realm where a shared understanding of rationality is non-existent, subsequently the outcomes of an act of aggression would be more difficult to predict. As a result, it can be concluded that regardless of whether a non-cooperative deterrence game is examined through the prism of the “classical” or “perfect” model, whenever the three factors outlined by Kaufmann are at play, deterrence strategy even if based upon nuclear weapons has a reasonable chance of success.

While proponents of deterrence may disagree on the role and implications of strategies of containment based upon nuclear weapons, it is often presumed that if the preconditions for achieving a robust national security policy built upon deterrence, set forth by Kaufmann, are operative, such a policy has a relatively high prospect of success. Nonetheless, critics have claimed that deterrence is futile and therefore, neither conventional, nor nuclear strategies of containment are capable of promoting peaceful interstate relations. Albeit many have expressed skepticism towards deterrence, it is arguably most prominently challenged by Robert Jervis (Columbia University). Jervis affirms that since deterrence is in essence determined by the reciprocal perceptions of the actors in the international sphere, and no truly “objective reality” exists, subsequently, even the most elaborate “attempts at deterrence can not only fail but backfire if the assumptions about others’ perceptions are incorrect” (Jervis 1982, 3). Building upon a variety of case studies, the scholar discloses there are three common factors, which can be exceptionally detrimental to the effectiveness of deterrence (Jervis 1982, 5).

The first element that can cause deterrence to fail is “misperception of value.” The commitment to destroy an object that is deemed valuable by a challenger is arguably a pivotal factor that determines the success of the defender to preserve the status quo. Yet, value is not as easily identified as it is often assumed. According to Jervis, the misperception that can occur in determining the value of either a material object, such as a military complex and a particular resource, or an immaterial object, like an ideology or a political regime, can be attributed to fact that “perception” in itself is entirely relative (Jervis 1982, 5). Therefore, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that “what one [actor] thinks is a punishment another may consider a reward” (Jervis 1982, 5). Further evidence attesting to the relevance of value can be found in Brown’s assertion that “our strategy has to be aimed at what the Soviets think is important to them, not just what we might think would be important to them,” a stance expressed at the height of the Cold War in front of the US Congress (Brown 1981, 10). Nevertheless, despite that Jervis claims deterrence has failed as a result of the misperception of value, in neither of the cited cases have nuclear weapons been in eminent probability of being used. Therefore, even though an argument can be made in favor of the importance of value for the functioning of deterrence, it can also be inferred that the misjudgment of what a challenger values the most will be more detrimental to a strategy based on conventional deterrence. Whereas, given that the potential aggressor is explicitly being threatened with an all-out nuclear war, due to the inherent destructive capacity of nuclear weapons, the significance of correctly determining value greatly diminishes.

Perhaps of even greater significance than misperception of value, the second usually cited factor that can cause deterrence to fail is “misperception of credibility.” A pledge to engage in a military confrontation as a response to a significant provocation can be acknowledged as credible, while a similar assertion under circumstances of a lesser incitement might not. Therefore, it is often taken for granted that the “credibility of a threat is strongly influenced by the specific situation in which it is issued” (Jervis 1982, 8; Brodie 1959, 175). However, the apparent correlation between provocation and credibility fails to explain why in analogous circumstances the threat of one actor can be found authoritative, whereas that of another remains unconceivable. While this apparent paradox can be attributed to the defender’s strength and capacity to execute a threat, Jervis insists that the culprit is in fact an element to credibility that is not directly linked to a particular situation, but instead, as put by the scholar, is “inherited in the threatner,” namely reputation (Jervis 1982, 8-9). Grounding his claims in cognitive psychology theory, the scholar affirms that reputation is manifested and has the ability to “influence others’ expectations of how the state will act in the future” in at least two distinct manners (Jervis 1982, 9). On the one hand, reputation can be asserted through what Jervis describes as “signaling,” meaning a firm strategy of commitment to act in a particular manner (Jervis 1982, 10; Nitze 1956, 188). Even though this tactic is commonly used, it is often unsuccessful, because of its heavy reliance on the ability of the challenger to recognize the credibility of the threat and fear retaliation. On the other hand, reputation can be inferred and subsequently state actions predicted on the basis of past behavior (Jervis 1982, 10). Although the latter tactic is usually perceived as a more reliable approach to assessing the credibility of a threat, it is only applicable in instances where conventional deterrence is at play, since nuclear weapons have been deployed only twice in combat and by a single actor, therefore, rendering impossible the drawing of conclusions determined by past behavior. This rationale, coupled with the observation that states, which possess nuclear weapons, always assume the role of regional or global powers, it is reasonable to assume that is unlikely for them to risk harming their reputation by backing down from a commitment or compromising.

Lastly, aside from misperception of value and misjudgment of credibility, the third often recognized aspect that can be detrimental to a deterrence policy is “misjudging the adversary’s alternatives.” Building upon the basic definition of deterrence, coupled with Kaufmann’s theory, it can be argued that deterrence strategies are able to produce a favorable outcome only when the foreseen expenses of defying the established status quo are acknowledged greater in comparison to the costs of tolerating it. Therefore, Jervis warns that

“deterrence may fail and defenders be taken by surprise ... if the defenders fail to grasp the expansionist’s dismal evaluation of the alternatives to fighting” (Jervis 1982, 13). The inability of defenders to grasp the root causes of the revisionist aspirations of a particular state has the capacity to undermine the even most elaborate and seemingly convincing deterrence strategies (Jervis 1982, 13-14). On this ground, one can affirm with a certain amount of confidence that from the three causes for deterrence failure, misjudging the adversary’s alternatives could be perceived as the most important of all. Still, while this may be true when conventional deterrence is at play, it is contestable whether such an argument would also be valid once one or more of the status quo states rely on a national security strategy based on nuclear deterrence. Although not explicitly, the idea of “misjudging the adversary’s alternatives” does suggest that the root cause of conflict is somehow related to the desire or need to acquire a particular natural resource. Therefore, it is logical to presume that this resource should be preserved at all cost and it is unlikely that a state would be willing to risk starting a military conflict, especially when there is the potential for a rapid escalation into an all-out nuclear war. Subsequently, Heuser’s claims that “the absolute power of the nuclear weapon made absolute war-aims irrational” and that attempting to conduct a limited war-effort against a nuclear capable defender can be an exceptionally risky endeavor, can be perceived as particularly relevant in cases where the acquisition of a certain resource is the end goal (Heuser 1998, 311). Considering Heuser’s assertion that expecting victory in a nuclear war is inconceivable, it can be claimed that misjudging the alternatives of the adversary is indeed a determining factor, but its impact beyond the scope of conventional deterrence is minimal.

The argument that misjudging the alternatives of the adversary is indeed a determining factor, but its impact beyond the scope of conventional deterrence is minimal, perfectly mirrors the deductions drawn in regard to the other factors, which Jervis claims are a common culprit for the collapse of deterrence. Not only that, but this reasoning also answers a question, which has not been explicitly posed, namely why is the concept of deterrence often presumed as signifying a containment strategy built upon nuclear weapons? Some scholars, such as Zagare and Kilgour, assert this rationale can be attributed to the implicit link in Kaufmann’s deterrence theory and nuclear strategy, and in turn seek to differentiate between two non-cooperative game models of deterrence, these being “classical” and “perfect,” yet, this is arguably not the case. Deriving from the evidence presented in the paragraphs above, it can be affirmed that the inferred interconnection amidst the concept of deterrence and nuclear weapons is grounded in the fact that a strategy of conventional deterrence is simply not a reliable enough tool for

defending the status quo against attackers. Therefore, one can conclude that, while deterrence-oriented security strategies are prone to failure, nuclear deterrence is not susceptible to the same flaws and supersedes these deficiencies. Nonetheless, it is necessary to scrutinize whether nuclear deterrence strategies are challenged by drawbacks of their own.

Evaluating the Nuclear Peace Proposition

Building upon the evidence presented in the previous chapter, I have established that nuclear deterrence supersedes the unescapable deficiencies of conventional containment strategies, namely misperception of value, misjudgment of credibility and misjudging the adversary's alternatives. Therefore, having affirmed that nuclear deterrence is not a self-defeating notion, it is of central importance for the key argument advanced in this thesis paper that a comprehensive examination aimed at evaluating the significance and impact of the Nuclear Peace Proposition is conducted. The origins of the proposition are directly linked to the observable absence of large-scale military confrontations between the two competing great powers during the period of the Cold War, a phenomenon often described as the "Long Peace" (Waltz 1990, 732; Gaddis 1987, 216). While few have offered an alternative explanation to the "how possible" question in this regard, the idea of the existence of a Nuclear Peace Proposition, as advanced by structural realists, has sparked an unsettling debate amongst IR scholars on the topic of nuclear weapons proliferation and their impact on international peace and stability.

Deriving from the apparent correlation between the enactment of national security strategies based upon nuclear proliferation and the unprecedented absence of war, the Nuclear Peace Proposition is commonly acknowledged as the structural realists' answer to the prevalent in the academic discipline of IR "how possible question." According to Kenneth Waltz, the theoretical basis for this hypothesis stems from two prerequisites. Firstly, not nuclear proliferation in itself, but instead proliferation for the purpose of deterrence is perceived as the preferred national security doctrine (Waltz 1990, 740). In line with Heuser's assertion that expecting victory in a nuclear war is inconceivable, he affirms nuclear deterrence is exceptionally robust, due to the fact that neither rational, nor irrational political leaders will ignore the "exceedingly high cost of a nuclear war" (Heuser 1998, 311; Rauchhaus 2009, 262). On this ground, Waltz maintains that "in a nuclear world any state will be deterred by another state's second-strike forces" (Waltz 1990, 739). Secondly, in order for the nuclear peace theory to be implemented, the international system should be characterized by bipolar distribution of power among the key actors (Waltz 1990, 734). Although it is precisely the effects of bipolarity

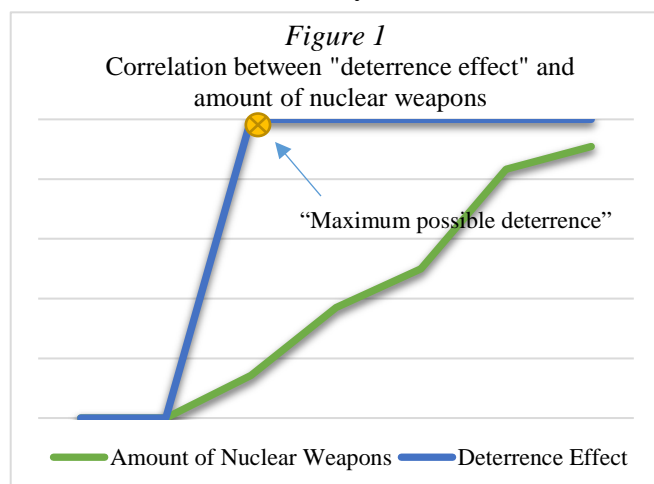
that are often challenged by proliferation pessimists, Waltz insists the symmetrical allocation of power is an essential precondition, as it, not only fosters a clear-cut distinction between allies and foes, but because of its simplicity, in such a power structure potential outcomes are easily determined (Waltz 1981, 2-3). The possibility of nuclear deterrence to serve as a peace promoting strategy in a unipolar or multipolar system is improbable, due to the complexity of these alternative world orders, which inherently fosters a greater chance for miscalculations on behalf of political leaders. Furthermore, these tend to perpetuate the notion of uncertainty by blurring “responsibilities and definitions of vital interest” (Waltz 1981, 3). On these grounds, whenever nuclear weapons are used for deterrence and a symmetrical power distribution is at paly, proliferation optimists confidently claim that, not only is it nearly impossible a large-scale military confrontation between two states possessing nuclear weapons to break out, but limited warfare is also expected to diminish, because no actor would risk escalation into an all-out war.

The structural realists’ Nuclear Peace Proposition, explaining the absence of large-scale confrontation between the two world powers, was arguably one of the most dominant theoretical paradigms during the Cold War era. Nonetheless, it has been fiercely criticized. Although scholars have strived away from directly challenging the capacity of nuclear proliferation to promote international security and peace, many have argued against its key prerequisites. The most prominent objections are embodied in the critique of the proliferation pessimist Scott D. Sagan. He insists that firstly, proliferation of nuclear weapons for the purpose of deterrence may not always be advantageous, and secondly, assuming all actors in the international realm possess a certain degree of rationality and in turn are expected to act in a rational manner has no theoretical basis and can have catastrophic consequences (Waltz and Sagan 1995, 48-49).

The proliferation of nuclear weapons for the purpose of deterrence is not a favorable strategic approach, as the structure of the international realm fosters preconditions for the development of feelings of insecurity and subsequently to the establishment of the security dilemma. The security dilemma refers to the attempts of one state to increase its security through either boasting military strength or pursuing alliances being perceived by another as a threat and responding by heightening its own security as well (Jervis 1978, 167-168). In an international system governed by fear and uncertainty, Sagan affirms that it is only appropriate for the states, seeking status quo, to impair the nuclear programs of others, due to concerns for

future revisionist endeavors. Signifying the first step towards a security dilemma, this impairment takes the form of a preventive strike against the potential rival to the enacted order, who “is developing but has not yet constructed a bomb, and when the size of the rival's nascent arsenal is extremely small” (Sagan 1994, 75). Still, because a preventive strike necessitates either action to be taken relatively early in the process of development or the complete destruction of all nuclear facilities, which cannot be guaranteed, its occurrence is highly unlikely (Sagan 1994, 75; Schweller 1992, 267). Not only that, but as pointed out by Fuhrmann and Kreps, military operations of preventive character are often denounced by the international community and can result in “diplomatic and economic isolation” with devastating implications in the contemporary globalized world (Fuhrmann and Kreps 2010, 838). Therefore, if status quo powers hesitate to respond to an unsanctioned nuclear proliferation, Sagan affirms a security dilemma taking the form of an arms race is bound to develop (Sagan 1994, 74). Despite of the fact that arms races and cold wars are relatively stable, meaning that it is improbable for a conflict to erupt, similarly to Jervis, Sagan warns that whenever nuclear weapons are involved in a contest of power, the consequences of an unforeseen escalation are unpredictable (Sagan 1994, 74-75; Jervis 1978, 192).

While Sagan warns an unexpected escalation during an arms race can bring unpredictable consequences, the feared negative implications of the security dilemma arguably erode, due to the great destructive potential of nuclear weapons. Since security is relative, it is common knowledge that in a conventional arms race defenders and challengers always seek to reach an equilibrium of their forces. Nevertheless, this logic does not apply to nuclear arms races. Since nuclear weapons have an enormous destructive capability, even Jervis, who assumes a critical stance towards deterrence, agrees with Waltz that a short-term buildup of arms will inevitably result in a stalemate, which “can be overcome only at an enormous cost,” this cost being nuclear war and mutually assured destruction (Jervis 1978, 190; Waltz 1990, 733). Although questionable at first sight, this rationale can be explicated on the basis of what Brodie defines as “deterrence effect,” which stands for the capacity to deter (Brodie 1959, 177). Whereas in conventional deterrence there is a mostly linear



correlation between military expenditure and security, the scholar maintains that this is not the case in regard to nuclear deterrence (Brodie 1959, 178). If one were to illustrate the “deterrence effect” of nuclear weapons as a function, it would resemble *figure 1*. The curve starts with a high degree of deterrence for the first nuclear bomb, and rapidly levels off. At that point, the “maximum possible deterrence” is reached and no increase in the available nuclear arsenal will result in a rise in the degree of security that a state enjoys (Brodie 1959, 177-178). It is on this ground that both Waltz and Jervis insist that “relatively small and weak states can hold off larger and stronger ones, or can deter an attack by raising the costs of conquest to an unacceptable level” (Jervis 1978, 190; Waltz 1990, 734). Building upon this assertion, coupled with the fact that an increase in the amount of nuclear warheads possessed by a defender or a challenger beyond the peak that is signified by the notion of “maximum possible deterrence” has no practical relevance, one can deduce that Sagan’s fear of the negative implications of nuclear arms races is unfounded.

Aside from fearing the negative implications of nuclear arms races, another aspect of the Nuclear Peace Proposition that critics often challenge is the structural realist assertion that both rational and irrational actors inherently recognize the “exceedingly high cost of a nuclear war” (Heuser 1998, 311). As already mentioned, non-cooperative games of the classical model rely heavily on states sharing a normative conception of rationality, which in turn fosters preconditions for them to realize that the worst possible outcome for all would be to engage in military confrontation. Similarly to Zagare and Kilgour, Sagan disputes the neorealist claim that state actors possess high levels of rationality. Yet, whereas Zagare and Kilgour perceive the concept as culprit for the failure of nuclear deterrence, on the grounds nuclear retaliation is in itself an irrational course of action, Sagan warns that even if states are rational actors, it is incorrect to expect that these will always behave accordingly (Waltz and Sagan 1995, 8-9). The scholar observes that even democratic states, which are commonly identified as reasonable actors, may “lose focus [and neglect] their overall objectives,” particularly in cases where multiple or conflicting goals are simultaneously pursued (Waltz and Sagan 1995, 52-53). This logic leads Sagan to conclude that there is the potential for accidental nuclear wars to occur, since the high degrees of rationality advocated by neorealists are not representative of the real world (Waltz and Sagan 1995, 117). Waltz acknowledges Sagan’s point that states may not always behave as anticipated, especially when threatened, and reaffirms that it is possible for “miscalculations” to occur (Waltz 1981, 8). Nevertheless, he maintains that such a “miscalculation would have to be monumental” and is unlikely, due to concerns of a massive

nuclear retaliation. (Waltz 1981, 31). Deriving from this assertion, it can be inferred that at least in a bipolar world regardless of whether an “accidental” nuclear strike is launched against another nuclear capable state or not, it would undoubtedly result in an international condemnation of the attacker and nuclear retaliation against him.

The theory of nuclear peace may not be constrained by the same drawbacks as conventional deterrence; still, some have argued that it suffers from deficiencies of its own. According to Sagan, containment strategies built upon nuclear capabilities are detrimental to the international peace and stability, because they contribute towards the perpetuation of the security dilemma, manifested through arms races. Furthermore, he warns that, in order to justify the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis, structural realists ambitiously ascribe high degrees of rationality to state actors, even though their expected behavior cannot be adequately predicted. Nevertheless, stemming from the evidence presented in the paragraphs above, an argument can be made that neither of these issues is substantive enough to falsify the theory of nuclear peace. Firstly, an increase of nuclear warheads possessed by a defender or a challenger beyond the peak that is signified by the notion of “maximum possible deterrence,” is counterproductive, thus rendering pointless one’s involvement in arms races. Secondly, while states may not always act rationally, “miscalculations” regarding the use of nuclear weapons are unlikely, especially in a bipolar world, as such behavior will result in an international condemnation of the attacker and nuclear retaliation against him. Therefore, having concluded that the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis has the capacity to ensure international order and promote the perseverance of the status quo, given that the necessary prerequisites are fulfilled, it is imperative to investigate why the already existing models of the power distribution, these being unipolarity, bipolarity and multipolarity, are deemed incompatible with a revised theory of nuclear peace.

The Faults of the Classical Models of Power Distribution

Nuclear deterrence and its derivative theory of nuclear peace have encountered fierce criticism. Some, such as Zagare and Kilgour, have questioned the ability of nuclear deterrence strategies undertaken by status quo powers to preserve the prevailing order. Others, like Sagan, claim that, not only will a nuclear policy of containment fail to uphold the established conditions in the international realm, but also it will prove detrimental to interstate peace, as it fosters preconditions for the development of arms races between rivals. While an argument can be made that building upon the presented evidence these issues have been comprehensively addressed, the debate over the applicability of the Nuclear Peace Proposition to non-

symmetrical power structures remains (Hanson 2002, 361). Deriving from the structural realist claim that a bipolar distribution of power, mirroring the one observed during the Cold War, is key to the effective functioning of the theory of nuclear peace, many IR scholars, including Waltz himself, insist against the capacity of the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis to have a positive impact on peace and security in a unipolar or multipolar international system (Rauchhaus 262-263, 2009). As I advocate for a multi-level Nuclear Peace Theory that is at its core based on multipolarity, it is of pivotal importance for the key purpose of this research to examine why the Hypothesis is deemed as only fitting in a system, where power is relatively equally distributed among two superpowers, and nuclear weapons are perceived as “obstacles to, rather than as facilitators of, international security,” whenever unipolar or multipolar power structures are the norm (Hanson 2002, 361).

The relevance of bipolarity might be perceived as being ascertained, due to plain necessity, since it was the dominant model of power allocation at the time when the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis was devised, still, it is commonly acknowledged that symmetrical power distribution is essential, as it fosters a degree of certainty within the international sphere. Waltz maintains that there are clear “advantages of having two great powers, and only two, in the [international] system” even if nuclear weapons are not present (Waltz 1979, 161). This is, because in contrast to unipolarity or multipolarity, a symmetrical allocation of power presupposes “clear and fixed lines between allies and adversaries” (Waltz 1981, 2). The simplistic structure of the system, coupled the fact that the “military might of both great powers makes quick and easy conquest impossible for either,” according to the scholar, the likelihood of the great powers to misjudge their own relative strength or that of their opponents is significantly diminished (Waltz 1981, 3). The validity of this logic is further enhanced by Waltz’s assertion that, whenever there is a balance of power among two major actors, these will abstain from forming complex military alliances, where the responsibilities of the other states are not clearly demarcated, and instead tend to rely solely upon their own capabilities in order to ensure their national security (Waltz 1981, 2-3). Considering the structural realist justification for the necessity of bipolarity for the adequate functioning of the Nuclear Peace Proposition, an argument can be made that the simplistic nature of bipolarity and its capacity to incite the great powers to embrace defense strategies based upon self-sufficiency, is only perpetuated by the introduction of nuclear weapons into the equation, thus further limiting the degree of uncertainty in a bipolar system.

Although the argument that the simplistic nature of the bipolar system has created preconditions for the diminution of fear and uncertainty and the Nuclear Peace Proposition merely serves as a tool further limiting the impact of these factors on interstate relations, might be deemed as debatable, evidence in support of this rationale can be found in several empirical researches. In his work *Evaluating the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis*, Rauchhaus tests the empirical validity of the theory of nuclear peace in both symmetrical and asymmetrical power structures. He maintains, despite of the fact that nuclear weapons are commonly linked to an increased possibility of interstate crises to arise, at least where bipolarity is the norm, this is not the case (Rauchhaus 2009, 260). Even though Rauchhaus' research indicates that regardless of the power distribution model, the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis does not prevent the conduct of limited warfare, the author notes that "the probability of major war between two states is indeed found to decrease considerably if both states possess nuclear weapons" (Rauchhaus 2009, 269). A similar trend is also observed in the work of Asal and Beardsley, who investigate the "relationship between the severity of violence in crises and the number of involved states with nuclear weapons" (Asal and Beardsley 2007, 139). According to the scholars, the possession of nuclear weapons by the two states in the international spheresubstantially decreases the chance of military confrontation and violence to erupt (Asal and Beardsley 2007, 152). Deriving from the evidence presented in the set of empirical inquiries, which are outlined above, it can be concluded that there is a certain correlation between the foreseen consequences of power symmetry and what the impact of the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis is. In order to evaluate whether this interrelation is not exclusive to bipolarity, it is necessary to examine the chance of conflict to arise within a unipolar structure where power is not balanced.

While Waltz maintains that the uncertainty and fear, stemming from the anarchical nature of the international realm can be subdued by a relatively equal distribution of power, proponents of offensive structural realism denounce this reasoning. A fierce advocate of the benefits of unipolarity, Mearsheimer claims that power symmetry assures neither security, nor survival, which are the ultimate goals of a state. According to him, the fulfilment of these goals can only be reached by moving away from seeking a balance of power and instead through a pursuit of power maximization (Mearsheimer 1994, 11). This logic stems from the fact that, since power is relative, there is no clear way of determining "how much power is enough to achieve survival" and states have no other choice than acquiring as much power as possible at the expense of power equilibrium (Labs 2007, 14). The acquisition of more power, relative to the others in system, is accomplished on the basis of what Elman describes as "automatic

expansion” (Elman 1996, 28-29). Since automatic expansion refers to “incremental, repeated, and localized efforts to expand power when such opportunities arise,” Labs suggests it does not pertain a “conscious bid for hegemony” and therefore, is not expected to negatively impact uncertainty and provoke any form of balancing on behalf of the other actors in the international arena to occur (Labs 2007, 12; Posen 2014, 59-60). Despite Labs’ assertion, one can speculate that even if a state enhances its power incrementally, these actions will nonetheless upset the status quo. It is not beyond reason to infer that through the course of time a state’s share of power accumulates and can possibly become greater relatively to that of the others in the realm. Subsequently, whenever the aggregate of power of that particular state, consciously aspiring to become a hegemon or not, becomes significant enough, it will be acknowledged by the other actors in the in the system as a potential threat and balancing coalitions are bound to arise.

Deriving from this rationale, one can postulate that the fear and uncertainty that stem from the biggest share of power being commanded by a single state is only further exacerbated with the presence of nuclear weapons. The empirical findings of both Rauchhaus and Geller, point to this being in fact the case. Rauchhaus warns that nuclear deterrence strategies are ineffective in promoting international peace and stability if employed by a single actor in the system (Rauchhaus 2009, 270). Furthermore, the scholar also discloses that there is a significant increase in the probability of large-scale military conflicts to occur (Rauchhaus 2009, 270). While reaching a similar verdict on the impact of nuclear weapons in system governed by power asymmetry, Geller’s research envisions even more pessimistic prospects. According to him, whenever power is asymmetrically allocated, because of the already existing high levels of uncertainty, the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis is bound to compromise peace, as even small, localized incidents can quickly spiral into deep crises (Geller 1990, 301). The empirical evidence, presented by Rauchhaus and Geller, arguably attests to the validity of the assumption that within a unipolar structure, where power is not balanced, the possession of nuclear weapons by a single actor in the international realm exacerbates the chance of conflict to arise. Since an analogy can be drawn between the foreseen consequences of unipolarity and bipolarity, and the manner nuclear weapons influence the respective power arrangement, one can conclude that power equilibrium amongst state actors or lack thereof, not only presupposes a certain kind of state behavior and interstate relations in the respective system, but also indicates the manner the structure is affected by the Nuclear Peace Proposition.

In both unipolar and bipolar power systems the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis merely perpetuates the expected effects of the respective model of power allocation, increasing the level of uncertainty in the former and bolstering the perseverance of the status quo in the latter, however in regards to multipolarity no such obvious correlation exists. It is important to note that Waltz does not explicitly dismiss the possibility of the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis producing favorable outcomes under conditions of multipolarity (Sagan and Waltz 1995, 44-45). However, he does, suggest that this would be unlikely, because in a multipolar structure, where the power allocation is contested by at least three main actors, “who is a danger to whom and who can be expected to deal with threats and problems are matters of uncertainty” (Waltz 1981, 2). Subsequently, it is often inferred that this structure model significantly hampers the capacity of states to promptly recognize and respond to changes in the international realm (Waltz 1981, 3). For Waltz, this is especially problematic, as it may lead to balancing failures and misguided military action, due to states miscalculating their own relative strength or that of the others (Waltz 2008, 170). Posen shares a similar concern. According to him, in a multipolar structure it is considerably more difficult for states to agree upon collective action, which subsequently limits the effectiveness of the status quo powers’ balancing attempts (Posen 2014, 63). On these grounds, analogously to the case of unipolarity, it can be deduced that from a theoretical standpoint, due to an overarching power disequilibrium and enduring uncertainty, the proliferation of nuclear weapons is expected to undermine the fragile international order in multipolar systems.

Still, there is definitive answer to the question whether a correlation exists between the theoretical reasoning of Waltz and Posen, and projected outcomes of nuclear deterrence deduced through empirical analyzes. Not only are quantitative researches on the impact of nuclear deterrence strategies in a multipolar world scarce, due to the speculative nature of the subject matter, but there is a wide disparity among the results that these inquiries have produced. On one side of the spectrum, Saperstein insists that a “tripolar system is only slightly less stable than its corresponding bipolar one.” Nonetheless, he maintains that this stability is expected to drastically decline with the increase in the number actors, especially if these possess nuclear capabilities (Saperstein 1991, 77). On the other side of the spectrum, Deutsch and Singer have found multipolarity to be even more promising than a structure of symmetrical power allocation. According to the scholars, “as the system moves away from bipolarity toward multipolarity, the frequency and intensity of war should be expected to diminish” and continue to do so the more state actors with nuclear capability the system contains (Deutsch and Singer

1964, 390). Building upon the discrepancies between, firstly theory and empirical evidence, and secondly the available forecasted outcomes of security policies grounded in nuclear deterrence, I can concur with Rauchhaus that a further exploration of the effects of multipolar nuclear structures is necessary (Rauchhaus 2009, 271).

Emphasizing the importance of balance of power and certainty, structural realist scholars commonly acknowledge that bipolarity, due to its simplicity, minimizes the possibilities of states engaging in military confrontation, an effect, which is perpetuated by the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis. In contrast, when a system is governed by unipolarity and a relevant proportion of power is held by single state, lesser actors are fearful for their survival as the might of the sole superpower could easily outmatch them. This power asymmetry results in higher levels of uncertainty and an increase in the likelihood of conflict to arise. While the benefits and disadvantages of the Nuclear Peace Proposition in bipolarity and unipolarity, respectively, are largely uncontested, the impact of nuclear deterrence strategies on multipolarity remains debatable. From a theoretical perspective structural realists, such as Waltz and Posen insist that the disequilibrating forces of multipolarity will lead to a deterioration of interstate order, as a result of the growth of uncertainty. Some empirical inquiries underpin this rationale and project that the lack of power symmetry, especially when nuclear weapons are added into the equation, predisposes the system towards greater degrees of uncertainty and subsequently, compromises the stability. Others maintain that policies of nuclear containment in multipolarity are expected to have an even more positive impact on international order in comparison to bipolarity. Therefore, an argument can be made that, at least in relation to unipolarity and bipolarity there is a correlation between the presumed consequences of the particular model of power allocation and the foreseen effect of the Hypothesis. Still, since it is unclear how nuclear deterrence affects multipolarity, an in-depth investigation into the functioning of multipolar structures is required.

Rethinking the Structural Realist Nuclear Peace Proposition

The observable correlation between the presumed consequences of the particular model of power allocation and the foreseen impact of the Nuclear Peace Proposition clarifies why proponents and critics of nuclear deterrence often deem unipolarity inhospitable to the idea of nuclear peace alike. Nevertheless, the inconclusive nature of the available empirical evidence on the repercussions of states employing nuclear deterrence strategies in a multipolar system raises an important question. If balance of power produces certainty and, as insisted by Waltz,

both of these factors are necessary prerequisites for the successful perseverance of the status quo (Waltz 1979, 16; Posen 2014, 63-64), how is it possible that Deutsch and Singer's quantitative inquiry projects nuclear weapons having a favorable effect on the established order in a multipolar system, where balancing is difficult and uncertainty prevails? Since my proposed revision of the Nuclear Peace Proposition is at its core based on multipolarity, not only is it crucial to scrutinize why a multi-level approach towards multipolarity is essential, but also to evaluate the supposed impacts of balance of power and uncertainty in relation to the nuclear weapons in a power structure dominated by multipolarity.

Defensive structural realists commonly acknowledge that balance of power is an essential element for the perseverance of the status quo. Power being at the same time relative and the ultimate currency in an international realm characterized by self-help, scholars subscribing to the defensive neorealist school of thought insist that states always seek to have a certain amount of it, which at the very least is not lesser than that of the other actors in the realm (Waltz 1991, 125-126; Snyder 150-151). A lack of equilibrium in power distribution, such as in the case of unipolarity, is an underlying reason for interstate conflict to arise. Therefore, coupled with the fact that offensive action compromises the established order, as pointed out by Waltz, states purposely "balance each other by 'internal' instead of 'external' means," the former referring to an enhancement in self-sufficiency through the buildup of defense and deterrence capabilities, while the latter suggesting forceful acquisition of territory (Waltz 1981, 2). Even though this process of balancing is clear-cut in bipolarity, where power is symmetrically distributed amongst the major actors, due to the added complexity that a growth in the number of actors generates, the scholar warns that this task is considerably more difficult whenever multipolarity is at play (Waltz 1981, 3; Posen 2014, 64). With many major actors in the system, response to "disequilibrating" shifts in the power arrangement are considerably hindered, thus creating the possibility for states to underbalance or overbalance, either of which may damage the established order and lead to violent conflicts (Waltz 1981, 3; Nexon 2009, 334).

Although the assertion that a power disequilibrium damages the established order and leads to violent conflicts is accurate if the system is governed by unipolarity or bipolarity, its impact on multipolarity debatable. While many, who subscribe to the defensive structural realist theoretical paradigm, undeniably share Waltz's rationale, outlined in the paragraph above, such an assumption is contentious on two grounds. Firstly, it suggests that despite the

greater amount of strong actors in the international sphere, states will continue attempting to balance against all. Secondly, by extension, it also implies that multipolarity is bound to and shares the same attributes as bipolarity. Evidence substantiating my reasoning can be found in Deutsch and Singer's work *Multipolar Power Systems and International Stability*. Even though Deutsch and Singer do not entirely dismiss the conception that in an anarchical realm the pursuit of power equilibrium is essential, they are critical of the assertion that multipolarity necessarily requires a strict balance of power amongst all of its major actors (Deutsch and Singer 1964, 402). According to the authors, if power is to be kept constantly proportionally distributed among all states in a multipolar system, this would mean that "the total pace of arms competition for all countries would be set by the fastest growing competitor," which is arguably unfeasible and illogical (Deutsch and Singer 1964, 401). Juxtaposed to the other known models of power allocation, the scholars maintain that, due to the great number of strong actors and the subsequent fragmentation that this fosters, "matters are quite different in a multipolar world" (Deutsch and Singer 1964, 401). Therefore, under conditions of multipolarity, balancing efforts are expected only against an immediate rival, thus considerably diminishing the possibility for crises to diffuse. (Deutsch and Singer 1964, 403; Väyrynen 1995, 363). On this ground, one can deduce that, while balance of power is always relevant in an anarchical international realm, the power arrangement has a much more insignificant impact in a world governed by multipolarity in comparison to unipolarity or bipolarity.

Even if power equilibrium has a decreased relevance in a multipolar world, since many prominent structural realists presume that there is an indivisible link between certainty and stability, it is often affirmed that the high level of uncertainty in multipolarity, nevertheless, predisposes the system to be considerably less stable in comparison to bipolarity. This implied interrelation between certainty and stability can be explained on basis of the analytical approach that some neorealists employ towards the concept of certainty, and more specifically the manner in which certainty or the lack thereof affects state actions. As there is no higher authority than the states, according to Saperstein, at the most basic level, all realists concur that, the international sphere is a self-organizing "deterministic 'chaos model'" (Saperstein 1991, 70). Chaos models can assume two distinct forms – laminar or chaotic. The former refers to an orderly arrangement in which certainty and predictability prevail. Whereas the latter, because of its chaotic nature, promotes a structure, in which affairs are dictated by uncertainty and unpredictability (Saperstein 1984, 304; Saperstein 1991, 70). Where scholarly opinions differ, however, is on whether laminarity or chaos are better at promoting the perseverance of

international order. Deriving from the line of reasoning employed in the majority of the academic literature examined in this thesis paper, an argument can be made that many renounced neorealists, including Waltz, favor an analytical approach towards certainty that advocates for the superiority of laminarity. As mirroring Waltz's conception, Saperstein maintains that "most war is the result of misjudgment, erroneous perception, and poor predictions," it is unsurprising that the results of Saperstein's qualitative research suggest that an increase in the number of nuclear capable actors is expected to have a drastically adverse effect on the international order (Saperstein 1991, 70; Waltz 1981, 3). Nevertheless, having already established that multipolarity is distinct from bipolarity, it can be inferred that properly assessing whether multipolar power structures inherently compromise stability, requires the concept of certainty to be examined from a different analytical perspective.

Once the presumed interrelation between the degree of certainty and projected level of stability is deconstructed, and the impact of a chaotically organized operative realm of states is examined from a different perspective, it can be deduced that the uncertainty produced by multipolarity, does not inherently compromise stability, but actually enhances it. According to Morton Kaplan, it is often affirmed that whenever power is symmetrically allocated, the availability of possible state interactions is extremely limited, which results in predictability and certainty; whereas, if the system is characterized by multipolarity – the opposite is true (Kaplan 1957a, 7-8). Still, Kaplan insists, "mistakes or failures in information can be tolerated more easily if the number of actors is greater," due to the uncertainty and unpredictability that the myriad of interaction opportunities entail (Kaplan 1957b, 689). While not denouncing the benefits generated by high level of certainty, deriving from Kaplan's rationale, Deutsch and Singer claim that an excessive degree of uncertainty, brought by an "increase in the number of independent actors, is [also] conducive to stability" (Deutsch and Singer 1964, 394). Although at first glance paradoxical, this rationale follows from the capacity of states to allocate attention to other actors in the international realm, which the authors define as "critical attention ratio" (Deutsch and Singer 1964, 394-395). As 'critical attention' is arguably relative in nature, analogously to how the relevance of power equilibrium decreases in multipolarity, because of the large number of powerful actors, the scholars assert that a deficiency in state attention will result in a considerable diminution of conflict. Otherwise said, the "correlation between multipolarity and stability revolves around the notion of attention available for conflict" (Deutsch and Singer 1964, 394). Therefore, I can concur with Deutsch and Singer that because of the projected low 'critical attention ratio' in multipolarity, "the dissemination of nuclear

weapons would tend to increase the stability of the entire international system” (Deutsch and Singer 1964, 403-404).

Although it can be deduced that nuclear deterrence enhances the stability of a multipolar nuclear system, multipolarity in its classical form cannot be used as the backbone for a revised Nuclear Peace Hypothesis, since it does not fully account for the intricacy of the current dynamics of the realm. As pointed out by Haass, “today’s world differs in fundamental ways from one of classical multipolarity (Haass 2008, 44-45). According to the scholar, this distinction can be attributed to two key factors. Firstly, in multipolarity “major powers work together on setting the rules of the game” (Haass 2008, 45). Yet, if as ‘major powers’ can be described those possessing nuclear weapons, this condition is not fulfilled, because only half of the members of the ‘nuclear club’ also have a permanent seat at the United Nations (UN) Security Council, which is often perceived as the supreme decision-making body. Secondly, Haass claims that in a multipolar system significant power disequilibrium is rarely tolerated (Haass 2008, 45). While balance of power has a much more insignificant impact in a world governed by multipolarity, even Deutsch and Singer recognize excessive imbalances may lead to the “elimination of the weak” (Deutsch and Singer 1964, 402). Still, despite of the great disparity in nuclear armaments of the present-day nuclear powers, arguably none has been or is in eminent danger of being eliminated. Therefore, as neither coherence amongst nuclear capable actors, nor an overarching balance of power are observed in the contemporary system, one can conclude that a Nuclear Peace Proposition purely based on multipolarity is not applicable.

The current international system does not resemble a classical multipolarity, due to the absence of coherence amongst nuclear capable actors and lack of an overarching balance of power; still, I argue that it can be characterized as a multi-level nuclear power system. This model of power allocation that I define as multi-level polarity is at its core based upon classical multipolarity. Therefore, it retains all of the central qualities that this known model of power arrangement entails. On the one hand, as proposed by Deutsch and Singer, since multipolarity is inherently different from unipolarity and bipolarity, balancing is expected to occur only against an immediate rival, thus the possibility for crises to diffuse considerably diminishes (Deutsch and Singer 1964, 401). On the other hand, due to the increased amount of strong actors in the arena and the subsequent unpredictability, stemming from the myriad of possible interactions, “in multipolar international relations, states are more risk-averse and rivalries less

pronounced” (Väyrynen 1995, 363). Yet, where my model differs is that it assumes a leveled approach towards the operative realm of states. Multi-level polarity recognizes the presence of considerably smaller, localized nuclear systems that are particular to a region, each with its distinct symmetrical or asymmetrical power arrangement, and coexisting within one single multipolar structure. From this perspective, my proposed revision to the Nuclear Peace Proposition is both innovative and functional. Its innovativeness is manifested by moving away from the one dimensionality of classical multipolarity and acknowledging the existence of not only a global, but also regional level of the international system. While, its functionality derives from the fact that the excessive uncertainty inherent in multipolarity should diminish the negative impact of regional nuclear asymmetries and at the same time foster a further decrease interstate conflict where nuclear symmetries are the norm. This a two-dimensional approach to multipolarity arguably accounts for and justifies the absence of coherence amongst nuclear capable actors and lack of an overarching balance of power. Deriving from these rationales, I defend the idea that applying the Nuclear Peace Proposition to multi-level nuclear polarity is a modest, but worthy revision to the original hypothesis.

Lacking strict overarching balance of power and fostering high degrees of uncertainty, structural realist scholars have often dismissed the possibility that a ‘chaotic’ type of system, such as multipolarity, has the capacity to promote international peace and stability, especially when nuclear weapons are used as a deterrence strategy. Nevertheless, building upon the comprehensive evaluation of the distinct approaches towards the concepts of certainty and balance of power, an argument can be made that this is not the case. Since the amount of attention that states can dedicate to others is relative, it follows that the greater the number of major actors consolidated in an international realm, the less attention states will be able to devote to actors they consider of inferior importance. Subsequently, a meaningful rise in the level of stability of the international system is expected, especially with an increased proliferation of nuclear weapons. Deriving from this rationale, while classical multipolarity is not representative of the contemporary dynamics of the international realm, by employing this type of power arrangement as the backbone for a revision of the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis, my multi-level nuclear polarity model arguably has a strong theoretical basis. Not only that, but with its innovative and functional two-dimensional approach to multipolarity, arguably accounts for and justifies the absence of coherence amongst nuclear capable actors and lack of a strict overarching balance of power. Still, even though one can conclude that the envisaged

multi-level model is theoretically sound, it is crucial to scrutinize whether it is also empirically valid.

Research Design

Empirically evaluating the capacity of my revised Nuclear Peace Proposition model, based on multi-level polarity, to promote international order is a challenging assignment, that I have chosen to resolve by employing a quantitative methods of inquiry approach applied to a Large-N comparative case study design. This research design is selected, because of its capacity to assess whether there is an interrelation between the decrease of interstate conflict and the horizontal dissemination of nuclear weapons that has been observed in the past several decades. For the study to produce generalizable results, comparable to the findings of other empirical inquiries, investigating the effects of nuclear deterrence, I use the standardized raw data provided by Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) and adhere to the definition of conflict and intensity, outlined in the corresponding coding scheme provided with the dyad-year version of the data set. Further clarification on the data set, coding scheme and information where to obtain these online, is provided in *Appendix I* and *Appendix II*, respectively.

In order for a correlation amidst nuclear deterrence and the decrease in military confrontation among state actors to be established, the study analyses patterns in the rise and decline of interstate military confrontation in a number of pre-selected case studies and in turn compares these tendencies to the aggregate of the conflicts, in which the primary actors in the examined case studies have participated. It is relevant to point out that the quantified military confrontations, which are presented in the first set of charts are subtracted from the overall amount of conflict depicted in the second set, thus avoiding double calculation. This specific methodological approach is expected to not only clearly illustrate whether the probability of states to engage in warfare has decreased, but also determine, if under conditions of multi-level polarity nuclear deterrence merely “shifts conflict to the lower end of the spectrum” (Rauchhaus 2009, 260).

Since the amount of nuclear capable states with known rivals is scarce, the state actors chosen for the comparative case study are selected through a non-probability sampling technique. This is done primarily in favor of investigating conflict patterns only relevant for the inquiry cases. There are three purposively chosen cases, these being firstly, India and Pakistan, secondly, South Korea and North Korea, and thirdly, Israel and its neighboring states,

as Israel lacks a clear binary opponent. Aside from the reasoning outlined above, these specific samples are demarcated on two grounds. On the one hand, each case accounts for a certain region, from a distinct part of the world, hence eliminating potential biases towards a particular location to manifest in the empirical data. On the other hand, considering that only the first pair of states exemplifies a symmetrical nuclear power arrangement, while in other two – power and nuclear capacity are asymmetrically allocated, these represent a worst-case scenario validation of the proposed model. The investigated conflicts amidst these pairs of states and in the particular region are drawn from the period of 1949 through 2016. This time frame is chosen, because no earlier or later conflicts are recorded in the UCDP data set.

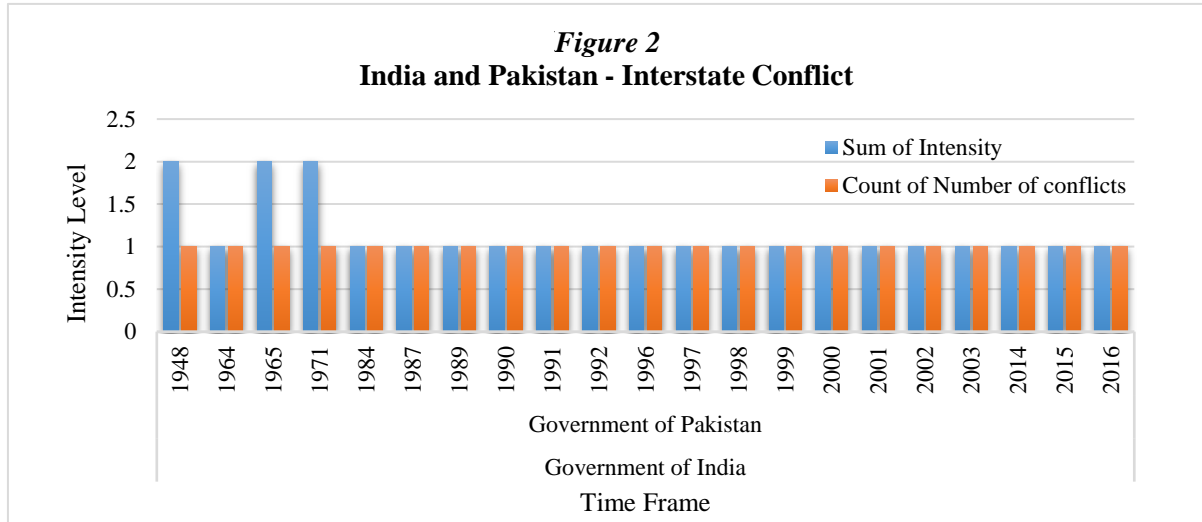
Despite of my efforts to produce a completely exhaustive quantitative analysis, this study suffers from a number of deficiencies. Perhaps the most important shortcoming of this inquiry derives from the modest size of the examined sample. Even though the benefit of a wider variety cases is clear, as already mentioned, the number cases, where at least one of the state actors is entangled in a rivalry and is nuclear capable, are exceptionally limited. In addition to that, due to the leveled approach towards multipolarity that my model envisions, precisely evaluating the effect of horizontal nuclear proliferation on regional power structures of symmetrical character is nearly impossible. This is anticipated, since from a theoretical perspective, both are presumed to favorably influence stability.

Findings

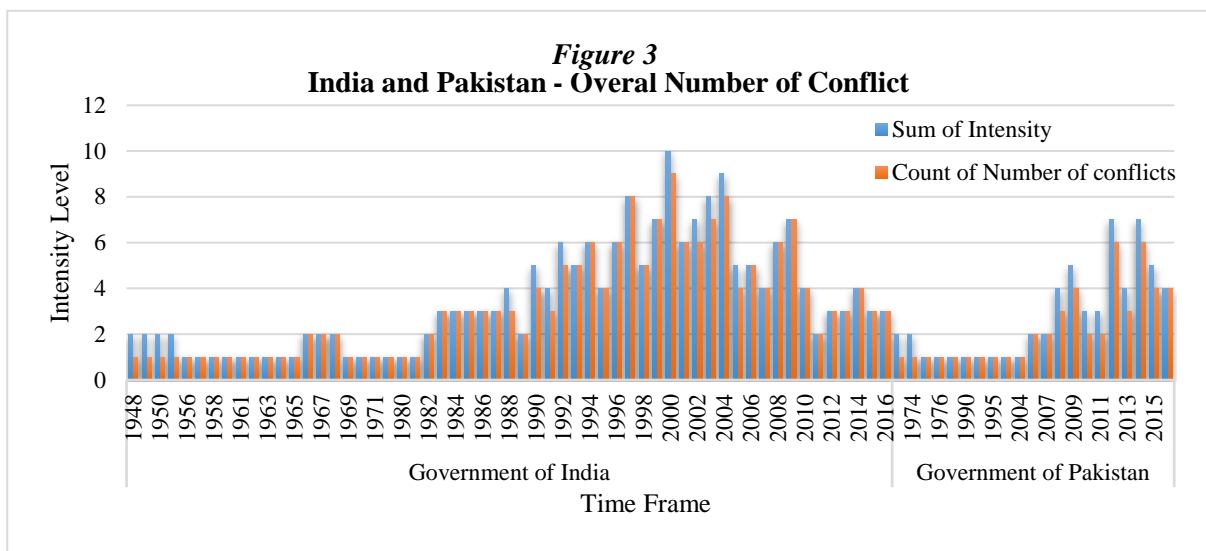
Despite of the several deficiencies inherent in the research, the results of the empirical study, aimed at evaluating whether the proposed Nuclear Peace Proposition model built on multi-level polarity promotes international peace and stability, provides intriguing insights into the practical performance of the proposed model.

The deeply rooted contest of power between India and Pakistan is a well-documented phenomenon. Fueled by a number of territorial disputes and further exacerbated by an emphasis on conflicting types of identity politics, this rivalry explains the pursuit and subsequent establishment of nuclear deterrence programs by India in 1974 and later by Pakistan in 1998 (Ruble 2017, 3-4). In accordance with the idea of the Nuclear Peace Proposition, it would be expected for the confrontations between these state actors to considerably decrease, especially after nuclear symmetry is secured. Yet, as illustrated in *figure 2*, this is not entirely the case. Building upon the data quantified in the chart, it can be noted that the general severity of the

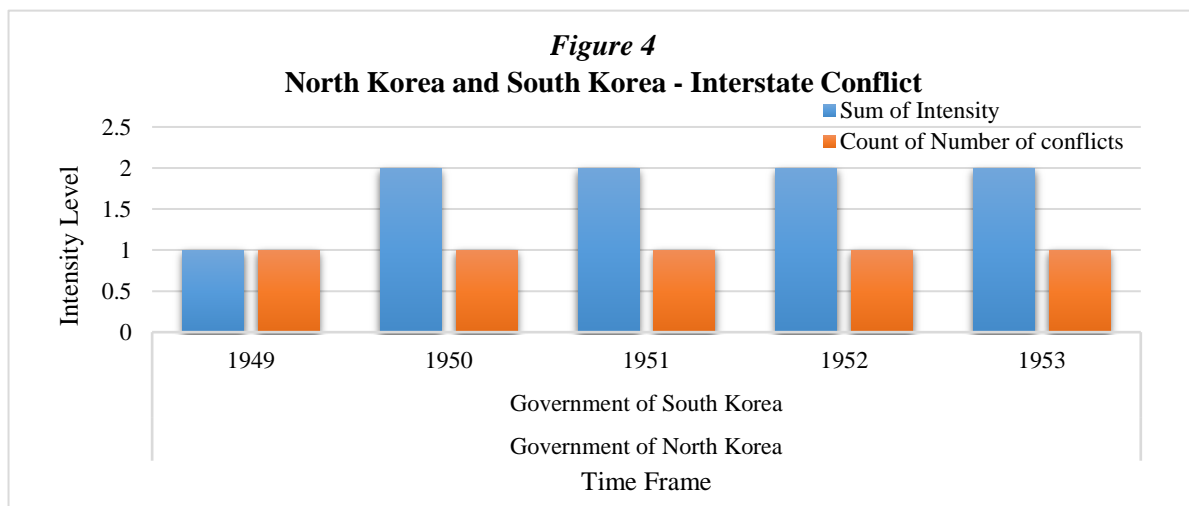
conflicts amongst the two states, declines from an all-out war, represented by a number 2 level of conflict intensity in the *Y-axis*, to a mere 1, which stands for a minor confrontation with less than 1000 casualties. Nevertheless, squirmishes with a low intensity of violence continue to occur almost on a yearly basis until 2003.



Building upon the empirical data presented in *figure 2*, it can be deduced that the enactment of policies of nuclear deterrence by India and Pakistan has had little impact on their direct interstate rivalry, except for reducing the intensity of the bloodshed. However, interestingly, the opposite is true when the overall number of regional conflicts, in which the two states participate, and the intensity of these squirmishes are examined. As portrayed, in *figure 3*, coinciding with the time when nuclear weapons proliferate in India and Pakistan, both actors experience a considerable rise in non-state led militant activity in their territories. While the amount of insurgencies peaks in the period from 2000 to 2005 and has currently considerably declined, the aggregate of the sum of intensity suggests that a disproportionate degree of violence is employed.

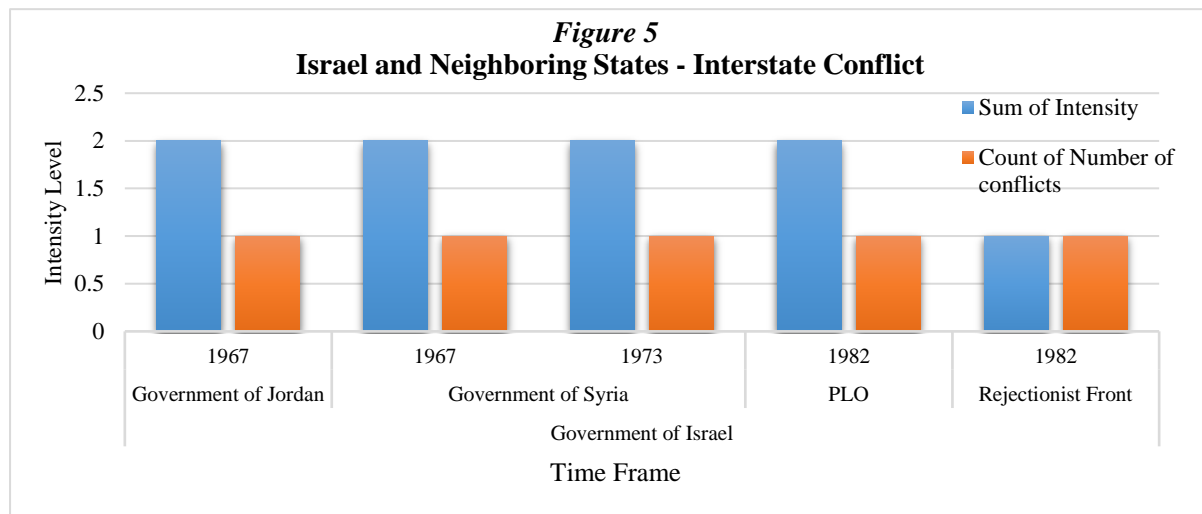


In contrast to the case of India and Pakistan, where empirics show that the actors' rivalry has contributed to the development of a perpetual cycle of violence that cannot be overcome through nuclear proliferation, the tensions between North and South Korea have not encouraged such developments. While it is certainly possible that there have been small-scale clashes between the states, since the UCDP data set does not register as conflicts confrontations where less than 25 combatants are killed, the only contests of power in the region are those that occur directly after WWII during the Korean War of 1950-1953. This trend continues even after the North Korean successful development and testing of nuclear weapons in 2010 that arguably gained a considerable amount of media coverage. On this ground, considering that the current power arrangement on the Korean peninsula is one of nuclear unipolarity, even though the relations between North and South Korea are undeniably strained, the observed absence of military or insurgent activities can be appropriated to the adequate capacity of multi-level nuclear polarity to foster international order.

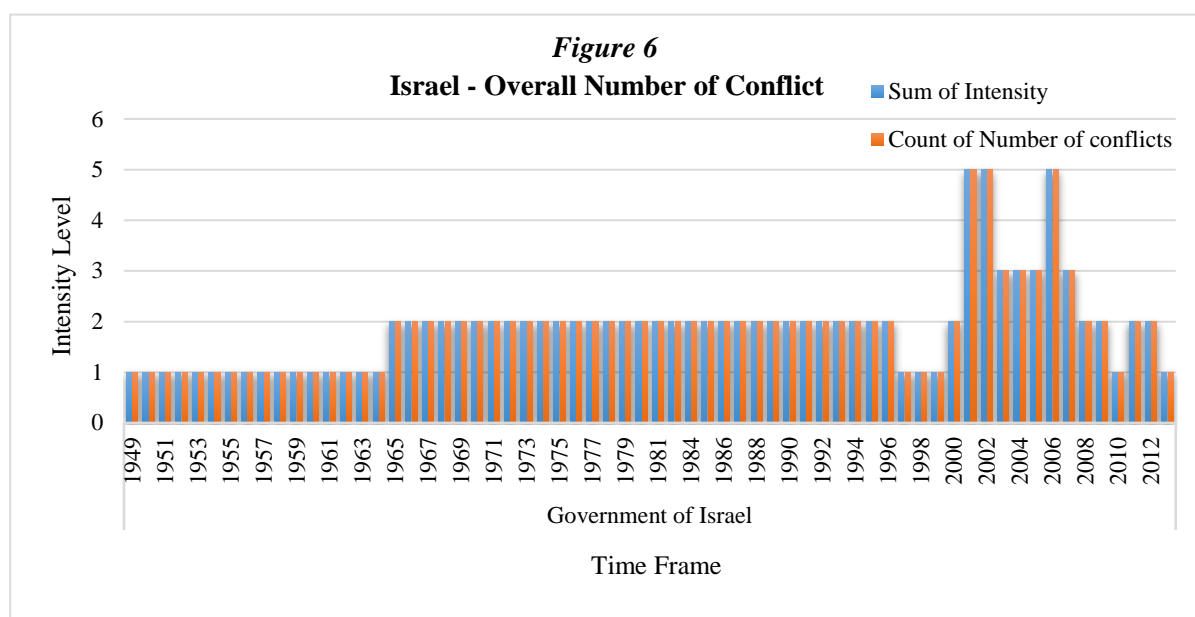


Analogously to the other examined pairs of states, Israel is also known for its antagonistic relations with neighboring countries, more specifically with Palestine, Jordan and Syria. Although the Israeli government has not officially disclosed information on their nuclear deterrence policy, or whether Israel even possesses nuclear weapons, it is alleged that Israel is a nuclear power since 1966, thus making it the first and only nuclear capable state in the region (Bahgat 2005, 35). Surprisingly, however, especially in contrast to the already examined case of India and Pakistan, where nuclear symmetry is at play, the dominant position of Israel, fostering a unipolar power distribution in the region, has favorably affected interstate conflict. In fact, as it is visible in *figure 5*, the effect of nuclear deterrence is so positive that with the exception of several high-intensity wars between Israel and its neighbors, which occurred immediately after the Israeli nuclear weapon development, post 1973 no purely interstate

conflict has been recorded. There are only two confrontations from 1973 onwards, that in spite of being illustrated as interstate warfare in the chart, are merely squirmishes amidst Israeli forces and non-state actors, which in both occasions are backed by the government of Palestine.



Juxtaposed to the decrease of interstate conflict, illustrated in *figure 5*, after the Israeli adoption a nuclear deterrence strategy there has been a considerable spike in the militant activities of insurgency groups. Comparably to the rise of non-state military confrontations observed within the territories of India and Pakistan, according to the information presented in *figure 6*, such an escalation is also present in Israel. Stemming from the data presented in the chart, despite minor fluctuations, the amount of conflict incited by militias has steadily increased throughout the course of time. As many as five military confrontations per year in 2001, 2002 and 2006 have happened on Israeli territory. Still, it is important to note that no squirmishes have been recorded after 2013.



Conclusion

If one perceives great powers as the states possessing nuclear weapons and moves away from the parochialism that this type of multipolar power arrangement presupposes by employing a layered approach, which distinguishes between regional and global power arrangements, an argument can be made that the contemporary international system resembles a multi-level power structure. From this perspective, the commonly affirmed statement that nuclear deterrence is incapable of assuring international order, due to the transition from a bipolar international realm to an intricate world order where distinct axes of power cannot be easily delineated, is no longer valid.

As demonstrated by the evidence presented in the quantitative case study, once the notion of Nuclear Peace Hypothesis is analyzed through the prism of multi-level nuclear polarity, it can be inferred that there is an interrelation amidst the enactment of strategies based upon nuclear weapons and the decrease of interstate conflict. Except in the case of India and Pakistan, where the proliferation of nuclear weapons made no significant impact on the rivalry between the two regional powers, aside from diminishing the intensity of the confrontations from wars to minor squirmishes, in the other two scrutinized instances interstate hostilities have been either prevented from occurring or halted. While a claim could be made that the relatively peaceful relations between North and South Korea can be credited to the existence of a heavily guarded by NATO forces buffer zone between the North and the South Korean border also referred to as the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), in the case of Israel and its neighbors, the correlation is undeniable. Even though both the quantity and intensity of interstate conflict have diminished, as illustrated in the secondary charts depicting the overall conflict in the region, including non-state military activities, it cannot be denied that, as pointed out by Rauchhaus, the dissemination of nuclear weapons tends to “[shift] conflict to the lower end of the spectrum” (Rauchhaus 2009, 260).

Aside from ‘shifting conflict to the lower end of the spectrum,’ due to the discrepancy in the results amongst the examined case studies, the validity of the theoretical underpinnings of the multi-level nuclear polarity cannot be conclusively established. From a theoretical standpoint, multi-level polarity is in essence a more complex form of a multipolar power arrangement and relies on excessive levels of uncertainty in the system to establish peace and order. Building upon this idea, it is logical for the uncertainty inherent in multipolarity to diminish the negative impact of regional nuclear asymmetries and at the same time foster a

further decrease in interstate conflict where nuclear symmetries are the norm. Nevertheless, the evidence presented in the empirical inquiry suggests the opposite is true. Two rationales can possibly account for this discrepancy. Firstly, the disparity can be attributed to the small sample of cases, which is a key drawback of the quantitative study. However, this cannot be easily resolved, as few cases exist where there are antagonistic relations between states and at least one of them is nuclear capable. Secondly, while excessive uncertainty may cause peace, the number of nuclear capable actors in the overarching system of multipolarity is not great enough to decrease the “critical attention ratio” of state actors, which Deutsch and Singer maintain is the key factor accountable for the diminution of conflict under conditions of power disequilibrium (Deutsch and Singer 1964, 394).

Despite of these deficiencies, the central research question posed in this research, namely can multi-level nuclear polarity successfully diminish interstate conflict and, thus, be used as an effective tool for promoting international peace and stability, has arguably been answered. Stemming from the qualitative and quantitative evidence provided in the study, it can be concluded that by examining Waltz’s original nuclear peace theory through the prism of multi-level polarity, deterrence does in fact decrease interstate conflict and thereby advance international order, even if that is at the expense of larger amounts of small, localized squirmishes involving non-state actors. Nonetheless, considering the limitations of this study, in order for the relevance of the theory of nuclear peace to be reestablished in the academic field of IR, further scrutiny into the effects of uncertainty and power disequilibrium under conditions of nuclear proliferation and deterrence are required.

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Appendix I – Raw Data

The raw data used in the empirical section of the research paper is adopted from the dyad-year data set version 17.1 provided by Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP). Due to the size of the data set, it cannot be presented here. However, it can be found on the official UCDP website by following this link -> <http://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/>. Alternatively, it can be provided upon request.

Appendix II – Coding Scheme and Definitions

The concepts of conflict, intensity and type, which are referred to in the charts, have been defined in accordance with the provided by UCDP dyadic data set version 17.1 codebook. The entire codebook can be obtained from the official UCDP website by following this link -> <http://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/>. Alternatively, it can be provided upon request.