

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.
PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.

1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 05/14/2019	2. REPORT TYPE Master's of Military Studies	3. DATES COVERED (From - To) SEP 2018 - APR 2019
--	---	--

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Back to the Future: The Potential of Great Power Competition to Return to Great Power Conflict	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER N/A
	5b. GRANT NUMBER N/A
	5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER N/A

6. AUTHOR(S) Newsuan Smith, Sasha, A., National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA)	5d. PROJECT NUMBER N/A
	5e. TASK NUMBER N/A
	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER N/A

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) USMC Command and Staff College Marine Corps University 2076 South Street Quantico, VA 22134-5068	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER N/A
--	--

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) 7500 GEOINT Dr. Springfield, VA 22150	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) Dr. Paul Gelpi
	11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) N/A

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release, distribution unlimited.

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT
This essay compares the roots of the First World War to the trends of future conflict and risk posited in contemporary future planning and intelligence estimates. From this comparative analysis, a synthesis emerges that suggests conditions analogous to the pre-1914 era exist today in the reemergence of Great Power conflict. In many respects, influences that actually drove decision makers on the "Road to War" before 1914 also concern intelligence analysts today as possible shaping measures on future decisions for war.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
Relevance of WWI; Future Studies; U.S. China Relations; U.S. Russia Relations; Strategy Recommendations; Great Power Competition; Great Power Conflict

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE			USMC Command and Staff College
Unclass	Unclass	Unclass	UU	42	19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code) (703) 784-3330 (Admin Office)


*United States Marine Corps
Command and Staff College
Marine Corps University
2076 South Street
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068*

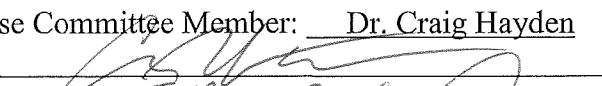
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

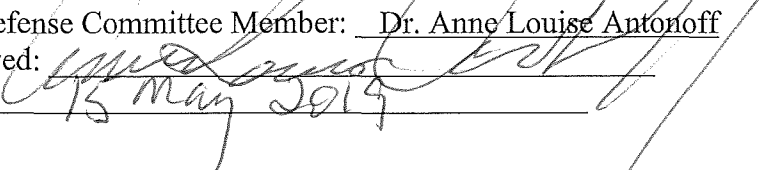
**Back to the Future: The Potential of Great Power Competition to Return to Great Power
Conflict**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

AUTHOR: Newsuan Smith, Sasha A.
AY 2018-19

Mentor and Oral Defense Committee Member: Dr. Paul Gelpi
Approved: 
Date: 15 MAY 2019

Oral Defense Committee Member: Dr. Craig Hayden
Approved: 
Date: 15 May 2019

Oral Defense Committee Member: Dr. Anne Louise Antonoff
Approved: 
Date: 15 May 2019

*United States Marine Corps
Command and Staff College
Marine Corps University
2076 South Street
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068*

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

Back to the Future: The Potential of Great Power Competition to Return to Great Power Conflict

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

AUTHOR: Newsuan Smith, Sasha A.
AY 2018-19

Mentor and Oral Defense Committee Member: Dr. Paul Gelpi

Approved: _____

Date: _____

Oral Defense Committee Member: Dr. Craig Hayden

Approved: _____

Date: _____

Oral Defense Committee Member: Dr. Anne Louise Antonoff

Approved: _____

Date: _____

Executive Summary

Title: Back to the Future: The Potential of Great Power Competition to Return to Great Power Conflict

Author: Sasha Newsuan Smith, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency

Thesis: This essay compares the roots of the First World War to the trends of future conflict and risk posited in contemporary future planning and intelligence estimates. From this comparative analysis, a synthesis emerges that suggests conditions analogous to the pre-1914 era exist today in the reemergence of Great Power conflict. In many respects, influences that actually drove decision makers on the “Road to War” before 1914 also concern intelligence analysts today as possibly shaping future decisions for war.

Discussion: Four analogies arise between *actual* friction and competition among nation-states before 1914 and *possible* crisis and conflict circa 2030 and beyond: 1) rivalry between Great Power empires and peer competition today; 2) pre-war Great Power economic interconnectedness, verging on globalization, and 21st century global economic interdependence, 3) pre-1914 arms races and 21st century weaponization of new and emerging technology, and 4) the fragility of the balance of power and the contestability of the international order. From this comparative analysis a basic synthesis emerges, through which four basic drivers of conflict become apparent: geopolitical rivalry as a fundamental driver of conflict, the protectionist threat to international stability, innovation as a threat to international order, and the revisionist disruption of the status quo.

Conclusion: To cope with the reemergence of Great Power competition and conflict, the U.S. should pay close attention to the four drivers highlighted in this analysis. These drivers suggest four basic priorities for the Defense and State Departments in coming years: 1) identify possible winners and losers of contemporary geopolitical rivalries, with an eye to mitigating the competition for influence in key geographical locations; 2) ameliorate anti-globalist reactions to an interconnected economic system, while recognizing the secondary and tertiary effects of shocks that can propagate rapidly across an ever more interconnected world and can lead, in true interdependent fashion, simultaneously to cooperation and conflict; 3) fund the change and modernization that the Defense Department needs to maintain decision-making advantage and dominance; and 4) solidify agreements with international partnerships to ensure regional influence while strengthening democracy at home as a role model for order abroad.

DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

QUOTATION FROM, ABSTRACTION FROM, OR REPRODUCTION OF ALL OR ANY PART OF THIS DOCUMENT IS PERMITTED PROVIDED PROPER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IS MADE.

List of Illustrations

Figure 1. World War I in Europe Wall Map of Pre-World War I 4

Figure 2. Empires before World War I 15

Figure 3. Strategic Driving Trends of Great Power Competition 28

Table of Contents

Executive Summary i

DISCLAIMER..... ii

List of Illustrations..... iii

Table of Contents iv

Preface..... vi

Introduction..... 1

 Pre-1914 Sources of Instability**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Great Power Conflict Model Exemplified during World War One (World War I)..... 3

 Imperial Rivalries 6

 Great Power Economic Interconnectedness 7

 Militarism and Arms Race 10

 Fragility of the Balance of Power 14

Future Forecasts Predictions for Conflict 19

 Peer Competition..... 19

 Global Economic Interdependence 21

 Weaponization of Technology 22

 Contested International Order 24

Strategic Driving Trends of Great Power Competition 28

 Analogy Synthesis.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Conclusion 33

Bibliography 36

Preface

I came to U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College with the expectation to challenge myself and ask poignant questions that would challenge the thinking behind how the Department of Defense conducts our decision-making. I chose to question the future environment and attempt to identify potential trends that could serve as indicators or warnings that war was on the horizon. Considering the future required me to view the past, specifically the pre-war environment and the origins of World War I, to determine what types of areas we should focus on to determine a potential trajectory for the future. I believed that Great Power competition would lead the U.S. into Great Power conflict in the future. This analytical essay is my attempt to create a “problem frame” for this possibility.

I would like to take the time to acknowledge Dr. Anne Louise Antonoff, Dr. Paul Gelpi, Dr. Craig Hayden, and LtCol David Pinion. Dr. Antonoff was instrumental in helping me get out of my brain and actually translate my concepts on to paper. Dr. Gelpi and Dr. Hayden served as sounding boards to challenge my concepts and get to heart of the analysis I intended to present. LtCol Pinion has been my champion since the beginning of my time at Command and Staff and his support has gone above and beyond, providing me the top cover I needed to be successful. Thank you to the Command and Staff leadership who were also very understanding and supportive of the time I needed to achieve my academic goals. Lastly, thank you to my mother and my sons, Josiah and Micah. My mom traveled from Philadelphia several times over the course of the year to ensure I could meet all of the tasks that were required of me. My sons have been understanding when Mommy needed quiet to get homework done. Thank you to you all!

Introduction

The international world order has been led by the Great Powers of its day for centuries. As of 2018, there are only three sovereign nations that qualify as “Great Powers”: The United States, China, and Russia. Both China and Russia have adversarial relationships with the U.S. In a December 2018 interview, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, USMC General Joseph Dunford, stated, “Russia is seeking to undermine NATO while... China is working on capabilities that would stop American power projection capabilities in the Pacific in all domains: sea, land, air, space and cyberspace.”¹ The Great Power military competition presented by China and Russia deserves our primary focus. However, in light of the potentially overwhelming amount of data to be processed in the multilateral, multi-domain character of the emerging operating environment, it may be hard to ascertain where the fight of the future may originate. By examining the archetype of Great Power conflict, the origins of the First World War, we may be able to anticipate and prepare for future war, ascertain why we may be fighting, and identify what may impact how we are going to fight. There are lessons to be learned from the environment that set the conditions for World War I which suggest the need to cope with comparable stressors in the international environment today.

This essay analyzes several analogies between the road to World War I and the future scenarios for conflict offered in contemporary future planning and intelligence estimates, and then synthesizes from those analogies some fundamental drivers of potential conflict. As the analysis demonstrates, analogous conditions are present. The potential for the reemergence of Great Power conflict can be found in the following parallels: geopolitical competition between

¹ Donald J. Trump, "A New National Security Strategy for a New Era," 2017 National Security Strategy, The White House, December 19, 2017, accessed September 17, 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/new-national-security-strategy-new-era/>

imperial rivals and between modern peer competitors, pre-war Great Power economic interconnectedness and global economic interdependence, pre-1914 militarism and arms races and the weaponization of technological advancements being made today during the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and the fragility of the pre-war balance of power and the contestability of the 21st-century international order. From this comparative analysis a basic synthesis emerges, through which four basic drivers of conflict become apparent: geopolitical rivalry as a fundamental driver of conflict; the protectionist threat to international stability; innovation as a threat to international order; and the revisionist disruption of the status quo.

As a rubric for isolating key trends and influences on the “road to war,” this essay uses a classic work by James Joll, updated by Gordon Martel, entitled *The Origins of the First World War*. It is certainly not the last word on the origins of the war, but it provides a basic model for scrutinizing Great Power conflict of the classical multipolar era. Diplomatic historians are basically the intelligence analysts of the past, privy to documents and secrets that statesmen of the day would have liked to acquire. Scholars of the origins of World War I therefore can identify with some confidence the fundamental issues and anxieties driving international relations before 1914. This essay will demonstrate that, in many respects, similar influences concern intelligence analysts today as possibly shaping future decisions for war.

Great Power Conflict Model: World War I²

The Great Power nation-state system arose in the wake of the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, and has been with us ever since.³ International Relations scholar John Mearsheimer defines a Great Power as a sovereign nation-state inclined to seek out opportunities to alter the distribution of world power in their favor, at the expense of other states. They defend the “balance of power” by maintaining or, if necessary, restoring the status quo when looming change has the potential to favor another state.⁴ In the classical, multipolar era before 1914, every nation acted on behalf of its own self-interest, using alliances, ententes, and rapprochements to bolster itself against its perceived rivals and enemies. However, the other countries could not be contained and self-interest at some point would cause a conflict of interest amongst these tenuous bonds.

In 1914 there were a number of Great Powers recognized in the world: France, Great Britain, Russia, the Austro-Hungarian Empire (aka Habsburg Empire), the Ottoman Empire, Germany, and Italy. Many had colonial empires. The world map⁵ was colored by imperialism, as depicted in Figure 1, below. All of the Great Powers jockeyed for position, coveting their rivals’ gains and needing to maintain the power they themselves had come to relish.

² James Joll and Gordon Martel. *The Origins of the First World War*. 3rd ed. London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2007.

³ Derek McKay and Scott H. M., *The Rise of the Great Powers, 1648–1815*. New York: Longman. 1983. Pp. xi, 378.

⁴ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014, 2.

⁵ "World War I In Europe Wall Map of Pre-World War I 1." World Wide Maps. Accessed April 11, 2019. <https://tldesigner.net/map-of-europe-pre-ww1/maps-com-world-war-i-in-europe-wall-map-of-pre-ww1-1/>

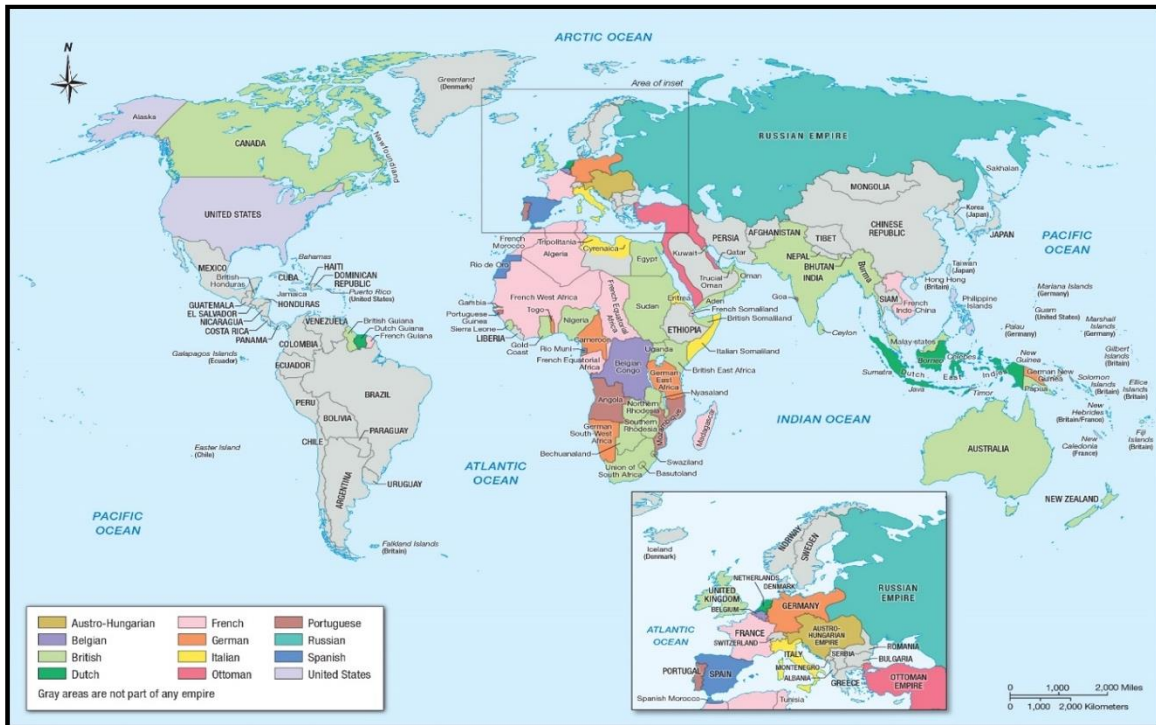


Figure 1. World War I in Europe Wall Map of Pre-World War I

World War I was the first global war originating in Europe and lasted from 28 July, 1914 to 11 November 1918. It was “the war to end all wars” and it resulted in mobilization of 70 million men (60M of which were Europeans). It was one of the largest wars in history and one of the deadliest. Approximately 9 million combatants and 7 million civilians died in the war effort. This was followed by genocides and the 1918 influenza outbreak causing approximately 50 million more casualties. Great Power conflict has very high stakes for civilizations and humanity as a whole. World War I did not in fact end all wars, as it led to another world war merely 20 years later. The enormity of its consequences, including territorial changes that continue to drive conflict today, requires that we consider its lessons. These lessons may help us to determine if our current Great Power competition is driving us towards a rapidly escalating conflict as before.

The immediate pretext for war in 1914 has long been understood – namely, the assassination of the Habsburg Archduke in Sarajevo by Gavrilo Princip, an ethnic Serb from Bosnia acting in concert with an underground movement in Serbia. Austria-Hungary issued an ultimatum to Serbia, and Serbia decided to mobilize against Austria-Hungary. The controversy sparked by the assassination of the Archduke came to be known as the “July Crisis.” Although many Powers sought a diplomatic solution, Serbia refused Austria’s ultimatum demanding the right to investigate the conspiracy, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, and Russia mobilized to protect Serbia against the Austro-German alliance. Germany then mobilized to support its ally Austria-Hungary against Russia, and the French and British mobilized in turn to support their ally and entente partner, Russia, against Germany. A complex series of alliances and ententes had brought every Power to its partner’s defense. This chain reaction drew the entirety of the European continent into total war.

Historians have long wondered: What was the fundamental cause of friction? Many have claimed the Germans sought war as an opportunity to expand, and they have therefore excused the other Powers for having declared war on Germany. Marxists have blamed the disaster on a crisis of capitalist imperialism among the Great Powers at large. Some historians have blamed the outbreak of World War I on militarism and “merchants of death,” and others have blamed it on the alliance system.

However, no one single source of tension gave rise to the conflict of World War I. There were at least four major forces that set the conditions for Great Power Conflict before 1914: imperial rivalries, the propagation of risk across Great Power interconnections, the rise of militarism and arms races, and the fragility of the balance of power. Each of these conditions will be addressed to discern key take-aways for future applicability. Their cumulative impact

undermined the stability of the pre-war international system. With the outbreak of the July Crisis, the Great Powers were primed for conflict.

Imperial Rivalries

From the late 19th century onward, the belief grew among pre-war Great Powers that “to remain a great nation or to become one, you must colonize.”⁶ It became an imperative for European nation-states to open territories to the flow of investments and goods, enabling economic expansion. Governments had to bolster their rule against the hostility of colonized inhabitants, and they needed also to defend their settlements against external threats. The pursuit of empire quickly evolved into the “civilizing mission” or the “White Man’s Burden,” aiming to lift “inferior races” from the perpetual struggle for survival and to “defend” them on humanitarian grounds. The British deemed themselves qualified to “administer the world’s resources as a trust for civilization as a whole.”⁷ European elites embraced colonial rule, but at times critics disagreed with the methods in which they pursued it.

Germany’s pursuit of *Weltpolitik* (world policy) spread fear of German expansion, particularly in Great Britain. The rise of the German navy posed a direct threat to British sea lines of communication and global trade. However, Great Britain was at least as afraid of Russia’s threat in Asia as of Germany’s threat writ large. Commercial interests often inclined Great Britain to work with Germany on individual issues to protect their investments, but the entente policy with France in 1904 marked a general realignment. British and French mutual support led to an anti-German focus and caused the two partners to seek resolution with each

⁶ James Joll and Gordon Martel. *The Origins of the First World War*. 3rd ed. London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2007, 219.

⁷ James Joll and Gordon Martel. *The Origins of the First World War*. 3rd ed. London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2007, 228.

other as conflicts arose to keep Germany at bay. The potential for Russian and German cooperation was intolerable to Great Britain, as it appeared to unite the two greatest threats to their Empire, and induced British decision-makers to safeguard their interests through a new entente with Russia in 1907. By setting aside their rivalry with Russia in Asia, they could focus on protecting global interests against Germany.

Geopolitical ambitions caused Russia to set its sights on Turkey, Asia, the Balkans and the Dardanelles, and inspired Germany to launch Weltpolitik as a way to constrain British world control. In turn, the British Empire pursued self-preservation, while the French actively expanded their own colonial role. Even weaker states played a part, as the combined impact of Italian imperialism and Balkan nationalism brought about the crumbling of the Ottoman Empire, ultimately fueling international tensions prior to 1914.

The imperial rivalries of pre-war Europe led to the stoking of old suspicions between Great Powers and the sparking of new ambitions against the weakening Ottoman Empire, China, Persia, Morocco, and other fragile dynasties. In such places, the various Powers mistrusted each other's intentions as all were seeking enhanced commercial and financial influence within those realms. Britain intended to reinforce its imperial influence, using its alliance with Japan and partnership with France for that purpose, while Germany professed to champion native rulers against British, French, and Japanese domination. Though not the immediate cause of war, expansionist and revisionist ambitions added to the instability of the international order and prompted Great Power governments to act on behalf of their own self-interests.

Great Power Economic Interconnectedness

International rivalry included more than the quest for imperial influence; it extended to the economic realm as well. Joll notes that for Lenin, "War was about the direct consequence of

rivalries between states whose capitalist masters were desperately looking for new fields of investment and pushing governments into imperial expansion.”⁸ Lenin’s argument captures the thoughts of many Marxists, then and now. However, the story is not so simple.

What later scholars might call “interdependence” already characterized the international arena. Nations that depended on each other for industrial trade could also be major rivals in, for example, international arms contracts. The very commercial competitors against which British politicians railed depended in fact on British banks, shipping, and insurance companies. At the same time, while supply chains had not yet reached the degree of global dispersion that characterizes industry in the 21st century, many Britons consumed German goods.

Scholars have debated over the years whether international trade strengthened or weakened the prospect of war. “The nature of economic life at the beginning of the twentieth century was such that international trading and financial links often had ambivalent political effects.”⁹ This ambiguity has long puzzled historians and political scientists alike. From one standpoint, commercial ties among the Great Powers might seem to foster peace, as trade would suffer in war. From another standpoint, however, a neo-mercantilist competition for overseas markets intensified geopolitical rivalries.

Interdependence varied, some European states being close trade partners, while others had fewer connections. When smaller states with relatively little stake in global trade – like Serbia and Austria -- enjoyed Great Power protection, the larger allies could find themselves

⁸ James Joll and Gordon Martel. *The Origins of the First World War*. 3rd ed. London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2007, 186.

⁹ James Joll and Gordon Martel. *The Origins of the First World War*. 3rd ed. London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2007, 205.

brought into conflict with their best trading partners over their client states' actions. War did not result from commercial competition, but global commerce also did not stop war.

The economy was not the immediate cause of World War I, but the pull and influence of the various players in the international market made economic forces a consideration. Big banks acted as agents for foreign governments and industrial enterprises sought to raise loans abroad. They found themselves closely connected to government policies, as risk rose during times of tumult. "Bankers and governments found themselves in a symbiotic relationship."¹⁰ To try to draw a conclusion about the impact of banking and investments on diplomacy would be to oversimplify the matter. On the one hand, international financiers maintained close governmental ties in order to have better insight into and potential influence on government policy. On the other hand, international banking benefited from the uninterrupted flow of international trade that would suffer in the event of crisis or war. Financiers saw war as double-edged; crisis increased risk, which drove up interest rates and therefore profits, but the opportunity to be gained in war initially eluded them.

Marginal gains and international competition meanwhile caused some entrepreneurs and merchants to become nationalistic and to press their governments to "safeguard" their interests with protective tariffs and military presence. Protectionism over time eroded cooperation, heightened competition, and motivated colonial conquests, all increasing the chances of war. Tariffs could serve as "diplomatic weapon[s]:" "A large state could use a discriminatory tariff to

¹⁰ James Joll and Gordon Martel. *The Origins of the First World War*. 3rd ed. London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2007, 192.

try to impose its will on a small state.”¹¹ Small states like Serbia could react with hostility; tariff wars formed a large part of the history of Austro-Serb relations.

Expectations that modern economies could not survive a protracted war effort led some states initially to assume away risks associated with their decisions. Yet economic rationality did not, in the end, govern state behavior. Gavrilo Princip’s action serves as an exemplar of when “fanatical nationalism inspires actions that are not based on any rational calculations of profit or loss, actions whose consequences are unpredictable and unintended.”¹² Nationalism proved to be a potent force, unleashing the global shock of the outbreak of war, which disrupted markets, up-ended trade, and led to a complete breakdown of trust in the financial system. Nevertheless, these costs did not cause governments to relent, confident as they were in the theory of a “short war.” The war expected only to last three months nevertheless carried on for over four years.

Militarism and Arms Races

One of the important factors in the path to World War I was the rise in militarism among the Great Powers. Cultural and bureaucratic attitudes towards conflict, combined with the growing influence of the military on political decision making, drove increasing expenditures on military capabilities. “Each government reacted to the military and naval preparations of its neighbors: a move to increase armaments was never isolated but was followed by increased military expenditure in other states, regardless of their political system.”¹³ European militaries struggled with the resulting economic burden, as they debated whether to expand the army or

¹¹ James Joll and Gordon Martel. *The Origins of the First World War*. 3rd ed. London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2007, 205.

¹² James Joll and Gordon Martel. *The Origins of the First World War*. 3rd ed. London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2007, 115.

¹³ James Joll and Gordon Martel. *The Origins of the First World War*. 3rd ed. London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2007, 115.

navy and how to pay for such expansion. Factional fights sometimes weakened the militarists' cause within their own governments. The degree of militaristic influence on policy of the era varied by nation-state, being evident in how, and how much, nations decided to invest in their defense. The arms races of the pre-war era not only pitted Power against Power but also saw rising socialist, anti-militarist politicians waging "war on war." The European nations' military elements interacted with social, political, and cultural norms in ways that drove the military decision-making that would lead up to World War I.

Each European Great Power had its own risk tolerance for the danger of war, leading them to undertake potentially dangerous and provocative steps, but each also postured itself defensively, as if acting solely in reaction to its rivals. "The arms race itself contributed to the feeling that war was inevitable; although governments claimed that their preparation for a defensive war was a sign of their wish for peace and their will to deter aggression, deterrents in fact often provoke as much as they deter."¹⁴ The contribution of arms races to the outbreak of war remains a controversial question. Whether or not the actual risk of war increased, the perception of its imminence certainly did. The First World War itself in fact became a key case for Cold War-era political scientists studying the internal and external dynamics and effects of arms races.

In the years before 1914, repeated international crises spread fear of war across the European continent. The land arms race among the Continental Powers – Germany, France and Russia, and Austria-Hungary to a lesser extent – took off especially after the Second Morocco Crisis in 1911. Meanwhile, the naval arms race between Britain and Germany led everyone else

¹⁴ James Joll and Gordon Martel. *The Origins of the First World War*. 3rd ed. London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2007, 115.

to anticipate an Anglo-German war, and further distorted the policies and diplomacy of the Continental Powers. Again, the Great Powers' focus was on their own imperialistic ambitions to spread their influence across the European continent and into Asia and Africa. What complicated matters more was the confrontation between military and civilian leadership of each nation-state. "The whole idea of governing the army by a civilian, whose whole training has been political expediency... is vicious in theory and hopeless in practice."¹⁵

The German military, in particular, epitomized the power of militarism. The Prussians had come to make up the majority of the leadership element in the German Empire's Army. They led the administration and supply of the army, bringing to bear their strong militaristic values and traditions. Politically, Germany was having to fight off the influence of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and their anti-military sentiments as the Socialists rose in political influence from 1890 onward. The Prussian nobility in charge of the military considered working-class recruits to be a likely risk of sedition and resisted bringing them into the army. The German Army prided itself on being free from civilian control and political influence. As Kaiser Wilhelm II declared, "The soldier and the army, not parliamentary majorities and decisions, have welded the Empire together. I put my trust in the army."¹⁶ Yet the army itself, as it expanded, increasingly became a conglomerate of the elite and the middle and working classes, and it therefore contained barely suppressed ideological tensions, which the leaders feared might break out in time of war and undermine the military institution.

¹⁵ James Joll and Gordon Martel. *The Origins of the First World War*. 3rd ed. London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2007, 97.

¹⁶ James Joll and Gordon Martel. *The Origins of the First World War*. 3rd ed. London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2007, 89.

The quintessential case of pre-war militarism and arms races was in fact the German Navy. From 1896 onward, German Grand Admiral and Secretary of State of the German Imperial Naval Office, Alfred von Tirpitz was the mastermind of the new German naval program. At home, the Navy, with its reliance on heavy industry and high technology, developed a political base among industrial leaders and workers. Its expansion became codified into law. The *Reichstag* nevertheless voted for taxes to pay for the Army and Navy, and it passed the periodic legislation requiring expanded construction.

Grand Admiral Tirpitz's ambition fueled much of the arms race climate that made war seem ever more possible. "The German fleet was the first serious threat to Britain's hegemony since the Napoleonic wars."¹⁷ The Germans needed to prepare to fight a war on two fronts externally, France to the west and Russia to the East, while also fighting a political war on two fronts internally, between the army and the navy. Tirpitz's primary rival abroad was the British Royal Navy. He aimed to corral Great Britain into an alliance or nudge it into neutrality, but by 1914 he realized that Germany's naval expansion had failed to deter or influence British policy. Nevertheless, "The programme of naval armament developed a momentum of its own that was hard to stop."¹⁸ German leaders were insistent on pursuit of their programs to counter the Anglo-French entente as well as the Anglo-Japanese alliance and, later, the addition of Russia to the policy of the ententes. Britain and its partners, conversely, regarded Germany as a threat.

¹⁷ James Joll and Gordon Martel. *The Origins of the First World War*. 3rd ed. London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2007, 96.

¹⁸ James Joll and Gordon Martel. *The Origins of the First World War*. 3rd ed. London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2007, 99.

Fragility of the Balance of Power

The world order of the day depended on British naval supremacy and imperial control, or at least so the British themselves believed. As former Labour prime minister, Ramsay MacDonald stated, “The British Empire under democratic custodianship can be a powerful element in maintenance of peace and promotion of the international spirit.”¹⁹ Great Britain was the Great Power responsible for the burgeoning world infrastructure – cables, shipping, insurance – all of which supported their claim of custodianship. What made Great Britain “great” was the ability of the small island to use its immense financial and commercial power, as well as military and naval power, to gain imperial influence.

So long as the Great Powers upheld what they called the “Concert of Europe” – a cooperative practice of consultation designed mid-century to resolve controversies of common interest, particularly the fate of the Ottoman Empire – peace among the Powers could hold. However, as that pattern of cooperation gave way increasingly to rivalry and competition, preservation of the European status quo came to rely instead simply on the balance of power.

¹⁹ James Joll and Gordon Martel. *The Origins of the First World War*. 3rd ed. London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2007, 96.

The need for military strength and, ultimately, imperial survival led the Great Powers to seek alliances with other known Great Powers to solidify their standing on the European continent.

They came to be known as the “Triple Alliance”²⁰ (Germany,

Austria-Hungary, and Italy) and the “Triple Entente” (Great Britain, France, and Russia), with many additional relationships such as the Anglo-Japanese alliance. These bonds obligated states, to varying degrees, to support their partners’ actions.

Before 1914, many European nations had agreements that pulled each into war in the event of an attack, whether by legal or moral obligation: Germany and Austria-Hungary, France and Russia, Britain and France, Japan and Britain. The expectation was that each member of an alliance would either maintain benevolent neutrality or take an active part on the side of their alliance partner if attacked. “The existence of the alliance system and the less formal ententes provided the framework within which the diplomacy of the pre-war years were conducted. It roused expectations about the behavior of other governments that conditioned the foreign policies and military plans of the major countries of Europe.”²¹ Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy were the first of the European nations to establish an alliance, which was considered official

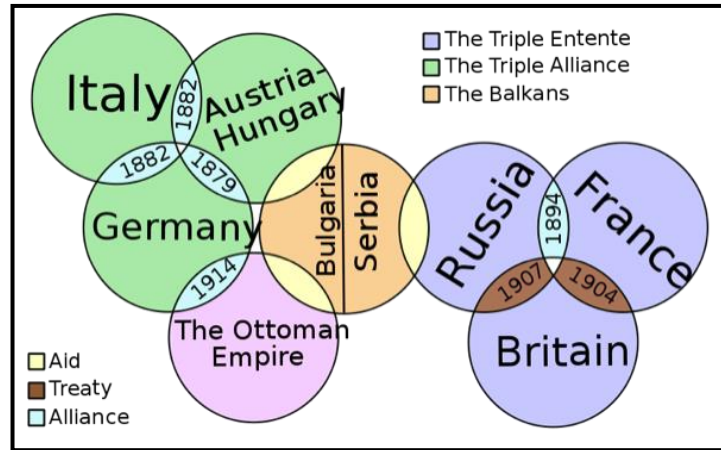


Figure 2. Empires before World War I

²⁰ "Empires before World War I." Map, Facing History and Ourselves. Accessed April 11, 2019.

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/image/empires-world-war-i>

²¹ James Joll and Gordon Martel. *The Origins of the First World War*. 3rd ed. London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2007, 81.

and enforceable. These nations renewed this alliance several times, in 1882, 1891, 1902, and in 1912. Britain, France and Russia had ententes, which were informal and at first considered merely as a friendly understanding between nation-states.

In turn, uncertainty and anxiety over the future allegiance of a junior partner or a proxy state led to attempts at alliance reinforcement, often by demonstrating loyalty in time of strife. The alliance system offered no guarantee of the status quo into the future; the net result was to make tensions more acute. The Bosnian Crisis of 1908-1909 demonstrates the danger to peace when alliance partners develop separate ambitions and agendas, as well as when local or regional disturbances spur larger Great Power responses. The crisis began with the announcement of Austria Hungary's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which the Habsburgs had occupied under the terms of the Berlin Treaty of 1878. Austria, acting unilaterally and without notifying Germany until the last minute, attempted to demonstrate its independence from the German alliance. Germany was displeased with the "fait accompli" but, in the end, gave diplomatic support, as Austria was Germany's only significant ally.

Austria's motive in annexing Bosnia was to subdue tensions within the Habsburg Empire's Slavic territories, including the two occupied provinces. This action only galvanized Serbia, which claimed Bosnia, to foment 'South Slav' nationalism aiming to "liberate all Serbians and to unify them under one state."²² It also emboldened Russia to hasten towards military development in defense of its fellow Slavs. The crisis represented ethnic expansionism, as Serbian nationalists across the border were instigating clandestine movements within Austria-

²² James Joll and Gordon Martel. *The Origins of the First World War*. 3rd ed. London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2007, 69.

Hungary's southern provinces to tear these "south [*jugo*] Slav" territories away and make them "Yugoslavia."

The subsequent Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 also demonstrated both the fidelity and the limitations of the alliance system. Serbia, Greece, Montenegro and Bulgaria formed an alliance to prey upon the weakening Ottoman Empire but then fell out over the spoils, as the first three allies turned upon the fourth. "The Balkan Crisis demonstrated that even firm, formal alliances did not guarantee support and cooperation in all circumstances."²³ Furthermore, Joll observes, "A Great Power could have its policies determined by the need to retain the friendship of a small power and to keep it within its diplomatic system, but the price was a promise of support for the local ambitions of the small power."²⁴ Serb expansionism henceforth placed Russian security at risk. Having already failed to gain Bosnia for the Serbs, yet vulnerable at home to the forces of pan-Slavism, the Russian politicians knew they had to try harder in the future. Now, however, they also had to worry about Austrian reactions to recent Serb gains. The Balkan states' triumph in the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 dealt a deathblow to the Ottoman Empire and signaled to the circling vultures that new possibilities existed for imperial expansion. After the Ottoman Empire, Austria-Hungary was the next "Sick Man of Europe," and knew it. They dreaded Serbian ambitions on their borders. Their reaction to the assassination in 1914 reflected this growing anxiety in the wake of the Serb victories in the wars of 1912-1913.

Weak but aspiring states – and even clandestine movements within them – in fact can trigger drastic changes to the balance of power, as happened in July 1914. The assassination

²³ James Joll and Gordon Martel. *The Origins of the First World War*. 3rd ed. London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2007, 79.

²⁴ James Joll and Gordon Martel. *The Origins of the First World War*. 3rd ed. London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2007, 81.

further revealed the swirling forces beneath the surface of the placid pre-war summer. Subversive members of the Serbian military were enrolled in a secret nationalistic association, called “National Defence” (*Narodna Odbrana*).²⁵ Their activities created a rift between the military and the government, and greatly complicated Serbia’s task in responding to the Austrian ultimatum demanding that Belgrade allow Habsburg authorities to investigate the crime. The Belgrade government had to reject Austria’s ultimatum, because submission to Austria would have meant abdication of national responsibility, resulting in effect in the triumph of the secret association. National Defence was sure of war between Serbia and Austria and it relied upon long-used tactics of terrorism and conspiracy brought forth from the Ottoman Empire. The Habsburg Monarchy could not conclusively pin the assassination of Franz Ferdinand on Serbia, but there was enough confusion for Austria to use it as an excuse to target Serbia for retaliation.

To reiterate, sources of tension within the origins of World War I were multifaceted and complex. Together, in reciprocal, systemic fashion, these trends undermined the chance for stability within the international system, as states responded to geopolitical rivalry and alliance anxieties abroad in ways that enhanced civil-military, political, and ideological tensions at home, and vice versa. The four major conditions previously highlighted set the atmosphere for Great Power Conflict pre-1914: imperial rivalries, Great Power economic interconnectedness, militarism and arms races, and disruption of international cooperation by disturbances to a fragile balance of power. Now we will consider analogous trends found in future forecasts, to ascertain if the conditions seen before 1914 translate to the future environment described in those studies.

²⁵ James Joll and Gordon Martel. *The Origins of the First World War*. 3rd ed. London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2007, 113.

Future Forecasts: Predictions for Conflict

Having reviewed four major conditions behind the origins of war by 1914, we can now pivot to present-day trends and consider major analogies among the forces of international instability in the 21st century. Despite many changes in the world order since before the First World War, it is clear that analysts today must heed many comparable threats to peace and stability. The underlying stressors and friction are highlighted in the following four studies: The National Intelligence Council's (NIC) 2017 "Global Trends: Paradox of Progress" report, the World Economic Forum's (WEF) "The Global Risks Report 2019", the Atlantic Council's 2016 "Global Risks 2035: The Search for a New Normal" report, and the US Army's Future Studies Group's compendium entitled "The Character of Warfare 2030-2050: Technological Change, International System, and the State." These reports, offering a ten to thirty-year outlook, all highlight problems to which the United States should pay attention as it prepares for the competitive future international environment.

Peer Competition

America's chief near peer competitor, the People's Republic of China (PRC), has a complex relationship with the U.S. that defies easy characterization. China and the U.S. are greatly intertwined economically, with China owning about \$1.12 trillion of U.S. debt (approximately 5.5%) as of November 2018.²⁶ "U.S. goods and services trade with China totaled an estimated \$710.4 billion in 2017. Exports were \$187.5 billion; imports were \$522.9 billion. The U.S. goods and services trade deficit with China was \$335.4 billion in 2017."²⁷ While the U.S. and Chinese economies are so closely tied, the PRC practices gray zone tactics, below the

²⁶ Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET). 2018. "Integrated Phase Classification: IPC 2.0: A Common Starting Point for Decision Making". FEWS NET. <http://fews.net/ipc>

²⁷ Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET). 2018. "Integrated Phase Classification: IPC 2.0: A Common Starting Point for Decision Making". FEWS NET. <http://fews.net/ipc>

level of war, such as using “fishing trawlers” as military listening-observation posts or modes of transportation for paramilitary forces. It also has whole universities dedicated to conducting cyber-warfare attacks against U.S. corporate and governmental entities (e.g., the hacking of Google in 2010 or the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in 2015).

The PRC’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA) uses commercial investments to influence foreign states, such as economic investments in Africa and South America or the “Silk Road”; collectively, they are known as the “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI.) However, when those countries cannot repay those economic agreements, China leverages the default as an opportunity to expand the PLA’s expeditionary presence militarily. Any of these exchanges could serve as a potential spark of greater conflict between China and the United States. The recently published 2019 Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community concluded that, “We assess that China’s leaders will try to extend the country’s global economic, political, and military reach while using China’s military capabilities and overseas infrastructure and energy investments under the Belt and [Silk] Road Initiative to diminish U.S. influence.”²⁸ China intends to gain control and influence with nations with whom the U.S. has secured bilateral or multilateral agreements.

U.S. relations with the Russian Federation, on the other hand, are reminiscent of the Cold War, but with a new twist. U.S. and Russia do not have the same cooperative relationship as do the U.S. and China, but they do possess bilateral diplomatic relations on certain topics like counterproliferation, climate change, and counter-terrorism. Historically speaking, in the post-Cold War-era, Russia is known to believe “that the spread of U.S. regional and global hegemony

²⁸ Daniel R. Coats, "Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community - 2019," Congressional Testimonies, January 29, 2019, , accessed March 15, 2019, <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/2019-ATA-SFR--SSCI.pdf>.

since the end of the Cold War threatens Russian vital national interests and deprives Russia of its rightful place on the world stage.”²⁹ Russia serves as a strategic nuisance and blames the U.S. for all of its inability to achieve global dominance. They conduct gray zone warfare, by conducting cyberattacks on U.S. national Presidential elections, cyber espionage on U.S. business entities, and acts of aggression against Crimea, the Ukraine, and Georgia, and could ultimately undermine Western influence in the East by partnering with China against the interests of the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in places like the eastern Mediterranean.

Global Economic Interdependence

The wave of globalization that preceded the First World War resumed late in the 20th century, and now almost every aspect of human life today is impacted by goods and services from around the globe. Small changes can ripple across the entire system, with disproportionate consequences. Great Power economic crises hit local economies particularly hard, as we saw in 2008 and its aftermath.

Extreme weather and environmental events (i.e. droughts, floods, famine, hurricanes, tornadoes, tsunamis, melting glaciers, erosion, rising sea-levels, and earthquakes) likewise will impact our food, water, and energy security. At the same time, massive environmental degradation caused by many decades of centrally planned industrialization under the former Soviet Union and China has taken its toll, from the drying up of the Aral Sea in Central Asia to the desertification of farmland in China. Economic growth has likewise destroyed major components of the global climate system, such as the equatorial belt of rain forests in Latin

²⁹ Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET). 2018. “Integrated Phase Classification: IPC 2.0: A Common Starting Point for Decision Making”. FEWS NET. [http:// fews.net/ipc](http://fews.net/ipc)

America and Southeast Asia. Climate change is becoming a consistent factor in our geopolitical and geo-economic decision-making, directly impacting food security by affecting “agricultural output, through changing temperatures and rainfall patterns and by causing wider systemic disruptions such as market volatility, interruptions to transport networks, and humanitarian emergencies.”³⁰ Chaos of this order could easily tip competition into conflict without advance notice.

Competition over resources could elevate nationalistic sentiments and foster a “haves versus have-nots” scenario on a global scale. “Intensifying impacts [of climate change] will render an increasing amount of land uninhabitable”³¹ and “cities will rapidly assume increased importance, as national governments cannot deliver on overall economic growth.”³² Urbanization amongst the world’s populations will mean declining self-sufficiency, increasing dependency on tenuous food supply lines, and increasing criminal and gang activity. The poor will become even poorer and hungry, fighting to escape the endless poverty cycle through mass migrations. The situation will ultimately lead to crises of health and mental well-being. Trust in the societal equilibrium, both domestic and international, will disintegrate. As societies decay, extremism may take root, and with it, war.

Weaponization of Technology

Advancements in technology will continue to shape risks in the global landscape.

Emergent competition in areas of innovation in high-technology signals potential challenges to

³⁰ Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET). 2018. “Integrated Phase Classification: IPC 2.0: A Common Starting Point for Decision Making”. FEWS NET. <http://fews.net/ipc>

³¹ “The Global Risks Report 2019 - 14th Edition.” World Economic Forum. 2019. Accessed February 2, 2019. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risks_Report_2019.pdf.

³² Matthew J. Burrows, *Global Risks 2035: The Search for a New Normal*, 11. Washington, DC: Atlantic Council - Strategy Papers, 2016. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/Global_Risks_2035_web_0922.pdf

U.S. dominance of a Western-led, rules-based international order. Klaus Schwab defines the Fourth Industrial Revolution as the current time in history,

characterized by a range of new technologies that are fusing the physical, digital and biological domains, impacting all disciplines, economies and industries, and even challenging ideas about what it means to be human. Occurring simultaneously are waves of further breakthroughs in areas ranging from gene sequencing to nanotechnology, from renewables to quantum computing.³³

These advancements impact life expectancy, the job market, economic development, biotechnology, even the race of invention. The United States takes for granted that it will maintain its dominance in the technological arena. China is proving to be an admirable foe in this sector. As published in *The Economist* in 2017, “The world’s most valuable resource is no longer oil, but data.”³⁴ Information, specifically ‘big data,’ is the premiere natural resource of the 21st century, and nations believe whoever controls the data, will lead the world. Targeted use of technology allows data to be wielded as a weapon of choice in the future operating environment.

Technology has the promise to create a new form of “complex interdependence.”³⁵ Rivals such as the United States and China often appear to be on a path towards confrontation over technological innovation. Yet their push for dominance in new capabilities, whether 5-G or quantum computing, could well make one dependent on the other. “Rapid technological advancements will increase the pace of change and create new opportunities, but will aggravate

³³ Klaus Schwab, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution* (London, UK: Portfolio Penguin, 2017), <https://luminariaz.files.wordpress.com/.../the-fourth-industrial-revolution-2016-21.pdf>.

³⁴ "The World's Most Valuable Resource Is No Longer Oil, but Data," *The Economist*, May 06, 2017, , accessed May 09, 2019, <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2017/05/06/the-worlds-most-valuable-resource-is-no-longer-oil-but-data>.

³⁵ Robert O. Keohane, and Joseph S. Nye. *Power & Interdependence*. 4th ed., Pearson Education Limited, 2012, 20.

divisions between winners and losers.”³⁶ Just as in the pre-1914 arms races, technological competition may be pursued for peace yet used for war.

Contested International Order

China and Russia, America’s two potential adversaries, also qualify as revisionist competitors in the sense that they seek to disrupt or overturn the international order that the U.S. and its allies have established. The 2017 U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) speaks of the need to “preserve peace through strength”.³⁷ It goes on to state,

China and Russia want to shape a world antithetical to U.S. values and interests. China seeks to displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific region, expand the reaches of its state-driven economic model, and reorder the region in its favor. Russia seeks to restore its great power status and establish spheres of influence near its borders. The intentions of both nations are not necessarily fixed.³⁸

A post-Western global system, not led by the U.S., will present no clear organizing principle. Such a system will also offer no guarantees of peace. At any moment a conflict could erupt, engulfing the global landscape in World War III.

China and Russia are both hedging their bets by seeking development in third world countries, increasing their access to resources and labor forces as global competition intensifies. “Virtually any part of post-Soviet space and Indo-Pacific could become areas of serious big-power competition.”³⁹ If that is so, turning the current model on its ear allows us to consider

³⁶ Marvin, Gonzalez. "Global Trends Paradox of Progress." Global Trends Home Page. January 15, 2017. Accessed October 25, 2018, 6. <https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/nic/GT-Full-Report.pdf>

³⁷ Donald J. Trump, "A New National Security Strategy for a New Era," 2017 National Security Strategy, The White House, December 19, 2017, accessed September 17, 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/new-national-security-strategy-new-era/>

³⁸ Donald J. Trump, "A New National Security Strategy for a New Era," 2017 National Security Strategy, The White House, December 19, 2017, accessed September 17, 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/new-national-security-strategy-new-era/>

³⁹ Matthew J. Burrows, Global Risks 2035: The Search for a New Normal, 11. Washington, DC: Atlantic Council - Strategy Papers, 2016. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/Global_Risks_2035_web_0922.pdf

what regional Russian and Chinese dominance would look like. There could be a Russo-Chinese military alliance, or the “East and West could square off after China suffers an implosion and ramps up nationalism.”⁴⁰ The Euro-American model where the West reigns supreme could become seriously compromised if “a dysfunctional Europe is absorbed into regional threats or the United States absolves itself from policing the world.”⁴¹ Abdicating that responsibility will only heighten the chance that the large amount of underbrush lying around the world may ignite into a wildfire, uncontrolled and all-encompassing.

The underbrush includes disruptions to global integration that place collective progress and multilateral institutions at risk. Widespread socioeconomic distress leaves the moral and ethical questions about who will control governance and mediate geopolitical rivalry that much more daunting. It is not yet clear how much global prosperity might follow U.S. economic growth, but it is also not known, and not knowable, whether U.S. growth will continue or will suffer another setback. Shrinking wealth, shrinking workforces, extended working ages, diminished financial returns, and an exorbitant global debt burden all undermine the economic social order. Lack of faith in democratization will give rise to “citizenship becoming supplanted by self/group identity, spurred by the Internet.”⁴² Whether happening simultaneously or singularly, any or all of these events could serve as a systematic shock to the international order.

Systemic shocks will further compound disruption of global integration. In *Global Trends*, Marvin Gonzalez writes.

⁴⁰ Matthew J. Burrows, *Global Risks 2035: The Search for a New Normal*, 11. Washington, DC: Atlantic Council - Strategy Papers, 2016. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/Global_Risks_2035_web_0922.pdf

⁴¹ Matthew J. Burrows, *Global Risks 2035: The Search for a New Normal*, 11. Washington, DC: Atlantic Council - Strategy Papers, 2016. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/Global_Risks_2035_web_0922.pdf

⁴² Matthew J. Burrows, *Global Risks 2035: The Search for a New Normal*, 10. Washington, DC: Atlantic Council - Strategy Papers, 2016. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/Global_Risks_2035_web_0922.pdf

The progress of the past decades is historic—connecting people, empowering individuals, groups, and states, and lifting a billion people out of poverty in the process. But this same progress also spawned shocks like the Arab Spring, the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, and the global rise of populist, anti-establishment politics. These shocks reveal how fragile the achievements have been, underscoring deep shifts in the global landscape that portend a dark and difficult near future.⁴³

The assassination in Sarajevo was a global shock that triggered a catastrophic war. The catastrophe triggered by global shock today might be Great Power war, or it might be international humanitarian disaster, or it might be a war between Western have's and anti-Western have-not's, championed by rival Great Powers

Global interdependence, now as in 1914, took many forms. It would be unwise to count upon the existence of cooperation to avert the possibility of war. While the world is currently operating as a multipolar international system founded on multilateral institutions such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, the rise of competition over influence or resources, such as food, water, and energy,⁴⁴ will likely lead to erosion or fragmentation of these institutions in the future. Fragmentation will foster nationalism and populism, which will exacerbate competition for resources, ultimately leading to conflict. Uneven distribution of gains from globalization, coupled with recurring economic crises, will erode trust in both local and global institutions, leading to local conflicts that defy easy governance by the U.S-led international regime. The frequency of disasters will test the capability of governments themselves to govern.

⁴³ Marvin Gonzalez. "Global Trends Paradox of Progress." Global Trends Home Page. January 15, 2017. Accessed October 25, 2018. <https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/nic/GT-Full-Report.pdf>, ix.

⁴⁴ "The Character of Warfare 2030-2050: Technological Change, The International System, & The State", 17. Army Future Studies Group. August 2016. Accessed March 2019. https://armyfuturestudiesgroup.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/ARMY_COMPENDIUM_Web-2.pdf.

Over 109 countries⁴⁵ are currently experiencing threats to their civil liberties in all areas, to include freedom of conscience, press, religion, expression, assembly, and speech; the right to security, liberty, privacy, equal treatment under the law and due process, a fair trial, and the right to life. A pivot is thus underway towards more autocratic or authoritarian governance. Fragile states around the world are finding themselves preyed upon by neocolonial forces like China and Russia who exploit their distress. When these creditors call in their loans, the fragile states will have no option but to surrender sovereign assets. Governments under threat from such outside forces, already overburdened by internal chaos, will find it increasingly difficult to trust in partnerships with other states in the future.

Meanwhile, competing “helping hands” offering aid to poor nations will resent each other’s interference. Like the imperial rivalries of World War I, future competition could be fueled by neocolonialist pursuit of exclusive access to trading and resources. The U.S., China, or Russia could very well fulfill the role of becoming the “world’s trust” holder, charged with “administering” global resources. As competition intensifies, any of the modern Great Powers could consider a threat to their influence or access to external markets as a reason to escalate into conflict. Future rebellions or revolution also pose the opportunity to escalate conflict between the Great Powers. Every nation will operate within its own self-interest just as the European nations did before World War I.

⁴⁵ "The Global Risks Report 2019 - 14th Edition." World Economic Forum, 80. 2019. Accessed February 2, 2019. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risks_Report_2019.pdf.

Strategic Drivers of Great Power Competition

Four major drivers of conflict have been identified, based on parallels between trends highlighted in the various forecasts, on the one hand, and forces driving pre-war tensions, on the other. These drivers illuminate the significance of the parallels or analogies and the fundamental commonality in case. The four drivers are: geopolitical sources of conflict; the protectionist threat to international stability; innovation as a threat to international order; and the revisionist disruption of the status quo. The relevance of these drivers will be discussed below.


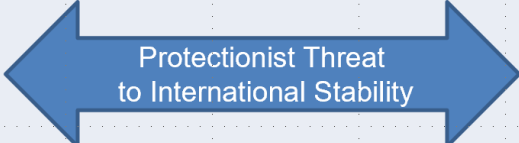

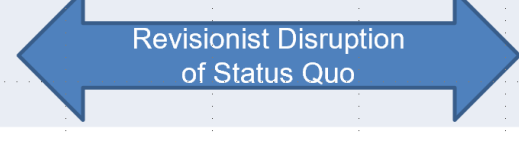
World War I	Analogies	Forecasts
Imperial Rivalries		Peer Competition
Great Power Economic Interconnectedness		Global Economic Interdependence
Militarism and Arms Races		Weaponization of Technology
Fragility of the Balance of Power		Contested International Order

Figure 3. Strategic Drivers of Great Power Competition

Geopolitical Drivers of Conflict

The analogous relationship between pre-war imperial rivalries and 21st century peer competition is perhaps the most obvious of the trends. Peer competition today between China, Russia, and the U.S. is emphasized across forecasts. Typically, such rivalry has to do with expansion, whether territorial or economic, often driven by the quest for resources or access to trade routes. China's Silk Road Initiative, their investment in Africa, and their militarization of the South China Seas all exemplify this pattern. Similarly, Russia's attempts to recapture former U.S.S.R territories like the Ukraine, Crimea, or Georgia center on the political value of key locations and demonstrate Great Power expansion of today. The U.S. and its allies condemn these actions, often due to the impact on the rights and sovereignty of others. Fundamentally, this driver is about the interaction of geography and international politics when multiple powers seek to gain influence in the same location, increasing tensions and the potential for conflict.

Protectionist Threat to International Stability

The protectionist threat to international stability emerges from another parallel, where Great Power Economic Interconnectedness is likened to modern Global Economic Interdependence. Economics compound geopolitical competition, adding another layer of complexity, when economic interests heavily influence governments in respect to gaining or guarding access to foreign markets. However, the need for cooperation counterbalances the pull of protectionism. Before 1914, theorists hoped that trade would preserve peace, but instead protectionist tariffs raised tensions. The example of China-U.S. economic ties exhibits this ambiguity today. Tough talk on trade may produce economic agreements that facilitate

cooperation, but it could also be taken as an act of aggression and end by elevating the potential for conflict.

Interconnectedness not only compounds competition, but also propagates risk. Shockwaves can come from many sources. Today's "assassination in Sarajevo" could be a military coup in Asia, or an earthquake triggering tsunami's around the Indo-Pacific, precipitating humanitarian disasters and disrupting global markets.

When global risk increases, the demand for protection will increase accordingly. The source of protectionism often is a nationalistic movement demanding exclusive access to jobs, resources, or markets for a state's own people. Neo-colonialism can also trigger fierce reactions from those who perceive foreign exploitation as a threat to their national identity. Globalization can likewise provoke political backlash against perceived economic injustice.

Economic interdependence nevertheless can, in some cases, mitigate risk of conflict. Resource scarcity and climate change could produce cooperation *or* conflict – or a combination of the two. Statesmen must decide how to balance competition with mutual gain.

Innovation as a Threat to the International Order

The analogous relationship between pre-war militarism and arms race and the weaponization of new technology today demonstrates that acceleration of innovation, such as with the Fourth Industrial Revolution, has the potential to disrupt global leadership. A state's ability to maintain its position in the world order is often a product of past accomplishments; innovation can call into question the ability to sustain such primacy into the future. Commercial innovation today is driving changes to military technology, and whichever nation best harnesses

that capability will achieve and maintain dominance. Nations are constantly looking for new forms of weapons systems; the technological innovations of the day help to advance that objective. States that can integrate innovation faster than their rivals can garner greater influence amongst other nations.

The World War I arms race of building new weapons systems has perhaps its greatest counterpart today in the technological innovation of artificial intelligence and the integration of big data. Nations believe that controlling the data of the future will determine who becomes the leader of the international order by virtue of dominating the multi-domain environment, particularly the space and cyber domains. Today, however, bureaucratic rigidity, though based on the need for rigorous application of regulations and procedures, may impede the ability of a state to pivot as quickly as the rate of technological advancement requires. Ultimately, the state that wins will be able to balance technological skill with organizational nimbleness.

Revisionist Disruption of Status Quo

The ability of revisionist Great Powers to try to alter the status quo reveals the analogy between the tenuous nature of the pre-war balance of power and the contested international order of the future. The pre-1914 alliances were designed, in theory, to preserve the balance of power. Yet, for fear of losing its ally in a future time of need, a state might grant that ally protection against its better judgment, as seen in German support for Austria during the annexation of Bosnia or the many reciprocal mobilizations during the July Crisis.

The way that the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance pitted Great Powers and smaller allied nations against each other is very analogous to how, in the modern world, the U.S., China,

and Russia could pull the international order to their respective sides if conflict arose.

Hypothetically, on a regional level, there could be a small incident in the Pacific where members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) were compelled to make a choice between supporting China and supporting the U.S. In that way, competing orders could arise and U.S. influence could be displaced.

Small states and non-state actors can have undue influence on the international order and demonstrate the phenomenon of lesser-power “tails” wagging Great Power “dogs.” Tomorrow’s “Serbia” could be Syria or Venezuela, pitting the U.S. against Russia in an effort to maintain or assert control and dominance. Alternatively, a non-state actor, like a new version of the Black Hand or National Defense flavored with the newest extremism, may arise to cause local social and political institutions to decline and bring down the international order with them.

Behind the pre-war alliance system, Great Britain served as the guarantor of the balance of power. Germany, however, resented that status quo as an unjust imbalance and challenged British hegemony around the world. Today, the U.S. currently is the guarantor of the international order, requiring it to take on the burden of preserving freedom and sovereignty around the world, but China seeks to overturn the rules on which it is based. Will that antagonism trigger a global division into armed camps? Or will the prevailing international order hold? Determining the answer to that question, relies the future of global peace.

Conclusion

Future decision-makers should consider the four drivers of Great Power competition and conflict in light of their strategic relevance and international and domestic applicability. While certainly not all inclusive or definitive, they raise an important perspective from which to view the future or shape future policies.

The above analysis has particular importance for the United States. The U.S. has taken on the role of global policing, enforcing morality, democracy, and global civil liberties. The role of guarantor forces it to the brink of conflict more than any other Great Power. Assurance of international order through U.S. military and political dominance, though serving the defense of the Homeland and preserving national security and prosperity, also exacerbates the potential for international conflict. Traditional armed force, however, may prove less useful in regulating such conflict than in the past:

Within states, political order will remain elusive and tensions high until societies and governments renegotiate their expectations of one another. Between states, the post-Cold War, unipolar moment has passed and the post-1945 rules based international order may be fading too. Some major powers and regional aggressors will seek to assert interests through force but will find results fleeting as they discover traditional, material forms of power less able to secure and sustain outcomes in a context of proliferating veto players.⁴⁶

Moreover, the four drivers identified above do not exist independently of each other. On the contrary, they interact in important ways. The trends of U.S.-led international order and the Fourth Industrial Revolution will “converge at an unprecedented pace to make governing and cooperation harder and will change the nature of power—fundamentally altering the global landscape. Economic, technological and security trends, especially, will expand the number of

⁴⁶ Marvin, Gonzalez. "Global Trends Paradox of Progress." Global Trends Home Page. January 15, 2017. Accessed October 25, 2018, 6. <https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/nic/GT-Full-Report.pdf>

states, organizations, and individuals able to act in consequential ways.”⁴⁷ So what can the United States do to mitigate the impact of this risk-laden future operating environment?

The world is moving away from the uncontested U.S. hegemony that characterized the early post-Cold War era, but the international system still revolves around the hub of U.S. power and values. In order to maintain this dynamic equilibrium, the U.S. must ensure that future National Strategies not only address Great Powers, such as Russia and China, but also address the rapidly changing landscape that has the potential to shift the ground underneath every Great Power’s feet.

To cope with that future world, U.S. priorities must be clearly aligned to address the risks and drivers of conflict identified above. The United States must:

- 1) recognize and anticipate contemporary geopolitical rivalries, with an eye to mitigating competition for influence and investment in key geographical locations;
- 2) ameliorate anti-globalist reactions to an interconnected economic system, while recognizing the secondary and tertiary effects of such forces as climate change and resource scarcity as risks that can propagate across such a system, possibly leading, in true interdependent fashion, either to cooperation or conflict, and perhaps to both at once;
- 3) fund the change and modernization that the Defense Department needs to maintain decision-advantage and dominance, particularly in areas of Artificial Intelligence and Big Data for application in the space and cyber domains; and
- 4) solidify agreements with international partnerships to ensure regional and global influence, while modeling democracy as a credible and appealing system of government that will continue to serve as the accepted basis for the pursuit of international order.

⁴⁷ Marvin, Gonzalez. "Global Trends Paradox of Progress." Global Trends Home Page. January 15, 2017. Accessed October 25, 2018, 6. <https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/nic/GT-Full-Report.pdf>

In sum, future decision-makers should consider the four drivers of conflict synthesized above in light of their strategic relevance and international and domestic applicability. While certainly not all-inclusive or definitive, these four drivers provide an important lens through which to view the future and shape future policies. The ambiguity of the future requires us to try to make sense of the direction in which we are headed. Looking back to get to the future adds logic to our policy considerations and lends coherence to our view of the grand scheme of things.

Bibliography

Burrows, Matthew J. *Global Risks 2035: The Search for a New Normal*. Washington, DC:

Atlantic Council - Strategy Papers, 2016.

https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/Global_Risks_2035_web_0922.pdf

Coats, Daniel R. "Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community - 2019."

Congressional Testimonies. January 29, 2019. Accessed March 15, 2019.

<https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/2019-ATA-SFR---SSCI.pdf>.

Statement for the Record, U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence

"Empires before World War I." Map, Facing History and Ourselves. Accessed April 11, 2019.

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/image/empires-world-war-i>.

Gonzalez, Marvin. "Global Trends Paradox of Progress." Global Trends Home Page. January 15,

2017. Accessed October 25, 2018. <https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/nic/GT-Full-Report.pdf>.

Joll, James, and Gordon Martel. *The Origins of the First World War*. 3rd ed. London, UK:

Pearson Education Limited, 2007.

Keohane, Robert O., and Joseph S. Nye. *Power & Interdependence*. 4th ed., Pearson Education

Limited, 2012.

Mattis, James N., *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge*. Arlington, VA: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2018 <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/.../2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>

Mckay, Derek and Scott H. M.. *The Rise of the Great Powers, 1648–1815* . New York: Longman.

Mearsheimer, John J., *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014.

Schwab, Klaus, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution* (London, UK: Portfolio Penguin, 2017), <https://luminariaz.files.wordpress.com/.../the-fourth-industrial-revolution-2016-21.pdf>.

"The Character of Warfare 2030-2050: Technological Change, The International System, & The State." Army Future Studies Group. August 2016. Accessed March 2019. https://armyfuturestudiesgroup.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/ARMY_COMPENDIUM_Web-2.pdf.

"The Global Risks Report 2019 - 14th Edition." World Economic Forum. 2019. Accessed February 2, 2019. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risks_Report_2019.pdf

"The World's Most Valuable Resource Is No Longer Oil, but Data." The Economist. May 06, 2017. Accessed May 09, 2019. <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2017/05/06/the-worlds-most-valuable-resource-is-no-longer-oil-but-data>.

Trump, Donald J., "A New National Security Strategy for a New Era," 2017 National Security Strategy, The White House, December 19, 2017, accessed September 17, 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/new-national-security-strategy-new-era/>

"World War I In Europe Wall Map Of Pre-World War I 1." World Wide Maps. Accessed April 11, 2019. <https://tldesigner.net/map-of-europe-pre-ww1/maps-com-world-war-i-in-europe-wall-map-of-pre-ww1-1/>.