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**Foreign Policy Strategies for Declining Hegemony: Searching for
the Balance between Costs and Involvement**

**Baia Ivaneishvili
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Scientific Supervisor: Nika Chitadze

(full name)

(Professor, Doctor, at International Black Sea University)

(academic title)

I confirm that the work corresponds to the field, is characterized by novelty, scientific and practical value and is presented by the format defined by International Black Sea University.

(supervisor's signature)

Experts (full name & academic title):

1. Sandra J. Johnson, Professor, Doctor

2. Shalva Dzebisashvili, Associate Professor, Doctor

3. Nino Kereselidze, Associate Professor, Doctor

Opponents (full name & academic title):

1. Bakur Kvashilava, Professor, Doctor

2. Zaza Tsotniashvili, Professor, Doctor

I acknowledge that this is my own work, which is presented in the format defined by International Black Sea University and is attached by the publications relevant to the dissertation.

(doctoral student's signature)

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation inquires the nature of an optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon and develops its implementation mechanisms. This is attained through building an analytical framework for the classification and assessment of the foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon based on their consequences for the determinants of hegemonic decline and attributes of a hegemon. As the analytical framework reveals, the optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon is the one that enables the hegemon to address its decline through reducing its foreign policy costs, thus, save its power resources and at the same time, maintain its influence on international relations as both, are important to secure its national interests. After revealing the nature of the optimal strategy, the dissertation proceeds with the development of the mechanisms of its implementation. It implies the complex addressing of all determinants and moderating factors of hegemonic decline established through the synthesis of IR literature. Both, development of the analytical framework, as well as the implementation mechanisms of the optimal strategy are achieved using the theoretical reasoning based on the well-established, empirically proven arguments of International Relations (IR) theory, further supported by the case study of the foreign policy strategy of the United States of America (USA) under Barack Obama Administration.

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ABBREVIATIONS

APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
EAS	East-Asian Summit
ERI	European Reassurance Initiative
FSB	Financial Stability Board
GCC	Gulf Security Council
HST	Hegemonic Stability Theory
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IR	International Relations
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NBC	Nuclear, Biological, Chemical
NFR	NATO Response Force
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NSS	National Security Strategy
OPS	Office of Press Secretary
RAP	Readiness Action Plan
SOF	Special Operations Forces

TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
TTIP	Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USA	United States of America
VJTF	Very High Readiness Joint Task Force

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation inquires the nature of an optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon and develops its implementation mechanisms. The goal of the dissertation is attained through building an analytical framework for the assessment of the foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon based on their consequences for the determinants of hegemonic decline and attributes of the hegemon. After revealing the nature of the optimal strategy, the dissertation proceeds with the development of the mechanisms of its implementation. Both, development of the analytical framework, as well as the implementation mechanisms of the optimal strategy are achieved through theoretical modeling based on the well-established, empirically proven arguments of International Relations (IR) theory, further supported by the case study of the foreign policy strategy of the United States of America (USA) under Barack Obama Administration. The theory building process develops the major argument of this dissertation: the most optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon is the one that enables it to decrease its foreign policy costs draining its power resources, and at the same time, retain its involvement in international relations expressing its impact on international relations, or its international influence. Simultaneous attainment of cost decrease and involvement preservation is a key to a successful foreign policy of a declining hegemon as avoidance of the drain of its power resources is necessary for constraining the decline. At the same time, international influence is crucial for securing the national interests of a hegemon and enables it to exercise its leadership in international relations. Consequently, we argue that the optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon implies a balance of low costs and high involvement.

Problem Statement

Hegemonic system, as well as hegemonic decline, are widely studied in the IR literature, however, a gap is identified in terms of the foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon. The gap is revealed in the following ways:

(i) **Lack of theoretical reasoning** - The strategies described and developed in the IR literature lack theoretical and generalized reasoning and mainly represent practical recommendations for the current hegemon, the USA. The existing strategies lack an in-depth analysis of their theoretical foundations. The insufficiency of generalized theoretical reasoning makes the existing strategies situational relevant only for the provisional settings within the international relations at the time of their elaboration. Since the existing foreign policy strategies designed for the current hegemon

do not involve an extensive theoretical analysis of the factors that have ultimately led to forming the practical recommendations given within, it is unclear how change in the status quo would effect on relevance of the respective strategies. Specifically, it remains unclear what exactly in the international relations should remain unchanged to allow the very strategies to retain their relevance, or what are the factors altering of which create a need to adapt the strategies to reassure their relevance. As a result of lack of theoretical reasoning, it is unclear in which circumstances the generalization of the existing strategies is possible or when do they enable theoretical discourse on the foreign policy strategies of the declining hegemon;

(ii) Conceptualization of a hegemon – the strategies against decline are oriented on cost reduction and saving power resources and are based on the theoretical conceptualization of decline, without performing the theoretical conceptualization of a hegemon itself (the theoretical conceptualization of decline is mostly not performed or presented in the scopes of the existing strategies. Instead, the strategies apply the referring to the theoretical arguments of the relevant literature of IR theory). The fact that the existing strategies designed for a declining hegemon are based on the theoretical conceptualization of hegemonic decline only and not the theoretical conceptualization of hegemon itself is problematic. The strategy of a declining hegemon should be directed to addressing the determinants of decline in the manner not to harm the hegemon's attributes as well as its capability to ensure its national interests and exercise world leadership, both of which will be revealed following the conceptualization of a hegemon;

(iii) Consideration of systemic consequences – the existing strategies do not consider the anticipated distribution of power of the system which the hegemonic system is supposed to gradually transfer to in the future. Therefore, the existing strategies do not consider the specificity of systemic consequences in terms of the patterns of the distribution of power affecting the state behavior, dynamics of the post-hegemonic world and as a result, optimal strategy of a declining hegemon. Due to this fact, the existing strategies are not differentiated according to the types of the system in which the decline takes place. Consequently, the discussion of historical cases of decline takes place without considering the specificity of the related systemic consequences. Analysis of the systemic consequences allows taking into account their effects on state behavior while discussing the decline of a hegemon and its strategies. Therefore, consideration of specificity of systemic consequences are key to the accuracy of the strategy;

(iv) Management of decline – lack of discussing decline management possibilities is also present in the existing strategies. Since they are tailored to the USA decline experiencing the initial

stage of its downturn, the strategies are designed to reverse decline and do not discuss what the strategy should look like in a long term perspective if the power gap keeps diminishing, reversion of decline is no longer possible and it will be necessary to direct the foreign policy to the constraint and management of decline.

Goal Statement

The goal of the dissertation is to develop an optimal theoretical strategy of a declining hegemon that addresses all the above-mentioned issues: (i) is based on generalized, theoretical reasoning, presenting the comprehensive analysis of the factors determining the developed strategy, based on the arguments of IR theory; (ii) performs both, conceptualization of hegemonic decline and a hegemon - accordingly the strategy addresses decline by taking into account the consequences of its implementation mechanisms on the attributes defining the status of a hegemon; (iii) considers the systemic consequences; (iv) is not designed only for the initial stage of hegemonic decline. The strategy developed in this dissertation is focused on constraining the decline and not reversing it since considering the specific systemic consequences it is assumed that decline reversion is not possible.

For this purpose, the dissertation establishes an analytical framework, which enables the classification and assessment of a declining hegemon's foreign policy strategies (considering the specific systemic consequences, implying the transformation of a hegemonic system to a multipolar one), ascertainment of the optimal action strategy and defining its implementation mechanisms.

Upon accomplishment of all the above-mentioned, the goal of the dissertation also extends to analyzing the existing hegemon's – the USA's foreign policy strategy under the President Barack Obama Administration for the purpose of revealing its compliance with the optimal strategy identified by this dissertation, in order to validate the developed strategy and observe, in reality, the execution of the theoretical mechanisms that are suggested for its implementation.

Significance of the Problem

The research focus of the dissertation, declining hegemon's foreign policy strategy and its implementation mechanisms, is particularly important nowadays and holds a significant part in the literature of the field throughout the last decade. The reasons for this are the signs of hegemonic decline implying the start of the decline of active hegemon's relative power and increasing pace

of rising powers' growth. In the IR literature, a growing interest is drawn toward the issues such as the viability of a hegemonic system and the factors causing the decline of a hegemon; a declining hegemon's action strategies and their implementation mechanisms; processes that may emerge during systemic change, or the transformation of power distribution within the international system; pattern of international relations in the post-hegemonic world. In this regard, this dissertation is especially important, because it (i) suggests an original analytical framework to classify and assess the foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon, leading to the ascertainment of the optimal one, and (ii) defines the implementation mechanisms of the revealed optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon.

Research Questions

The major research question of the dissertation is: What is a nature of an optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon and how is it implemented?

In order to inquire the nature as well as the implementation mechanisms of a declining hegemon's foreign policy strategy, the main research question is divided into the following sub-questions:

- (i) What is the nature of a hegemon - what are attributes of a hegemon?
- (ii) What type of a leadership (coercive or consensual) can a hegemon exercise on international relations; what determines its influence on international relations; what are the foreign policy means it applies to exercise its influence and secure its national interests?
- (iii) What is decline; what are the determinants of hegemonic decline and how can it be addressed?
- (iv) How can the optional foreign policy strategies of a hegemon be assessed – what are the assessment criteria of the foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon?
- (v) What are the implementation mechanisms of the optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon?

The second chapter of the dissertation answers the first four sub-questions, while the third chapter addresses the remaining one (the first chapter of the dissertation is a literature review). Consequently, at the end of the third chapter, the dissertation provides an answer to its major research question. The fourth chapter of the dissertation is a case study, which reveals compliance of the Obama Administration's foreign policy strategy with the theoretical strategy developed in

this dissertation and aims to validate the main argument of the dissertation developed through responding to its major as well as sub-research questions.

Hypothesis

As a qualitative research, the dissertation follows an inductive logic and represents an exploratory research, final result of which is a generation of the hypotheses. Therefore, the dissertation performs a theory building, leading to the establishment of two variables, costs and involvement, which enable the establishment of the factors that should be addressed by a foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon as well as the identification of the outcomes of a successful strategy. Though the theoretical conceptualization of a decline, the dissertation establishes that an empirical expression of all determinants of hegemonic decline, is the increased foreign policy costs of a hegemon that lead to the drain of its power capabilities. Therefore, costs, as a variable illustrates the foreign policy costs of a hegemon, affecting its power capabilities. Low costs, by preventing the drain of the power capabilities of a hegemon, enable constraining of its decline. Involvement is a variable generated through the conceptualization of a hegemon and illustrates hegemon's impact/influence on international relations, which is affected by the two attributes of a hegemon, power (defined in relative terms) and willingness to exercise leadership in international relations.

The theory building process develops the major argument of this dissertation: the most optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon is the one that enables it to decrease its foreign policy costs draining its power resources, and at the same time, retain its involvement in international relations expressing its impact on international relations, or international influence. Simultaneous attainment of cost decrease and involvement preservation is a key to a successful foreign policy of a declining hegemon as avoidance of the drain of its power resources is necessary for constraining the decline. At the same time, international influence is crucial for securing the national interests of a hegemon and enables it to exercise its leadership in international relations. Consequently, we argue that the optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon implies a balance of low costs and high involvement.

Novelty

Novelties of this dissertation are: (i) establishment of the analytical framework that enables assessment of the optional foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon, and ascertainment of an optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon; (ii) development of the original optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon.

Establishment of the Analytical framework - An analytical framework for the classification and assessment of hegemon's foreign policy strategies is established based on the two variables, costs and involvement (see Figure 2-1). Costs represent an empirical expression of the determinants of hegemonic decline and affect the power resources of a hegemon. When allocated on the two-dimensional axes, the costs indicate how costly in terms of the spending of power resources a certain strategy of a declining hegemon is. On the other hand, involvement as a variable empirically expresses the two attributes of hegemon – power and willingness to exercise its leadership in international relations and illustrates the hegemon's ability to achieve desired outcomes in international relations. Allocated on the axis this variable illustrates the extent of involvement a hegemon can retain in case of each strategy.

Based on the theoretical arguments presented in the literature of international relations, the dissertation establishes that an optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon should be the one that has an inherent balance between involvement and costs, enabling the declining hegemon to achieve a higher degree of involvement with lower costs. Therefore, the analytical framework, classifying the strategies in terms of their costs and involvement, enables assessment of the optional foreign policy strategies and ascertainment of the optimal one for a declining hegemon.

Constructing the two-dimensional axes of costs and involvement - to assess the outcomes of declining hegemon's possible foreign policy strategies represent the dissertation's novelty.

Development of the Original Optimal Foreign Policy Strategy – Correspondingly to the goals of the dissertation that imply addressing of the gap found in the IR literature, the novelty of the strategy is revealed in the following:

- (i) Considering the systemic consequences related to the specific power distribution pattern while analyzing the hegemonic decline and an optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon. Adapting the theoretical discussion to the specific systemic consequences changes the nature of the strategy in terms of its objectives and implementation mechanisms, increases the accuracy of the strategy and limits the cases that can be used for the development or validation of the theoretical reasoning;
- (ii) Theoretical conceptualization of a hegemon based on the synthesis of IR literature, which enables not just to direct the strategy against the determinants and empirical expressions of decline, but consider the effects of its implementation mechanisms on the state of a hegemon defined

through its attributes. This is attained through integrating involvement – the variable expressing the state of a hegemon into the analytical framework. Consideration of the strategies' consequences on the state of a hegemon is highly important for defining an effective strategy, as the separate means of saving hegemon's power resources that are usually applied against decline, sometimes negatively affect the hegemon by damaging its attributes;

(iii) Complex addressing of the determinants as well as the moderating factors of hegemonic decline. This is achieved through the theoretical conceptualization of hegemonic decline that enables revealing the determinants as well as the moderating factors of hegemonic decline. As a result, the developed strategy, unlike one part of the existing strategies, addresses not just an empirical expression of the determinants of hegemonic decline in the form of the increased foreign policy costs, but the determinants, or the root causes of the decline themselves. While unlike the other part of the existing strategies, the one developed in the dissertation deals with not just particular determinants of hegemonic decline, but imply complex addressing of all root causes and moderating factors, taking into consideration the effects of the applied mechanisms on the state of the hegemon defined on the basis of its attributes;

(iv) Development of the implementation mechanisms of the optimal foreign policy strategy. The dissertation defines novel mechanisms even for the objectives that are implied in the existing strategies. An example is the mechanisms developed for the promotion of the economic interests of a hegemon. The existing strategies imply that the influence attained through the hegemon's military security guarantees is enough for securing the economic interests of a hegemon in the regions where its trade and investments are concentrated. However, as revealed in the dissertation, influence, based on military power although assists a hegemon to gain a privileged position in international cooperation, does not in itself constitute a provision of hegemon's economic interests. In order to exploit the possibilities generated by its influence, the hegemon should participate in the formation of regional financial-economic order and relations. This will enable the hegemon to facilitate the establishment of favorable regional order to its own interests and become a state that is best positioned to exploit the benefits of financial-economic cooperation. Thus, a hegemon will continue to receive disproportionate benefits for the disproportionate costs of the order maintenance, and prevent competing powers to establish their own economic order against its interests. Otherwise, the latter would get the maximum benefits of the economic cooperation and accelerate their rise concurrently to the hegemon's decline.

Practical and Theoretical Value

As previously stated, the goal of the exploratory research performed in this dissertation is a theory building in order to develop an analytical framework for the classification and analysis of a declining hegemon's foreign policy strategies, reveal the optimal strategy and define its implementation mechanisms. Thus, the novelties of the dissertation described above, also represent the theoretical value of the dissertation.

In addition, dissertation's theoretical value is enhanced due to analysis and synthesis of existing IR literature in relation to the challenges and anticipated consequences of isolationism - an optimal strategy's alternative. Beyond the discussion of the existing theoretical arguments in terms of the challenges of securing the national interests of a declining hegemon implementing the isolationist strategy, the dissertation additionally offers an extensive theoretical reasoning to demonstrate the inability of the strategy to secure the economic interests of a declining hegemon.

Last but not least, the dissertation reveals the less considered issues in IR theory, which require additional research. One of such issues is the influence of anticipated power distribution pattern of the post-hegemonic system on the optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon as well as the responses of the rest of the states to the actions of the hegemon and its leadership. The dissertation has also illustrated that the theory of neorealism should additionally study the possibilities of securing the economic interests of a hegemon. Influence acquired through the regional military presence, which the theory relies on, supports, but does not provide the economic interests of a hegemon. Identification of the less considered issues in the IR literature enhances the theoretical value of the dissertation as further study of the issues will influence the theoretical debates on the strategies of a declining hegemon.

As to the practical value of the dissertation, it lies in an analytical framework it establishes for the classification and assessment of a declining hegemon's foreign policy strategies, as well as the implementation mechanisms defined for the optimal foreign policy strategy. The analytical framework is applicable for assessment of a conducted foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon. The balance of the two variables, costs and involvement implied in the conducted strategy illustrates the success of the strategy in terms of saving the power resources of a declining hegemon and constraining its decline. On the other hand, suggested implementation mechanisms of the optimal foreign policy strategy that imply complex addressing of the determinants, as well

as the moderating factors of decline, can be used as an analytical roadmap when developing and researching foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon.

Theoretical Framework

The systemic scope of the research, dealing with the hegemonic decline and an optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon, requires analysis of a wide spectrum of IR phenomenon, which narrows down to the optional theories of realism and liberalism, that can be applied as a theoretical framework of the dissertation. Only the two theories have explanatory power for analyzing the systemic consequences and establishing the determinants of state behavior in international relations, thus, are applicable for the analysis of the broader spectrum of international relations' phenomenon, than any other IR theory. Unlike realism and liberalism, the remaining IR theories are limited in scope, analyzing only the specific issues of international relations.

Among the two traditional IR theories, this dissertation, similar to the majority of the studies of hegemonic decline and the foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon, found in the IR literature, chooses to apply realism as a theoretical framework (See Gilpin, 1981; Posen & Ross, 1996, 2011; Mastanduno, 1997; Mearsheimer, 2001; Art, 2004; Ikenberry et al., 2009; Jervis, 2009; Brooks et. al., 2012; Monteiro, 2014). Choice of neorealism is conditioned by two main reasons. The first, reason is related to the deeper analysis of systemic consequences presented in the scope of the theory, Although, both theories, neorealism, as well as liberalism, imply well-reasoned and well-analyzed determinants of state behavior in international relations, realism offers a deeper study of the anarchy driven systemic consequences on international relations, including a broad analysis of the effects of distribution of power in international system. Since hegemonic decline implies transition of one type of a system in terms of the power distribution pattern, to another, the study of decline, as a phenomenon, as well as the strategies of a declining hegemon, imply the analysis of systemic consequences of the different types of systems in terms of power distribution patterns. Thus, in this dissertation, a theory, better fitted for the analysis of hegemonic decline is considered to be neorealism.

The second reason for the application of neorealism as a theoretical framework of this dissertation is that we consider its determinants of state behavior more reliable than the ones of liberalism, especially, for the analysis of international relations beyond the hegemonic system. Neorealism's theoretical assumptions are empirically evidenced and tested in all possible systems in terms of power distribution patterns. However, the empirical evidence of liberalism's major theoretical

assumptions, deriving from the complex interdependency and existence of liberal regimes and institutions serving as intervening variables fuelling the international cooperation (for major statements, see Keohane & Nye, 1977; Krasner, 1982), are only found in a contemporary international relations, starting from WWII, coinciding with the establishment of the hegemonic order by the USA. As a result, liberalism's claims regarding the viability of the institutions of contemporary liberal world order in the post-hegemonic system, although being theoretically grounded, can only be hypothetical while the picture the realists expect in the post-hegemonic world is based on the observation of the dynamics of any previous non-hegemonic orders.

Establishment of the expected patterns and dynamics of international relations in the post-hegemonic world is critical for the development of the foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon. Such a strategy, according to this dissertation, implies constraining hegemonic decline on the one hand, and preparing the hegemon for the post-hegemonic international system, on the other. Therefore, specificities of the system that its foreign policy strategy is preparing the hegemon to function in affects and determines the directions of the very strategy. Consequently, the two circumstances have outweighed the choice between realism and liberalism in favor of the former. First, realism presents arguments that are empirically tested within any type of the system in terms of distribution of power including the multipolar one that is anticipated to arise after the hegemonic decline. Simultaneously, in terms of post-hegemonic layout, prediction of realism is more pessimistic rather than that of liberalism and involves the end of mitigated anarchy characteristic to the contemporary world as well as the introduction of the balance of power based order. Although, establishment of the accuracy of theoretical expectations of post-hegemonic world is far beyond the scope of this dissertation, realism has been selected as a theoretical framework for the strategy development in order to assure its readiness for the worst possible scenarios.

Following the discussed reasons, neorealism is applied to provide a general theoretical framework for the dissertation. To analyze the research topic, it relies on the theoretical arguments of such key representatives of the theoretical school as Kenneth N. Waltz, John J. Mearsheimer, Robert Jervis, Robert J. Art, Barry R. Posen, Stephen M. Walt, and William C. Wohlforth.

The application of neorealism as a theoretical framework for the dissertation implies that the development of an optimal strategy for a declining hegemon takes place based on the assumption of the theory that the behavior of states is conditioned by the anarchical structure of the international system. Namely, the development of the strategy occurs based on such systemic

consequences determined by neorealism as self-help condition; defining power in relative terms; power being a determining factor of security of states; low prospects for cooperation beyond the hegemonic order due to such preventing factors as asymmetric gain and threat of defection; the impact of distribution of power over the behavior of states in international relations; exclusive opportunities of cooperation dominance under hegemonic order. Consequently, the foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon based on the patterns of state behavior determined by realism is directed towards preserving both the hegemon's power resources and its influence over international relations, which, according to the theory is necessary for securing its national interests – security and prosperity.

The systemic consequences determined by realism also conditions one of the major theoretical assumptions of the dissertation that defines the essence of foreign policy actions and mechanisms of the declining hegemon within the scope of the dissertation. Based on realism arguments, according which the pattern of distribution of power within the system affects the pattern of systemic consequences and state behavior in international relations, the research is limited by the specific case of the hegemonic decline. Namely, the dissertation discusses the case when due to the hegemonic decline, emergence of multipolar system is expected. Based on the same neorealist arguments, it has been revealed that under given circumstances, only constraining the decline is possible instead of either complete cessation or reversal. Respectively, the foreign policy strategy of the declining hegemon developed in this dissertation possesses three major directions: constraining of decline, management of decline processes, and finally facilitation of shaping post-hegemonic system into the hegemonic interests as a long-term objective.

Finally, the application of neorealism as a theoretical framework for the research conditions the orientation of the developed foreign policy strategy to be directed towards maintaining the hegemon's power instead of preservation of its order in the post-hegemonic system. Realism, as discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation, believes that hegemon should establish an order constructed in favor of its interests and maintain it throughout its hegemony as such an order, beyond benefiting the hegemon, enables it to sustain its national interests and serves as a mechanism for exercising its international leadership. However, realism rejects opportunities for collective order maintenance in the multipolar system that could have served as a sole chance of maintaining the order established and supported by the hegemon after its decline, and argues that in such a system order can be based on balance of power, making the power as a critical resource for the state (Waltz, 1979, 2000; Gilpin, 1975; Mearsheimer 2001). Therefore, although the foreign

policy strategy developed in this study is boldly oriented to the sustenance of the hegemonic order by a declining hegemon as long as it still remains a hegemon, it does not imply any specific mechanisms for preservation of the order in the post-hegemonic system. Instead, in the long term perspective, the strategy is oriented towards the maintenance of the power resources of a declining hegemon as well as the facilitation of the establishment of favorable power distribution in the international system through enhancement of the potential balancers of its anticipated challengers.

Besides the basic arguments of neorealism, the dissertation uses different realist and non-realist theories that come in no clash with the neorealism arguments regarding the research phenomena and/or the systemic consequences of hegemony. Such are the cases of the theoretical conceptualization of hegemony and its decline.

Theoretical conceptualization of a hegemon, beyond the major arguments of neorealism, is based on the constructivist arguments presented in the works of Martha Finnemore, G. John Ikenberry and Charles A. Kupchan, to discuss the importance of legitimacy of a hegemon and its world order as well as the means for the provision of legitimacy. Introduction of the phenomenon of legitimacy enables to explain the capability of a hegemon to exercise leadership in international relations while being limited in power to dominate the system. The same phenomenon also explains the necessity of a hegemon to establish and maintain a rule-based world order, working in common benefit of its participants, in order to provide conforming to the hegemon's leadership. Moreover, constructivist ideas on legitimacy, together with the arguments of Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory (which is a realist theory, incorporating constructivist arguments to explain the balancing tendencies and alliance behavior), enabled to analyze the balancing tendencies against a hegemon, as one of the determinants of hegemonic decline. Accordingly, the necessity of maintaining the legitimacy, or consensuality of the hegemonic leadership while experiencing decline is established in the dissertation as well as foreign policy implementation mechanisms for its preservation are designed within the scope of the optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon.

Due to the fact that realism, in general, maintains that the outcomes of the states' activity in international relations depends on their power capabilities, incorporation of constructivist arguments on the importance of hegemon's legitimacy might seem inconsistent with major claims of realism. However, similar practice could be found in the IR literature and is not a novelty for this dissertation. Specifically, in relation with the hegemonic system, functioning of the hegemonic order and the hegemonic leadership, realism borrows the concept of the necessity of legitimacy for exercising leadership from political science that studies the phenomenon in relation with the

hierarchical system (see Jervis, 2009; Ikenberry et al., 2009). The necessity of legitimacy while exercising leadership in political science comes from the limitations of coercive power of central government making the power as a separate entity insufficient for maintaining the rule and sustaining the regime stability. In such case, to provide conforming of the governed, the authority is to be seen as a legitimate and needed (for major statements, see Weber 1978).

The hegemonic system, according to the structural realism, is the only system where anarchy is mitigated by introducing the hegemonic order and the elements of a hierarchical structure through the hegemonic leadership (Jervis, 1977, 2009; Gilpin, 1975). Consequently, the hegemonic system is the only one in terms of distribution of power that allows its particular actor to establish an (hegemonic) order different from the balance of power, sustenance of which requires hegemonic leadership. Since realism acknowledges the constrained ability of a hegemon to exercise international leadership through coercion only due to its limited resources, it recognizes the necessity of legitimacy of hegemonic leadership as well as its order. Legitimacy makes the hegemonic leadership consensual and provides the conforming of the majority of states (Jervis, 2009; Ikenberry et al., 2009). In this case, coercing the challengers being in minority becomes possible for the hegemon without draining its power resources.

According to realist theory, the HST, hegemon forms a world order based on common benefit to sustain conforming towards the order and its own leadership (see, Kindleberger, 1973, 1983; Gilpin, 1981; Krasner, 1976). The same idea is supported by Keohane (see Keohane, 1980, 1984) though he develops a different viewpoint from HST realist representatives regarding the future of international institutions in the post-hegemonic system). According to HST, the hegemonic order is primarily beneficial for the hegemon itself, however it is gainful for the participant states as well. Simultaneously, According to HST, chances of cooperation within international relations excluding the hegemonic system are diminished. The hegemon provides public goods in the form of the opportunities for stability and cooperation, enabling the economic growth and well-being of other countries within its order. It all makes HST believe that the states become conformers of the hegemonic order that facilitates the hegemon to practice its leadership in international relations and maintain it for the longest run available.

Similar reasoning is provided by Waltz (2000), explaining the low intensity of balancing tendencies against the USA. Waltz argues that balancing is one of the strategies of survival states apply to, whereas bandwagoning is another. The latter “may sometimes seem a less demanding and a more rewarding strategy than balancing, requiring less effort and extracting lower costs

while promising concrete rewards” (p.38). According to Waltz, given that states act rationally, the decision of strategy depends on a cost-benefit evaluation. Therefore, deriving from the arguments of defensive realism, together with the power preponderance of the USA, the fact that the order it has established and sustains made cooperation, economic development, and consequently, an empowerment of many of the states possible, make the outcomes of the states’ cost-benefit evaluation supportive of conforming to the order.

Therefore, based on Waltz’s defensive realism arguments, conforming towards the hegemon could be explained through the established legitimate order and leadership based on common benefit by the latter. Moreover, reasoning about the aggravation of balancing against the hegemon due to its offensive behavior is compatible with the defensive realism logic. Waltz (1979) states that when offensive aggression is exercised by the state, the rivals would usually balance against the aggressor. Consequently, in case of the offensive and coercive actions of the state fueling of balancing tendencies is anticipated. Therefore, defensive realism chooses maintenance of the status quo over seizing power as it would set other states to balance it, diminishing its security rather than boosting it.

Mearsheimer (2001), despite representing the offensive wing of realism, also supports this claim of the defensive realism specifically regarding the hegemon. As it is discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation, Mearsheimer explains that it is due to the USA behavior that does not contain threats to the security of the states outside the western hemisphere, that the current hegemon does not face the aggravated balancing tendencies in international relations (see pg. 42, para 3).

Thus, the arguments presented in the dissertation regarding the necessity of legitimacy of the hegemonic order and its leadership being traditionally developed by constructivism do not contradict and are consistent with the basic arguments of neorealism. Incorporation of these very arguments into the neorealism-based theoretical framework facilitates to analyze the possibility for the exercise and maintenance of hegemonic leadership within international relations despite the limited resources of a hegemon that curbs its capability for coercive domination.

Besides the constructivist arguments, alongside the arguments of neorealism, the arguments of the realist hegemonic stability theory (Robert Gilpin, Charles P. Kindleberger, Robert O. Keohane, Stephen D. Krasner) as well as political economy (Robert Gilpin, Charles P. Kindleberger) are applied in the dissertation while analyzing the hegemonic decline and its determinants.

Specifically, relying on these theories, overextension and free-riding phenomena within the hegemonic system are explained permitting to analyze steadily growing costs of system protection and dominance by the hegemon. Subsequently, the necessity to reduce system maintenance costs by the declining hegemon has been revealed as well as the mechanisms of eradicating free-riding practices and reduction of system maintenance costs have been elaborated within the scope of the optimal foreign policy strategy of the declining hegemon.

Research Methodology and Methods

Exploratory nature of the research, developing the optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon, has conditioned the choice of the qualitative methods that are best suited for theory building. Therefore, the dissertation applies qualitative research methods for determining the phenomena related to hegemonic decline and exploring the possibilities of constraining the decline.

However, despite the fact that the following research implies a theory building, the dissertation is not a hypothetical or normative discussion on the optional strategies of a declining hegemon, as conducted reasoning is based on the empirically proven theoretical arguments presented in the major works of the IR theory. Consequently, development of the optimal strategy is based on the theoretical modeling through well-established arguments of IR theory.

The dissertation is limited in the application of case-study-based quantitative cost-benefit calculation while assessing the foreign policy strategy developed in its scope (multilateralism) as well as its alternative strategy (isolationism), also discussed in this study. Instead, the cost-benefit evaluation in this dissertation is mostly performed based on the arguments of IR theory. The limitation in case of the strategy of isolationism is conditioned by two reasons. First, since the international relations has obtained the world scope¹, case of the application of the isolationist strategy by a hegemon did not occur. This fact, on the one hand, justifies the neorealist arguments on the non-feasibility and non-rationality of isolationism, presented in the subchapter 3.2 while discussing the strategy. However, on the other hand, it makes the validation of these arguments through the case-study-based cost-benefit calculation impossible.

¹ It is implied that the historical cases of isolationism of the period when the world was not interconnected and states in one of its region did not possess information on the events taking place in other regions, are analytically irrelevant for this study. An example of such cases is the isolation of China in XV-XVIII centuries.

Simultaneously, the cost-benefit calculation for the validation of isolationism is not possible in case of the current hegemon, the USA as well, due to the fact that evaluation of the strategy should rest on the modeling of the events' development. Despite the fact that the calculation of the costs saved through isolationism is mostly feasible through the modeling, it is impossible to numerically establish the damage resulted by the implementation of the strategy. For this reason, quantitative cost-benefit evaluation of isolationism is not presented in other existing works discussing the strategy as well (e.g., see Posen & Ross, 1996; Art, 2004). Instead, similar to this dissertation, evaluation of the strategy is accomplished based on the arguments of IR theories.

As for the strategy of multilateralism, developed in this dissertation, claim on its optimality is also overwhelmingly based on the theoretical reasoning (however, in its turn, the theoretical arguments applied while developing the strategy are empirically tested in the relevant works of IR theory). This, as discussed in the following section, presenting the limitations of the dissertation, is also conditioned by the irrelevance of historical cases of hegemonic decline for this study. Namely, on the one hand, relevance of the historical cases is limited due to the different systemic consequences of the hegemonic decline discussed in this dissertation, implying the emergence of multipolarity as a result of the decline. On the other hand, relevance of the historical cases is limited due to the exclusive characteristic of the contemporary hegemonic order implying the existence of the advanced network of the regimes and institutions, which in the scopes of the strategy developed in this dissertation is considered as a major mechanism for a hegemon to sustain its influence and exercise its international leadership (see pp. 21-22).

Instead of the quantitative cost-benefit calculation, beyond the theoretical modeling, the dissertation implies a case study that validates the strategy developed in its scope through establishing its similarity with the one applied by the USA during the Barack Obama Administration. The validation is accomplished through demonstrating the fact that the strategy independently developed in this study based on the theoretical modeling coincides with the one elaborated and implemented by the executive branch of the current hegemon.

In order to ascertain the optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon, the dissertation starts with conducting a theoretical conceptualization of hegemony and establishment of its attributes. This is accomplished through revealing the empirical expression of the hegemonic attributes, referred as involvement, which in the dissertation is applied as an assessment criterion for a strategy success. Involvement indicates the impact of a foreign policy strategy on the state of a hegemon – high involvement would be an evidence of hegemon's strength, while lowering

involvement would be an indication of its decline. Theoretical conceptualization of hegemon and establishment of the empirical expression of its attributes is accomplished through the synthesis of the concepts and definitions of hegemony as well as systemic consequences of hegemony found in the IR literature.

After establishing the assessment criterion of the strategy success the dissertation proceeds with the analysis of the determinants of hegemonic decline in order to define what and how should be addressed by a declining hegemon in order to constrain its decline. This is necessary for developing the implementation mechanisms of its foreign policy strategy. Establishment of the determinants is also accomplished through synthesis of the factors conditioning hegemonic decline as well as systemic consequences of decline found in the IR literature. After establishing the determinants of decline, the dissertation reveals their common empirical expression, costs, conditioning the drain of hegemon's power resources. Costs are applied for assessing the effectiveness of the strategy mechanisms developed in the dissertation, directed against hegemonic decline.

Simultaneous application of the variables empirically expressing the hegemonic attributes and the determinants of hegemonic decline makes it possible to assess the influence of a foreign policy strategy on both, power resources of a hegemon, affected by the determinants of its decline as well as the attributes, or the state of the hegemon in terms of its standing in the international relations. Therefore, while assessing the strategy, exclusive concentration on power resources is avoided, which enables assessment of the absolute and not relative capabilities of a hegemon. This, as illustrated in the literature review, is a frequently made mistake during the analysis of declining hegemon's strategies in the IR literature.

After establishment of the empirical expressions of a hegemon and determinants of its decline, the dissertation proceeds with the development of the optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon. Due to the choice of neorealism as the theoretical framework of the dissertation, development of the optimal strategy is conducted considering the systemic consequences of the specific trend of power distribution in which the decline takes place. Namely, the dissertation examines the case of hegemonic decline when an emergence of multipolar system is anticipated as a result of the decline. Therefore, prior to development of the implementation mechanisms of the optimal strategy not only hegemonic system was analyzed, but multipolar one as well (as hegemonic decline starts in the hegemonic system and ends in the multipolar one). Consequently, development of the strategy of a declining hegemon is conducted based on the analysis of (i)

specific systemic consequences, (ii) determinants and empirical expressions of decline, and (iii) capabilities of a hegemon to provide its leadership and secure its national interests.

Therefore, conceptualization of hegemony and hegemonic decline and development of the optimal foreign policy of a declining hegemon, conducted in the second and the third chapters of the dissertation, are accomplished through the synthesis of theoretical arguments found in the IR literature. After development of the theoretical foreign policy strategy of multilateralism, the final chapter of the dissertation conducts a case study analyzing the foreign policy strategy of the Obama Administration. The case study aims to reveal compliance of the Administration strategy with the theoretical strategy developed in the dissertation. On its turn, establishment of the compliance on the one hand, validates the theoretical strategy by revealing that its mechanisms have been applied by the Administration of the current hegemon for sustaining its leadership. This endorses the accuracy of the theoretical reasoning that the strategy is based on. On the other hand, analysis of the Obama Administration Strategy enables to observe the practical execution of the theoretical mechanisms for the strategy implementation, developed in the scope of the dissertation.

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis for the Case Study

The case study of foreign policy strategy of the Obama administration has two main objectives. The first objective is to establish the foundations of foreign policy strategy of the Obama Administration in order to reveal that the latter, like the theoretical strategy developed in the dissertation is directed towards constraining the hegemonic decline. Since the common foundations of the two strategies are established, the second objective of the case study entails revealing the compliance of the strategies in terms of their more specific objectives and implementation mechanisms.

The research is conducted in two directions in order to establish the common foundations of the Obama Administration strategy and the theoretical strategy constructed in the scope of the dissertation. The objective of the first direction is to identify the decreasing-gap tendencies in the relative power between the existing hegemon and the system's other powerful actors. In this regard, the subject of study pertains to two main indicators that define power – the size of economy and military capabilities. In particular, on the one part it analyzes the statistical data indicators of economic size (GDP current prices, GDP PPP) and the tendencies of its growth (see Appendix 1, 2, 3, 4), and on the other part the indicators of dynamics in military capabilities (see Appendix 5).

Secondary data are utilized to observe the above-mentioned indicators and analyzed by using the method of descriptive statistical analysis.

In order to establish the tendencies of the USA's decline being the foundation of the Obama Administration's foreign policy strategy, the second direction considers document analysis. In particular this entails analyzing strategy documents of the USA, Presidential speeches and press-conference remarks, interviews of the USA president, press releases of the White House Office of Press Secretary. The objective of this direction is to explore the content of the documents in order to find evidence that the determinants of the Administration's foreign policy strategy have been the changes in the power distribution of the contemporary international system diminishing the USA's relative power preponderance.

The research is conducted in two directions to accomplish the second objective of revealing the conformity between the tendencies of the USA's foreign policy strategy under Obama Administration and the strategy of multilateralism defined within the scope of the dissertation. The first direction includes document analysis as well as observing and analyzing the political discourse, whilst another – foreign policy behavior. This kind of approach is complex and excludes arriving at one-sided conclusions based solely on mere abstract rhetoric and vice-versa, ignoring the ideas and narratives while concentrating on actions.

The first direction involves two methods of document analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA). Document analysis implies analyzing strategy documents of the USA, Presidential speeches and press-conference remarks, interviews of the USA president, press releases of the White House Office of Press Secretary, Congressional Research Service reports, agenda and decisions of the international forums, such as G20, United Nations (UN), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Objective of the document analysis is to explore their content in order to establish compliance between the objectives and implementation mechanisms of the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy and theoretical strategy of multilateralism developed in this dissertation.

In the scope of CDA the research is done to investigate the President Obama's speeches, press-conference remarks and interviews. The goal of this direction is to establish how the tendencies of the foreign policy strategy correspond with the strategies of multilateralism defined in the dissertation, which are accomplished by observing the political discourses. The correspondence are expressed in advocating the multilateralism strategy mechanisms for eliminating the free-

riding problem, dealing with common threats, as well as reducing the costs by refraining from reacting to the problems, which don't pose threats towards the hegemon's viable interests.

The second direction, which is used to analyze the conformity between the tendencies of the USA's foreign policy strategy and the strategy of multilateralism involves observing and analyzing the actions and decision of the Administration in compliance with its declarations on document and discourse level. For this purpose the dissertation analyses the cases implying responses of the Administration to the international challenges of its period, its decisions on use of force as well as on restraint for its application, implementation of the decisions taken at major international forums listed above, dynamics of foreign trade, investment and security cooperation, dynamics of multilateral and bilateral relations. The analyses of these actions are accomplished to reveal the conformity between the USA's foreign policy and the mechanisms of multilateralism strategy.

With regard to analyzing the actions in compliance with the theoretical strategy of multilateralism, the study limitation is represented by the fact that not all of the circumstances have occurred during the Obama Presidency, for which specific actions are prescribed according its own strategy and in compliance with the one of multilateralism. E.g. no military intervention on the security treaty ally of the USA has ever occurred, in case of which, as defined by the strategy documents of the Administration, it had to involve in military actions to defend the ally. Thus, in such cases, the study in respect to the similarity of the existing hegemon's foreign policy strategy and a theoretical strategy of multilateralism is conducted through the first direction only – by the methods of document and discourse analysis.

Limitations

Major limitation of the dissertation is conditioned by the choice of neorealism as its theoretical framework and implies the consideration of the systemic consequences characteristic to the specific pattern of the distribution of power while developing the optimal foreign policy of a declining hegemon. This makes the analytical framework of the dissertation and the developed optimal strategy fit to the case of emerging multipolar system concurrently to the hegemonic decline. The neorealism arguments form the foundations for that limitations arguing that different systems in terms of distribution of power create divergent systemic consequences influencing behavior of states in international relations. As a result, the strategy developed in this dissertation, considering specific systemic consequences could prove unfit to address the case of arising either hegemonic or bipolar system following the decline of the hegemonic one.

The discussion of the decline within the specific pattern of distribution of power also imposes limitations regarding the given strategy. First of all, the strategy designed in this dissertation is directed towards constraining the hegemonic decline and not complete cessation of it. According to the theoretical arguments applied in the dissertation, considering the systemic consequences of the case, it is impossible to stop decline since the hegemon is only capable of influencing the decline process through saving its power resources and exercises limited capabilities to stop rising challenges (see pp. 89-90). Though the hegemon is still capable of leaving any of the separate challenges behind due to improving its own growth rates, it will ultimately fail to outdo their collective rise. Therefore, process of hegemonic decline continues. Second, the foreign policy strategy developed based on the neorealism arguments excludes the possibility of preserving the hegemonic order on the basis of collective effort in the post-hegemonic system, thus making the declining hegemon's optimal strategy being oriented not on the preservation of the hegemonic order but its power instead. Third, the discussed case of decline excludes war with challengers, since it would be suicidal for the hegemon in the face of multiple nuclear armed challengers (see pp. 89-90). Fourth, consideration of specific systemic limitations restricts the application of historical cases of decline to work out the optimal strategy due to their operation under different specific conditions.

Beyond the constraints imposed by its theoretical framework, the dissertation is limited with the application of historical cases to empirically observe the hegemonic decline for one more reason. Specifically, the dissertation studies the case of the hegemonic decline within the hegemonic order of contemporary international relations involving advanced network of institutions and regimes. Existence of such networks within the present-day international relations that serve as a mechanism for exercising the hegemonic influence and its leadership is regarded by this dissertation to be the major distinctive feature of the hegemonic decline in the contemporary international relations. Respectively, a current hegemon the USA possesses unprecedented mechanisms for sustaining its order and exercising its leadership in international relations unlike any other hegemon in the history of IR. This puts limitations to the relevance of historical cases of the hegemonic decline for this dissertation as the foreign policy strategy developed in its scope implies the sustenance of the national interests, as well as the international leadership of the hegemon, to a great extent, through the advanced network of institutions and regimes, exclusively characteristic for the contemporary hegemonic order.

Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation proceeds with the **literature review**, analyzing the existing IR literature on hegemonic decline and strategies of a declining hegemon. The literature review classifies the existing strategies, presents the major arguments and assumptions of each revealed category and reveals their major gaps leading to the establishment of the necessity of further research on the optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon.

Literature review is followed by the **second chapter** of the dissertation developing an analytical framework for the classification and assessment of the optional foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon. The analytical framework is developed based on the prior establishment of two variables, costs and involvement. Involvement represents an empirical expression of the attributes of a hegemon (power and willingness to exercise its leadership on international relations) and is established through the theoretical conceptualization of hegemony. Costs represent an empirical expression of the determinants and moderating factors of hegemonic decline and is established through the theoretical conceptualization of the decline. Allocation of the variables on the two dimensional axes forms the analytical framework (see Figure 2-1) enabling to assess the foreign policy strategy in terms of its outcomes on the pace of hegemonic decline, measured through costs, as well as the capability of a hegemon to exercise its leadership and secure its national interests based on the state of hegemonic attributes expressed through involvement. The analytical framework classifies the optional strategies of a declining hegemon based on the four possible balance of the two attributes, costs and involvement and reveals that the one implying the balance of high involvement alongside low costs is the optimal one as both, saving power resources as well as the maintaining influence on international relations is important for a declining hegemon for securing its national interests.

After establishing the assessment criteria of the optimal foreign policy strategy and revealing the one, the **third chapter** of the dissertation develops the implementation mechanisms of such strategy. Prior to development of the optimal strategy mechanisms, the chapter starts with the negation of the alternative strategy options of a declining hegemon, as none of these strategies are capable to provide the optimal balance of the costs and involvements to a hegemon. After negating the alternative strategy options, the chapter develops the implementation mechanisms of the strategy of multilateralism entailing optimal balance of the two variables: high involvement and low costs.

In order to decrease the foreign policy costs and at the same time, maintain high involvement in international relations, the optimal strategy develops two major implementation mechanisms: threat categorization and multilateralist foreign policy. Threat categorization defines two categories of threats in terms of their significance to the national interests of a hegemon and implies that the hegemon should only act if vital or highly important interests are at stake and refrain from action in case of the minor and non-direct threats in order to save its foreign policy costs, therefore, its power resources. Multilateralist foreign policy contributes to cost reduction through sharing the burden of order maintenance to other powers of the system as well as the sustenance of the legitimacy of a hegemon. Reduction of the latter, being the moderating factor for fueling of the balancing tendencies against the hegemon, would result in complication of attaining its foreign policy objectives, thus, increased foreign policy costs.

After establishing the optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon and developing its implementation mechanisms in the second and third chapters of the dissertation, its final, **fourth chapter** conducts the case study of the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy in order to reveal its compliance with the theoretical strategy of multilateralism. The case study reveals the similarity of the foundations as well as the objectives and implementation mechanisms of the two strategies through studying both, declared policy of the Administration and its actions. Establishment of the analogy endorses the validity of the theoretical strategy through revealing the fact of its execution by the current hegemon's Administration and enables observation of the practical realization of its implementation mechanisms.

CHAPTER 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the existing foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon in order to illustrate their gaps that as we argue, generate the necessity of further research to establish the most optimal ways of addressing the hegemonic decline. In this sense, the existing strategies of the declining hegemon are classified into three main categories in accordance with the volume of optimal international engagement being a central issue of their scope. After discussing the strategies belonging to each of the categories their respective gaps are illustrated as well as the solutions are offered application of which enable this study to eliminate the deficiencies of the existing strategies.

Analysis of the existing strategies reveal that their major gap implies the lack of theoretical reasoning or the illustration of the theoretical foundations of the action recommendations given in the strategies that are mostly designed without performing the theoretical conceptualization of hegemony and/or hegemonic decline. Consequently, this study is designed to address the gap through developing a foreign policy strategy that is based on the prior theoretical conceptualization of hegemony and the hegemonic decline as well as the comprehensive analyses of the specificities of the systemic consequences of both, hegemony and hegemonic decline. This, unlike the existing strategies, ensures that the one developed in this dissertation implies complex addressing of all determinants, causing or aggravating the hegemonic decline without affecting the attributes of a hegemon and its capabilities to secure its national interests and exercise its international leadership.

Existing strategies of the declining hegemon can be classified into three main categories according to their main distinguishing feature - **the volume of optimal international engagement**. First, the ones involving dramatic reduction of engagement being optimal for the declining hegemon. These strategies are known as retrenchment or isolationist strategies. Second, the ones that take the opposite stance. They will be mentioned as deep engagement strategies. Third, the strategies that support cutting the engagement down but not completely abandoning it. They are known as selective engagement strategies.

Retrenchment, or isolationist strategies that find reduction of international engagement optimal for the declining hegemon are based on basic arguments of isolationism. Major statements of the retrenchment strategies in IR literature are presented by Ravenal, 1990; Buchanan, 1990; Schneider, 1992; Bandow, 1994; Nordlinger, 1995; Posen & Ross, 1996; Gholz et al., 1997; Art, 2004; Posen, 2013; Craig et al., 2013. These authors, excluding Nordlinger, refer to the foreign

policy strategies suggested in their works as disengagement, retrenchment or benign detachment and attempt to avoid mentioning the term of isolationism. However, all of the works are based on basic isolationist ideas and assumptions, and therefore, they will be collectively mentioned as isolationism hereafter.

Isolationism views developments in international relations not hazardous to the hegemon's security and prosperity and rejects active international engagement and the need of preserving international order. Such a thought is based on the idea that preservation of international order or application of military power is not necessary for securing the national interests of a hegemon, security and prosperity. Security of the hegemon is provided with the power gap separating it from other states and meeting economic goals is achieved through economic means, without any use of force or forward military presence.

Isolationists maintain that ensuring homeland security from conventional attack is provided by relative power preponderance. Simultaneously, the hegemon's international disengagement will reduce the threat of unconventional attacks (such as, terrorist, Nuclear, Biological, Chemical (NBC) attacks) driven by the hegemon's international activism. Thus, relative power preponderance allows the hegemon to feel itself secured without international engagement (see Posen & Ross, 1996; Art, 2004). As for providing prosperity, hegemon's sound economy and huge financial opportunities, on the one hand, make financial-economic relations appealing for many states with the hegemon, on the other hand, it conditions asymmetric interdependence in the hegemon's favor that could be exploited by the hegemon to satisfy its economic interests. Thus, the hegemon is capable of sustaining its national interests, security and prosperity without actually being involved either in international relations or provision of global security commitments.

Analysis of the isolationist strategies presented in the IR literature (extensive analysis of the isolationist strategies is given in the third chapter of this dissertation), unveil the major gaps of such strategies. First, the isolationist strategies are not based on the theoretical conceptualization of hegemony that would reveal the nature of the hegemony in terms of its attributes and capabilities to maintain its status and secure its national interests. Instead, the isolationist strategies are oriented on foreign policy cost reduction based on the major arguments of the realist theories, according which overextension is the major determinant of hegemonic decline. Addressing overextension through the reduction the foreign policy costs of a hegemon, conducted without the analysis of the attributes of a hegemon enabling it to sustain its national interests, may result in the application of

the cost-saving mechanisms damaging the capability of a hegemon to retain its status and secure its national interests.

Second, the isolationist strategies, although their authors claim themselves as realists, ignore the systemic consequences of anarchy described in the major works of structural realism (see Waltz, 1979, 2000; Mearsheimer, 2001; Jervis, 2009; Ikenberry et al., 2009), based on which majority of realist authors, including the founder of the theory, Kenneth N. Waltz (see Waltz, 2000), believe that isolationism is a non-feasible strategy for a hegemon aiming at constraining its decline. Unlike the isolationist strategies, this study implies both, prior theoretical conceptualization of hegemony as well as the extensive analysis of the systemic consequences of anarchy described in realist theories, in order to reveal optimal ways of preserving the power and influence of a hegemon that are 'allowed' by the anarchic structure of international relations.

In terms of the volume of the hegemon's international engagement, another type of strategy in the literature of international relations is referred as **deep engagement** (for main arguments, see Mastanduno, 1997; Ikenberry, et al., 2009; Brooks et al., 2012; 2013). This strategy is tailored on the USA and is based on the assumption that weakening of the USA relative power at this stage makes it unnecessary to refer to retrenchment. According to the strategy, modern USA is fully capable of maintaining its traditional level of international engagement. Subsequently, deep engagement sees no need to change the strategy to reduce foreign policy costs to constrain the decline. The major argument of the strategy is huge USA military power gap with the rest of the states that cannot be narrowed even in the face of rapid rise of new power centers in the foreseeable future.

Thus, deep engagement should not be identified as a strategy of a declining hegemon, directed to constraining one. In this respect, the need of discussing this strategy in comparison with the optimal strategy of a declining hegemon would not be in this dissertation if not another claim of its supporters. Specifically, they do not recognize a considerable part of the reasons of the hegemonic decline, implying that burden of order preservation costs mostly borne by the hegemon only and respective free riding of other states would cause an unequal development or turn into the reason of the hegemon's decline in the long run. This belief of the strategy supporters derives from their assumption that diminished international activism of a hegemon negatively affects its impact on international relations, undermining the benefits of such disengagement. Likewise, the supporters of deep engagement see no reason in reducing the order sustenance costs by the hegemon even in case of the start of its decline.

The major gap observed through the analysis of the deep engagement strategies is that they lack an extensive analysis or the theoretical conceptualization of hegemonic decline that would allow the authors of the strategies establish the determinants of hegemonic decline and develop mechanisms for addressing them. Instead, the strategy is concentrated on the absolute gains of the hegemonic engagement without the examination of the consequent costs of its further expansion and/or unnecessary international activism. Establishment and extensive analysis of the determinants of hegemonic decline that imply limitations for the hegemon's international activism as well as the mechanisms for attaining its international goals are fundamentally important for the development of the optimal strategy of a declining hegemon. Otherwise, the foreign policy strategy implying the irresponsible, unnecessary international activism could lead the hegemon to overextension and/or the aggravation of balancing tendencies against itself (see Gilpin, 1981; Waltz, 2000; Jervis, 2009) and consequent diminishment of its power capabilities and power preponderance. For this reason, unlike the deep engagement strategies, prior to the development of the optimal foreign policy of a declining hegemon, this dissertation conducts a theoretical conceptualization of hegemonic decline in order to reveal its determinants, as well as the specificity of systemic consequences of the hegemonic decline, imposing the limitations to the mechanisms a hegemon could apply for retaining its status and constraining its decline.

In terms of the volume of the hegemon's international engagement, the last type of the strategies of a declining hegemon is **selective engagement** whose major claims are presented by Posen & Ross (1996) and Art (2004). Selective engagement finds reduction in the hegemon's foreign policy costs critical while in decline. However, unlike isolationism, it argues that saving foreign policy costs should not be done at the expense of the maintenance of international order as believes that the latter is vital for the hegemon's national interests. Major implementation mechanism of this strategy that enables a hegemon to save foreign policy costs without diminishing its capability to maintain world order and international leadership, is a threat categorization. This implies categorizing threats into two categories of action and inaction based on their significance for securing the national interests of a hegemon.

Selective engagement is closest to our vision on the optimal foreign policy of a declining hegemon as preliminary research on the determinants of hegemonic decline, attributes of the hegemon, as well as the systemic consequences of hegemony and hegemonic decline has led to the development of our major argument. Namely, we argue that the optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon implies a balance of low costs and high involvement (see the section of hypothesis in

introduction, pg. 5). However, analysis of the existing selective engagement strategies has revealed a major gap addressing of which is the main goal of the strategy developed in this study. Selective engagement, similar to the above discussed strategies, lacks theoretical reasoning, or, extensive analysis of the theoretical foundations of the strategy. Consequently, the strategy, in its essence, represents a combination of practical action recommendations for the current hegemon, the USA.

The insufficiency of theoretical reasoning in its turn, results in two major deficiencies of the existing selective engagement strategies. First, it makes the strategies situational relevant only under the conditions of the existing settings in international relations by the time of their elaboration. Since the theoretical foundations of the developed recommendations remain uncertain, it is unclear under what conditions the recommendations maintain their relevance or need to be adapted in order to reassure their pertinence. Second, due to the lack of extensive theoretical analysis, the deep engagement strategies do not imply the theoretical conceptualization of hegemonic decline or a hegemon itself. Consequently, it is unclear how the mechanisms directed against constraining the hegemonic decline would affect the attributes of the hegemon and its capabilities to maintain international order and secure its national interests as the determinants of these very capabilities are not antecedently established.

Unlike the existing selective engagement strategies, this study implies both, theoretical conceptualization of hegemony as well as the hegemonic decline, based on which the optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon is developed. Theoretical conceptualization of decline enables establishment of the determinants as well as the empirical expressions of hegemonic decline while theoretical conceptualization of hegemony reveals the attributes of a hegemon and determinants of its capability to secure its national interests and exercise international leadership. This enables to evaluate the strategy mechanisms developed in this dissertation, on the one hand, in terms of their impact on the pace of the hegemon's decline, and attributes and capabilities of the hegemon on the other. Considering the effects of the cost reduction mechanisms on the attributes of the hegemon is crucially important, as the former is possible to be attained through damaging the latter.

At the same time, this dissertation conducts a comprehensive analysis of the systemic consequences of hegemony and hegemonic decline, which affect the elaboration of the strategy implementation mechanisms. According to neorealism, constituting the theoretical framework of this study, systemic consequences determine the behavior of states in the international relations as well as the types of behavior that will be punished or awarded under the specific systemic

consequences. Therefore, we argue that the study of the systemic consequences of hegemony as well as hegemonic decline is critical for the development of the implementation mechanisms of the declining hegemon's optimal foreign policy strategy in order to assure they are not counterproductive and comply to and utilize the capabilities allowed by the specific systemic consequences. As a result, this study differs from the existing selective engagement strategies by the theoretical conceptualization of hegemony and hegemonic decline as well as the extensive analysis of the specificity of the respective systemic consequences prior to the development of the optimal strategy and its implementation mechanisms. This enables establishment of the mechanisms for addressing the hegemonic decline entailing no or least possible damage to the attributes and capabilities of a hegemon.

Besides different strategies in terms of volume of engagement, the IR literature also covers the strategies and theories that involve hegemonic decline and/or management of the hegemonic decline. However, they are not focused on constraining the decline. Among such strategies and theories are appeasement, oriented on decline management as well as long cycle theory, which studies the cycles of ascendance and decline of great powers. Although the **long cycle theory** (for major statements, see Modelski, 1987; Thompson, 2006; Rosecrance, 1987; Goldstein, 1988) monitors the ascendance and decline of historic great powers that, according to the theory, take a cyclical nature, it does not focus on examining decline avoiding mechanisms and discussing foreign policy strategies of declining great powers. Therefore, the long cycle theory is not considered as the one examining the strategies of a declining hegemon.

As for **appeasement**, its relevance for the purposes of this study is limited in two ways. First, appeasement discusses decline management and not its constraining mechanisms (for major statements, see Carr, 1946; Gilpin, 1981; Treisman, 2004), while this dissertation aims to develop a foreign policy strategy enabling the declining hegemon to constrain its decline. Second, appeasement discusses a different case of the hegemonic decline from the one found in this dissertation. The foreign policy strategy developed in this dissertation reveals an optimal strategy for a declining hegemon when after the decline emergence of multipolar system is anticipated, while appeasement discusses the case of one hegemon's decline with simultaneous rise of another. As discussed in the introduction of the study, the optimal foreign policy of the declining hegemon will differ on the basis of possible distribution of power after the decline as different distribution of power leads to different systemic consequences determining the behavior of states. Subsequently, the foreign policy strategy of the declining hegemon will differ depending on the

pattern of the system the hegemon is preparing itself to function in terms of the post-decline distribution of power.

Thus, IR literature contains considerable amount of works discussing the hegemonic decline and/or the foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon. However, the thorough analysis of the existing strategies reveals major gaps implying the lack of generalized, theoretical reasoning; simultaneous application of theoretical conceptualization of hegemonic decline and the hegemony itself; and analysis of the systemic consequences of hegemony and hegemonic decline. These gaps result in the three major deficiencies of the existing strategies: (1) incapability of the strategies to assure that the causes of hegemonic decline are addressed without damaging the attributes of a hegemon and affecting its capability to secure its national interests; (2) lack of the analysis of the optimal possibilities of constraining hegemonic decline allowed by the specificity of respective systemic consequences; (3) incapability to illustrate the theoretical foundations of the foreign policy action recommendations given in the strategies that result in the vagueness of their relevance whenever the status-quo, or the IR settings of the time of their elaboration change. The following study is designed to address these shortcomings of the existing foreign policy strategies through comprehensive theoretical analysis of hegemony, hegemonic decline and their relevant systemic consequences which is done through the theoretical conceptualization of both, hegemony and hegemonic decline. As a result, the dissertation develops an optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon implying the complex addressing of the determinants as well as the moderating factors of hegemonic decline by the most optimal mechanisms allowed under the specific systemic consequences, without affecting the attributes and capabilities of a hegemon to secure its national interests.

CHAPTER 2. FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGIES OF A DECLINING HEGEMON

The following chapter aims to establish an analytical framework, which based on the variables that derive from the attributes of a hegemon as well as the factors causing the hegemonic decline, enable classification of the foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon. The first part of the chapter develops a concept of a hegemon and reveals the attributes of a hegemon, following which, the second part of the chapter defines the factors that condition hegemonic decline as well as the means for constraining it. The last part of the chapter, based on the attributes of a hegemon, as well as the means for constraining hegemonic decline, develops variables that enable the establishment of analytical framework for classification and assessment of the foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon.

Development of the concept of hegemony, presented in the beginning of the chapter, is accomplished through the synthesis of the definitions of a hegemon found in the literature of International Relations. The concept defines a hegemon in terms of its power as well as its function to establish and maintain the world order. Accordingly, the two attributes of a hegemon, power and willingness are established on the basis of a definition. The extent of power of a hegemon, expressed in relative terms, should provide the kind of gap among the states to defy counterbalancing a hegemon, while the willingness indicates the hegemon's readiness to undertake the functions ascribed within the definition, implying the establishment and maintenance of world order.

On the basis of the attributes of a hegemon, the chapter introduces the first variable for the classification and assessment of a declining hegemon's foreign policy strategies - involvement. Involvement is an empirical expression of the two attributes of a hegemon combined. It represents a hegemon's ability to achieve desired outcomes through participation in international relations and in order to be high, requires both, power as well as willingness of a hegemon to accomplish its functions. Therefore, involvement is a variable that measures a hegemon's impact on international relations.

Another variable for classification and assessment of a declining hegemon's foreign policy strategies is costs. It derives from the concept of decline defined as a process of the loss of relative power of a hegemon. Through elaborating the reasons for declining, it is determined that ever-increasing costs of protection and order maintenance leads a hegemon to diminish in relative

power. Therefore, in order to maintain its relative power, a declining hegemon's foreign policy strategies should be oriented on decreasing operating costs. Therefore, costs, as a variable, indicates the expenditures related to implementation of each foreign policy strategy.

Based on the two variables, involvement and costs, in the last part of the chapter, an analytical framework for classification of the foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon is developed taking a form of two dimensional axis. Allocated on the axes, the variables allow to classify four foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon, representing the four possible balances of the two variables. Beyond classification of strategies, the analytical framework illustrates how implementation of each strategy affects the attributes and a status of a hegemon and therefore, enables assessment of the strategies, which will be performed in the next chapter.

2.1. Defining Hegemony

This subchapter, through the synthesis of the definitions of a hegemon found in the IR literature, develops a concept of a hegemon, which in the scope of the dissertation will be applied for the analysis of the phenomena related to the hegemon and hegemonic system. The concept defines a hegemon as a state with relative power preponderance that makes it impossible to be counterbalanced, who establishes and maintains the world order which serves as a structured mechanism of enforcing its influence on international relations. Therefore, a hegemon is characterized by two attributes: (i) power, defined in relative terms and (ii) willingness to influence the outcomes of the international relations by establishment and maintenance of the hegemonic international order.

IR literature defines a hegemon as a state that has significantly more capabilities than any other. Hegemon's security cannot be meaningfully threatened by other states, as its power is too great to be counterbalanced (Keohane & Nye, 1977; Gilpin, 1981; Waltz, 1979; Layne, 1993; Mearsheimer, 2001; Jervis, 2009; Ikenberry et al., 2009; Monteiro, 2011, 2014; Brooks & Wohlforth, 2016). Mearsheimer (2001) states that the key feature for defining a hegemon is the power gap between the potential hegemon and the second most powerful state in the system. To qualify as a hegemon, a state must have, by some reasonably large margin, a power gap that would provide it the excellent prospects to defeat all of its opponents alone and some of them in tandem (Mearsheimer, 2001). Therefore, according to Monteiro (2011), a hegemon is not just the most powerful great power in a system, but the only one, powerful enough not just to enjoy the preponderance of power and face no competition, but influence the external behavior of all other states.

Although a hegemon is the only great power in the system, power capabilities are not so concentrated to produce a global empire that would imply subordination of all other states or to establish a purely coercive leadership over the international system. For this reason, IR literature suggests, that hegemon “manages” the international system through the formation of rule based international order which, as orders generally imply according to Weberian definition, organize power in ways that establish or preserve the legitimacy of government institutions and decision making (Weber, 1978). By establishing and cultivating belief in the legitimacy of the international order, shaped by a hegemon, its leadership takes a consensual form and therefore, reduces the opposition and cases of rivalry from the rest of the states (Cox, 1981; Keohane, 1984; Ikenberry & Kupchan, 1990; Jervis, 2009; Ikenberry et al., 2009; Finnemore, 2009). This enables a hegemon to avoid unnecessary spending of its power resources, conditioned by widely spread opposition it would otherwise face in international relations, and concentrate on fewer challenges it will face while enforcing its order.

Similar argument about the consensual form of leadership for the legitimation of international order is developed by Jervis (2009), who suggests that the unipole will make “serious efforts to persuade or coerce (and the line between the two is often blurred) the others to develop goals, values, and beliefs that are compatible with its own” in order to establish a leadership widely perceived as legitimate by the rest of the world. Jervis believes that “economic and military power are not sufficient to reach some objectives, and a unipole whose values or behavior are unappealing will find its influence reduced” (Jervis, 2009, p.192). Therefore, a hegemon establishes and maintains an international order enabling it to legitimize its influence on international relations.

The institutions functioning within the hegemonic order are based on the hegemon’s interests and first work to the hegemon’s advantage. However, conforming to this very order lies in the fact that secondary states share the common belief that they also benefit from the order created by the hegemon, thus, their majority pose no challenging threat to it. In order to cultivate this situation, the hegemon has to make certain compromises for greater long-term benefits. Any hegemon attempting to legitimize its role will diminish its own coercive capabilities. As Finnemore (2009) maintains, any system of legitimation imposes limits on the ability to translate capabilities into power – the need of legitimation sometimes requires the hegemon, despite being fully capable, to refrain itself from applying force for coercive purposes. Moreover, a hegemon invests heavily into stability of the system, creating and maintaining international order, which is also a short-term cost contributed in exchange of a more long-term benefit such as retaining the favorable status quo or

establishing the channels for spreading and legitimizing its influence in the form of institutions of international order.

A hegemon's role as a state responsible for establishing and maintaining an international order as well as providing stable financial and economic international order is particularly discussed by the realistic hegemonic stability theory (HST) (see Kindleberger, 1973, 1983; Krasner, 1976; Gilpin, 1981; Keohane, 1984). HST pays a particular attention to the importance of a hegemon's financial-economic capabilities. Kindleberger believes that one of the most significant roles of a hegemon is to provide a sustenance of an international order's financial-economic vibrancy. Performing this role imposes on a hegemon maintenance of "an open trading system, freedom of the seas, well-defined property rights, standards of weights and measures that may include international money, or fixed exchange rates, and the like in the periods of tranquility" (Kindleberger, 2000, p.451). In addition, a hegemon is a source of crisis management when needed. According to Kindleberger, without hegemon's positive leadership, backed by its resources and a readiness to make some sacrifice in the international interest, the provision of such public goods as a market for distress goods, a steady flow of capital, and a rediscount mechanism may disappear. In this sense HST regards a hegemon's economic power as the key to creating and maintaining an international order.

Neorealism is another realistic theory discussing the importance of forming and maintaining an international order by a hegemon, though unlike political economy and partially HST, Neorealism pays less attention to the financial benefits gained from the order or the costs needed for keeping it operational. Neorealism identifies a hegemon as the most interested entity in preserving the status quo in the system, thus being heavily oriented on stable international order. Preserving stability means to exclude the kind of wars that would potentially change the existing balance of power, or cripple the hegemon's interests. Therefore, reflecting the potential of the great power wars to change the balance of power in the international system, Mearsheimer (2001, 2013) believes that any general war is excluded between major states under a hegemonic order. As to the international order and its institutions, neorealism perceives them as levers in the hands of a hegemon to exercise and legitimize its influence (see Krasner, 1982).

IR literature pays so much attention to mechanisms of creating and supporting an international order by a hegemon that it serves as a distinguishing factor between a hegemon and a unipole, or alternatively hegemonic and unipolar systems. Ikenberry et al. (2009) believe that unipolarity should "be distinguished from hegemony and empire, terms that refer to political relationships and degrees of influence rather than to distributions of material capability" (p.4). According to

Ikenberry et al., unipolarity is all about distribution of power within the system and maintains that there is only one pole as a sole great power in the system but keeps silent about political patterns or relationships depicted by terms such as empire or hegemony. The same ideas are shared by Goldstein who defines hegemony as “being able to dictate, or at least dominate, the rules and arrangements by which international relations, political and economic, are conducted” (Goldstein, 1988, p.281). Therefore, key to distinguish unipolarity from hegemony is to make a basic distinction between power as material resources and power as influence. Unipolarity reflects the distribution of material resources within the system, while hegemony implies political relations through which a unipole being a hegemon in this particular case, forms an order that enables it to influence the other states of the system and affect their behavior in international relations.

As a result, the dissertation defines a hegemon as a state whose power preponderance with the rest of the world makes it inconceivable to be counterbalanced, and who takes responsibility for creating and maintaining an international order which in turn, provides it with the opportunities to legitimize its role, enforce its influence on international relations, gain benefits and preserve the status quo. Thus, a hegemon is defined in terms of the two attributes - power, expressed in relative terms and willingness to establish and maintain an international order.

2.2. Reasons of Hegemonic Decline and its Prevention Possibilities

The following subchapter defines hegemonic decline, its determining factors and prevention possibilities. As a result, it is established that decline, which is a process of diminishment of a relative power of a hegemon, according to the IR literature, is conditioned with two main factors: (i) overextension, and (ii) natural tendency of the international system to restore the balance of power. Each of the factors are discussed in detail in the scope of the following sections. After discussing the determining factors of hegemonic decline, the last section of the subchapter establishes that hegemon, through its foreign policy strategy, can address its decline by reducing the foreign policy costs.

Hegemonic decline is a process of decline of a relative power of a hegemon. Simultaneously, a decline in absolute power of a hegemon is not a sufficient or necessary precondition to trigger its decline. Instead, downsizing the gap between a hegemon and the rest of the world is what sets declining in motion. Decline decreases the quality of hegemon’s security and influence over other states’ external behavior as well as its ability to maintain the international order, hence, jeopardizes its status.

Theories of IR describe two reasons of hegemonic decline. First is **overextension**, which, in turn, is conditioned with two main factors. First factor implies the misuse of power by a hegemon that is stipulated by the fact that it is not checked by any other state or coalition of states. The second factor, conditioning hegemonic overextension relates to the disproportionate costs a hegemon bears for order maintenance in international system, which along with the free ride of other member states of the system results in uneven growth and reduction of hegemon's power preponderance over the rest of the world. Second reason of hegemonic decline implies natural tendency of restoring the **balance of power** in the international system that, in the face of unbalanced power, forces states to seek ways of reestablishing the balance of power in the international system.

Both of the above-mentioned reasons of hegemonic decline are in direct connection with a hegemon's foreign policy and/or challenges posed by international relations. Though, it should be noted that there are certain internal factors that affect decline, described by the representatives of political economy and HST (for major statements, see Gilpin 1981). Internal factors responsible for hegemonic decline are related to the hegemon's economy. As Gilpin argues, according to historical tendencies and reasons described in economics theories, the rate of the hegemon's economic growth diminishes over the time leading to undermining of the economic, military, and political foundations of its international position. Since the following dissertation aims to classify and assess the foreign policy strategies of a hegemon, it only discussed the external factors of decline that can be addressed by the hegemon's foreign policy strategies. Accordingly, consideration of internal factors of hegemonic decline goes beyond the aim of the dissertation and only external factors of decline are discussed in details in the following sections.

2.2.1. Overextension and Free Riding

Overextension as a phenomenon characteristic to hegemony is mainly described by two realist theories – structural realism and HST. Arguments of structural realism have been developed by Kenneth N. Waltz and Robert Jervis (for major arguments, see Waltz, 1979, 2000; Jervis, 2009) while classical statement of the arguments of the HST on the issue belong to Charles P. Kindleberger and Robert Gilpin (for major arguments, see, Kindleberger, 1973, 1983; Gilpin, 1981).

According to Waltz, “in the light of structural theory, unipolarity appears as the least durable of international configurations as dominant powers take on too many tasks beyond their own borders, thus weakening themselves in the long run” (Waltz, 2000, p.27). Reason for this for Waltz is the

misuse of power, which is stipulated by the fact that it is not checked/balanced by any other state or coalition of states. Similar argument is developed by Robert Jervis. As Jervis (2009) states, permissive structure of international relations – in other words, lack of countervailing power, create structural incentives for a hegemon to pursue excessive expansion. According to Jervis (2009), there are four facets to this argument: “First, power is checked most effectively, if not only, by counterbalancing power. ... It follows from the propensity of states to use the power at their disposal that those who are not subject to external restraints tend to feel few restraints at all.” Second, state interests expand along with its power. “The unipole can pursue luxuries, and once a state has started to do so, it, like an individual, soon comes to see them as necessities.” Third, “the unipole also feels a compulsion to seek more because increased power brings with it new fears. As major threats disappear, people elevate ones that previously were seen as quite manageable. But there is more to it than psychology. A dominant state acquires interests throughout the globe ... and it is not only hubris that leads it to be concerned with everything that happens anywhere. The growth of power and influence establishes new positions to be defended.” Four, “as Realists stress, even states that are content with the status quo must worry about the future. ... However secure states are, only rarely can they be secure enough, and if they are currently very powerful they will feel strong impulses to act now to prevent a deterioration. ... [S]o even if the unipole is not in danger it may seek to expand rather than accept a loss” (pp.198-200). Therefore, overextension described by neorealism, is a misuse of power by a hegemon, stipulated by the permissive structure of international system.

HST explains overextension based on costs needed for performing the duties ascribed to the hegemon such as creating and maintaining an international order along with dominating it. The hegemon manages to create and sustain its own order by manipulating material incentives, such as punishments and rewards, which help hegemon to influence the behavior of other states by altering their cost-benefit calculations. Though except for the costs for material incentives, according to Gilpin (1981) in order to maintain its dominant position, a hegemon “must expand its resources on military forces, the financing of allies, foreign aid, and the costs associated with maintaining the international economy. These protection and related costs are not productive investments; they constitute an economic drain on the economy of the dominant state” (p.157) According to Gilpin, costs of dominance for a hegemon increase over time making the preservation of status quo more difficult. As number and strength of challenging powers increase, the dominant state is forced to spend more resources to maintain its superior military or political position.

George Modelski also discusses the gradual growth of dominance and system protection costs for the hegemon (Long Cycle Theory). Modelski investigates the motivation of hegemon's challenging states in terms of their willingness to engage in competition with a hegemon. According to him, monopoly rents that hegemon enjoys from dominating the international system, attracts rivalry and competition. As hegemon has power and authority to create a world order that, in the first place, benefits its own interests, rival states are prompt to challenge the hegemon in order to establish their own order, benefiting their own national interests. For Modelski, this is the reason the initial preponderance gained by a hegemon cannot last and eventually, the global system becomes an arena of oligopolistic rivalry, wherein a number of major powers strive to maximize their advantages (Modelski, 1978).

Modelski, while explaining why the hegemon is challenged by rising rivals, does not focus on explaining why challenging powers start to rise at certain point in hegemonic system. However, the reason for gradual rise of rival states within the hegemonic system with the passage of time is discussed in HST through such events characteristic to this very system as provision of public goods by a hegemon and the costs associated with it, and subsequent free-ride of the rest of the states (key statements belong to Kindleberger, 1973; Gilpin 1981. See also, Gilpin, 1975, 1987; Keohane, 1980; Krasner, 1976; Russett, 1985; Snidal, 1985).

By establishing and maintaining an international system, a hegemon produces a kind of public goods. E.g. militarily, the hegemon provides stable security order and takes responsibility for guarding the global commons (Posen, 2003) while economically, the hegemon provides public goods by opening its domestic market to other states, supplying liquidity for the global economy, and providing a reserve currency (Kindelberger 1973; Gilpin 1975). These public goods are being exploited by everyone, but the costs are majorly covered by a hegemon. The latter's interest in continuous production of the public goods lies in the fact that it itself consumes disproportionate share of the goods it provides, justifying it to bear disproportionate share of costs for their provision. As Ikenberry et al. (2009) note, a hegemon has an interest in bearing disproportionate costs because it benefits disproportionately from establishing an order (public goods are integral parts, or byproducts of the order) that promotes system-wide outcomes that reflect its values and interests.

According HST, because the dominant power will defend the status quo and international order in its own interest, lesser states have little incentive to pay their "fair" share of these protection costs, causing the so called free-rider problem, associated with the hegemonic international system

(Gilpin, 1981). In the long run, world market economy spreads economic growth throughout the international system, diffusing the wealth and factors of growth to the new centers of economic growth. These arguments draw Gilpin to conclude that while overextension together with the costs associate with preservation of world order and stability of the international system continue to drain the hegemon, the free-riding rising states enjoy the lower costs and rising rates of return on their resources. Eventually, the different rates of growth result in the decline of the dominant state and produce a decisive redistribution of power and result in disequilibrium in the system (Gilpin, 1981).

Meanwhile, the states with fast-paced growing power develop a desire to convert their newly attained power into appropriate privileges within the international relations. They start questioning a hegemon's special rights and privileges the international order provides it and its prime role in the process of decision making within international entities. From this point, while the responsibility for providing the costs for the maintenance of the system's stability still relies on a hegemon, the exclusive privileges of the hegemon to lead international relations start to weaken. Questioning of the legitimacy of hegemon's exclusive rights and privileges in international system as well as subsequent weakening of its authority will tempt states to challenge the order and stop conforming with the hegemon which further increases the costs of the maintenance of the international order and accelerates the decline of a hegemony.

2.2.2. Balance of Power

Another reason of the short duration of unipolarity, discussed in the theory of neorealism, is a tendency of restoring a balance of power in the international system. As Waltz states, "even if a dominant power behaves with moderation, restraint, and forbearance, weaker states will worry about its future behavior. ... As nature abhors a vacuum, so international politics abhors unbalanced power. Faced with unbalanced power, some states try to increase their own strength or they ally with others to bring the international distribution of power into balance" (Waltz, 2000, p.28). In this way, according to the neorealism theory states will strive to the point to balance a hegemon's might.

It is anticipated to take a long time to get the balance of power to restore in case of a large power gap between a hegemon and rising powers. But if a hegemon's might failed to be balanced through such traditional means as the so called 'hard balancing', it is expected that other states will provide the kind of 'soft balancing'. (Pape, 2005; 2005; Ikenberry et al., 2009; Walt, 1989, 2009; Mastanduno, 2009). Soft balancing occurs when states decide that dominance of a hegemon is

unacceptable, however, they lack capabilities to balance its overwhelming power. According to Pape (2005), soft balancing implies non-military tools to delay, frustrate and undermine aggressive unilateral policies of a hegemon. Although resistance in the form of soft balancing does not shift the balance of power offering a real counterweight to a hegemon, it increases its material costs and ability to exercise influence.

The possibility to apply soft balancing against the hegemon within the unipolar system is made available by the structural consequences this very system is characterized by. As Walt (1997) argues, in case of the current hegemonic system, the structural shift to unipolarity removed one of the major motivations for the middle-ranked great powers to defer to the United States. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent disappearance of the major security threat for the former allies of the United States, the current hegemon lost leverages that their security dependence have been giving it to dictate outcomes in international relations. Ikenberry et al. (2009) offer a similar argument: “decline in a shared security threat makes it harder to strike bargains: the leading state’s offerings of security are less needed by other states and it is less dependent on the frontline support of weaker and secondary states.” (p.26) Therefore, according to Ikenberry et al., while under bipolarity the propensity of other middle powers to defer to the United States was structurally favored, under unipolarity the opposite may occur (Similar argument is developed by Finnemore, 2009, Mastanduno, 1997).

IR literature implies that a hegemon’s behavior determines the likelihood of arising soft balancing and formation of coalitions against it (see Jervis, 2009; Finnemore, 2009; Walt, 2009; Ikenberry et al., 2009). According to Jervis, “the incentives to try to overturn unipolarity are much less when states do not fear that the superpower will invade them or greatly diminish their sovereignty. Indeed, if they believe that the unipole will provide a degree of order and public goods and that rivalry would be destabilizing, they may actively support unipolarity” (Jervis, 2009, p.207). Like Jervis, Ikenberry et al. (2009) argue that balancing tendencies in hegemonic system depend on the behavior of a hegemon. They believe that the behavior of the unipole may produce potentially divergent effects: “through its behavior, the unipole may encourage would-be challengers to accept subordinate but beneficial roles. Alternatively, and because it has the capability and discretion to act as a revisionist state itself, the unipole’s behavior might heighten the insecurity of other states and prompt them to contemplate individual or collective challenges to its dominance” (Ikenberry et al., 2009, p.24). According to this thinking, the extent to which other states may attempt to

damage or weaken the hegemon's influence depends on the degree to which the hegemon poses a threat to national interests of other states.

The given arguments are endorsed by Walt's balance of threat theory, which argues that states balance not just against power capabilities of other states but they take into consideration their aggressive intentions as well (Walt, 1985, 1987, 1989, 2009). Walt argues that balancing behavior is most usefully understood as a response to threat. The extent to which states appear as threatening to others depends on a variety of factors, including, but not limited to, the aggregate power resources of the state. For Walt, "states that are viewed as aggressive are likely to provoke others to balance against them" (Walt, 1987, p.25). Therefore, according to this theory if hegemon is benevolent, states would have less reason to balance against it as it could allay others' fears that it will use its hegemonic power for self-aggrandizing purposes (Mastanduno, 1997; Walt, 2009).

The balance of threat theory opposes the major claims of neorealism that states balance against offensive capabilities of other states, not their intentions. Mearsheimer (2001), explaining the rationale behind this argument, states that when a state surveys its environment to determine which states pose a threat to its survival, it focuses mainly on the offensive capabilities of potential rivals, not their intentions. Because the intentions are ultimately unknowable, "states worried about their survival must make worst-case assumptions about their rivals' intentions. Capabilities, however, not only can be measured but also determine whether or not a rival state is a serious threat" (Mearsheimer 2001, p.45). Therefore, states ultimately fear each other's capabilities regardless of their intentions.

However, when Mearsheimer discusses the reasons why cold war era allies do not attempt to balance the United States after its completion, his arguments fully match with that of balance of threat theory implying the relationship between hegemon's behavior within the system and balancing tendencies. Mearsheimer believes that lack of balancing tendencies from former allies against the United States are conditioned by the fact that "United States has no appetite for conquest and domination outside of the Western Hemisphere; offshore balancers do not provoke balancing coalitions against themselves. Indeed, their main mission is to balance against dangerous rivals" (Mearsheimer 2001, p.390). According to Mearsheimer's very claim, states outside the hegemon's own region are not fearful to the possible territorial snatches or being dominated by the hegemon (though the hegemon will extort certain amount of influence over the majority of states, beyond its region the extent of hegemon's influence falls short of enabling its domination). As a result, if any state ever attempts to disrupt regional order, all other states will find themselves

naturally allied with the hegemon to counterbalance the possible threat. It reflects the fact that the states are more sensitive to the threat posed by their regional powers than to the one posed by a hegemon. Simultaneously, the hegemon also identifies the regional disruptor as potential competitor and shows interest in both cooperation with other regional states and contribution to regional balance of power. In this spirit, the hegemon could be identified as a threat outside its own region only by the rising regional hegemons, while other states remain natural allies to the hegemon if the latter remains benevolent towards them.

Therefore, although the arguments of the balance of threat theory may in general contradict with the ones of the neorealism, embracing the balance of power instead, the arguments of the two theories are consistent when it comes to the analysis of the balancing tendencies in the hegemonic system specifically against the hegemon. The two factors contribute to this consistency. The first implies the production of public goods by the hegemon that, according to realist theories, is an exclusive byproduct of a hegemonic system (see Kindleberger, 1973; Gilpin, 1981; Krasner, 1976). Gains that states are enjoying as free riders in the hegemonic system, affect the cost-benefit evaluation of states while choosing between conforming to and challenging the hegemony, and incentivize them to conform to the hegemonic order. As discussed above, based on the works of Waltz, Jervis and Ikenberry et al. (see pp. 13-15; 40-41), if opposite occurs, or the hegemony is believed to be harmful to the security and prosperity of the wide majority of the states, the cost benefit evaluation would tend them to challenge the hegemon and aggravate the balancing tendencies against the latter.

The other factor affecting the balancing tendencies against the hegemon is structural consequences characteristic to the hegemonic system that influence the behavior of states. The anarchic consequences within the hegemonic system are mitigated. Through forming and protecting the international order, the hegemony performs the central government-like functions. Consequently, the international hegemonic system resembles a hierarchical one. Introduction of hierarchical elements into anarchical system changes the consequences produced by anarchy in terms of influence the structure exercises over the behavior of states.

In case of hegemonic system, the extent of power gap that defies to balance the hegemon's might is not enough for other states to conform to the hegemon's order and not set themselves against it. Otherwise, there would be no soft balancing and rivalry against the hegemon within the hegemonic system. If a hegemon, taking into account its attributes and functions, is compared to a central government, investigation of the phenomenon of subordination to a hegemon is possible by

analyzing the factors that condition the subordination to central government. In a hierarchical system, subordination to the central government is simultaneously based on the extent of power and legitimation. Without legitimation, the governance should be solely based on coercion, while legitimation allows to exert power through voluntary or quasi-voluntary compliance, defined as a willingness to comply that is backed up by coercion, particularly coercion that ensures that others will be obeying the law (Levi & Sacks, 2009). The necessity of legitimation exists as much as the extent of power taken separately is not adequate enough to provide subordination (Weber, 1978).

Similarly to central governments, the hegemon also faces the necessity of legitimizing its role, since, as previously discussed, power limitations do not allow it to establish purely or mainly coercive leadership. Through legitimation the hegemon makes its leadership consensual, so it helps us understand the willingness of the allies and the conformers of a hegemon to defer to hegemonic leadership (Cox, 1981; Keohane, 1984; Finnemore, 2009). Stemming from this it can be assumed that the degree to which other states will either conform, balance or oppose the hegemon's international order would depend not only on the power of the hegemon but the level of its legitimacy. As a result, an extent to which hegemon's actions will be perceived as legitimate influences others states' attitudes and actions towards the hegemon.

However, these arguments about the hegemon's behavior and balancing tendencies associated to it could only be applied to hegemonic systems. If the system would no longer be a unipolar due to the hegemon's decline, the motives of states' actions would change, getting more dominated by anarchic structural consequences that would ultimately impose on states to balance the power as a capability in any case.

2.2.3. Constraining the Hegemonic Decline

Hegemonic decline is the process of diminishing hegemon's relative power that could be conditioned by (i) decline of the hegemon's absolute power while other states experience rise, or (ii) unequal rising paces of the hegemon and that of other states, where the hegemon is less advantaged. Consequently, despite those reasons the decline always derives from such changes in hegemon's and/or other great states' power capabilities that diminishes the power gap between the hegemon and other states with ultimate shift of balance of power in the international system.

Thus, decline is the process of diminishing the hegemon's relative power that in case of overextension, as discussed above, is conditioned by the increasing foreign policy costs of a hegemon that drain its power capabilities. As for the other determinant of hegemonic decline, the

natural tendency of restoration of balance of power, it is only a byproduct of already changed power distribution in international system and will not take place unless the hegemon's relative power remains unvaried or increases. Consequently, the primary reason for decline is rising foreign policy costs of a hegemon. However, while describing the phenomenon of balancing tendencies in international relations, it was established, that the major factor, contributing to its aggravation (moderating factor) is the diminishment of hegemon's legitimacy, which conditions conforming to its leadership. Diminishment of hegemon's legitimacy in the beginning of its decline, before it is still non-feasible to balance its power, intensifies soft-balancing, which will increase foreign policy costs of a hegemon. As a result, intensification of balancing tendencies, as a determinant of hegemonic decline, also contributes to the pace of decline by increasing the foreign policy costs of a hegemon. In this particular case, although reversal of balancing tendencies is impossible without reversal of hegemonic decline, avoiding the growth of foreign policy expenditures of a hegemon, due to the aggravation of balancing tendencies, is possible through maintaining its legitimacy.

Two major factors contribute to the increase of foreign policy costs of a hegemon conditioned by its overextension. In case of the pattern of overextension described by structural realism, the hegemon's rising costs are connected to the inexistence of structural barriers - permissive structure of international system prompts the hegemon to go beyond vital needs and pursue luxuries. As for the cases of the limitations of nation-states and pattern of overextension described by HST, hegemon's gradually rising costs are connected to the maintenance of international order. The ever-increasing protection costs of the order finally overpower the benefits gained from the international relations by the hegemon ultimately leading to decrease of its power capabilities. According to Gilpin (1981), such protection costs drain the economy of a hegemon and imply increasing military expenditures for the maintenance of stability of international system, supporting allies, maintenance of international economy, costs associated with provision of incentives and punishments to support the rule-based international order. In case of overextension described by HST, along with the costs of sustaining an international order by the hegemon, its relative power gets diminished by such phenomenon, related to the hegemonic system, as free riding that drains the hegemon's power resources and concurrently nurtures rapid growth of other states.

Due to the nature of the considered determinants of hegemonic decline, it can be assumed that constraining the decline of a hegemon's relative power is possible through diminishing of its

foreign policy costs by avoiding an overextension of a hegemon and loss of its legitimacy. As a result, foreign policy strategy directed against hegemonic decline bears the nature of the one oriented on reducing costs. Such strategy contributes to constraining the decline of relative power in two ways. On the one hand, it would allow a hegemon to preserve its power capabilities by preventing their drain. On the other hand, the strategy oriented on the reduction of foreign policy expenditures would increase the resources available for productive investments in the economy that would further increase the power resources of a hegemon.

2.3. Classification of the Foreign Policy Strategies of a Declining Hegemon

The following subchapter develops an analytical framework for the classification and assessment of the foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon, based on the variables, costs and involvement. The subchapter starts with the establishment of the two variables. Costs, as discussed in the previous subchapter, affects the pace of decline and as a variable, expresses the amount of expenditures necessary for the implementation of a specific foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon. Involvement is an empirical expression of hegemon's attributes, power and willingness and taking into consideration the power as well as the willingness of a hegemon to exert influence on international relations, indicates an extent of hegemon's impact on international relations. Therefore, the variables, costs and involvement illustrate the impact of a foreign policy strategy both, on the pace of decline as well as the capabilities of a hegemon.

After the establishment of the two variables, the subchapter proceeds to the development of analytical framework for the classification and assessment of the foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon through allocation of the variables on the two-dimensional axes. The analytical framework enables classification and assessment of the four possible strategies of a declining hegemon based on the four possible balances of the two variables and an impact each of the balances entail on the pace of hegemonic decline and hegemon itself.

Optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon should be the one that addresses the determinants of its decline and at the same time, enables the hegemon to preserve its attributes, therefore, its essence. Thus, an analytical framework for the establishment and assessment of such strategy should be based on the variables that derive, on the one hand, from the determinants of hegemonic decline and on the other hand, attributes of a hegemon.

According to the definition, presented in the beginning of the chapter, a hegemon is a state that enjoys significant relative power preponderance and its security cannot be meaningfully threatened

by other states. A hegemon is also a state that undertakes a responsibility for the establishment and maintenance of the rule-based international order that implies assuming functions such as responsibility for the stability of the international system and operation of international institutions, provision of legitimacy to the international norms and standards, formation of international agenda etc. Hence, as established in the first subchapter, for a country to be classified as a hegemon, it has to have two attributes: power and willingness to carry out the functions related to the establishment and maintenance of order to the international system.

Power implies all the component elements of state capability, conventionally defined as size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capacity, military might, and organizational-institutional competence (Waltz, 1979). According to the definition of a hegemon applied in the dissertation, not just the indicators of its absolute power are important but that of its relative power. The extent of power gap between the hegemon and other major states of the system is supposed to make the very system unipolar and keep in disbalance. Otherwise, no extent of absolute power would be adequate to the results described in any parts of the hegemon's definition. Only a significant power gap allows the hegemon to enjoy relative security and perform the ascribed functions – provision of the stability of the international system through order shaping and maintenance.

Willingness is another attribute of a hegemon. Without willingness to undertake the responsibilities ascribed to a hegemon, a state powerful enough would be qualified as an unipole - a term that only reflects the distribution of power resources in international system. Hegemony, on the other hand, is defined as a situation, in which “one state is powerful enough to maintain the essential rules governing interstate relations, and willing to do so” (Keohane & Nye, 1977, p. 44). As Keohane (1984) notes, willingness or a decision to exercise leadership is necessary to “activate” the posited relationship between power capabilities and outcomes. To exercise its leadership, as discussed in the first subchapter, hegemon establishes and maintains a rule-based order, which serves as a structured mechanism for exerting as well as legitimizing its influence on international relations. Willingness of a hegemon is, therefore, expressed through its commitment for the sustenance of a rule-based world order.

A hegemonic classification relates to the state, which possesses both attributes at the same time – power as well as willingness. As mentioned above, state possessing a relative power preponderance with the rest of the world that does not have a willingness to exercise its leadership in international relations, is not considered as a hegemon, but is referred as a unipole. Example of

a unipole would be the twentieth century USA prior to the Second World War, which despite being superior in terms of power compared to other states, did not have the willingness to exert its influence on international relations. For this reason, as such USA of that period is not regarded as a hegemon.

A combined empirical expression of hegemon's attributes, power and willingness, relate to the outcomes achieved by the hegemon in international relations, which further, within the framework of the paper, is referred as involvement. Bearing in mind willingness to establish and maintain a rule-based order within the international system, involvement features hegemon's impact on international relations and the ability to achieve desired goals at the international level which on the other hand, relate to the power capabilities of a hegemon. Involvement is not measured on the merits of active participation within international relations, but is based on the merits of outcomes achieved throughout participation.

As involvement is an empirical expression of the two attributes of a hegemon, defined in terms of power and willingness, its decline would be a consequence of diminishing of one or both of its attributes and take place when hegemon loses its relative power and/or its willingness to take responsibility for the provision of international order. Notwithstanding the determinants of involvement's diminishment, it indicates the extent of influence a hegemon is capable to exert on international relations in order to secure its national interests. Therefore, involvement is a variable that "measures" a hegemon: high involvement would be an evidence of hegemon's strength while undermining of involvement would be either an indication of hegemonic decline. Applied as a variable for the assessment of the optional foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon, involvement illustrates the influence of a strategy on the capabilities of a hegemon, implying both, power of a hegemon as well as its impact on international relations.

The other variable necessary for the assessment of the foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon is costs. As established in the previous subchapter, reduction of the foreign policy costs is a means of constraining hegemonic decline. As a variable, costs expresses the influence of a foreign policy strategy on the power resources of a hegemon – high costs condition their drain while low costs enable their preservation. Therefore, costs, as a variable, expresses the impact of a foreign policy strategy on the absolute power of a hegemon and it does not indicate the state of a hegemon in general in terms of its relative power preponderance and influence on international relations. In order to assess a foreign policy strategy in terms of its impact on hegemon's decline, another variable, involvement should be brought in. Cost reduction is a mechanism for addressing

the causes of decline while involvement expresses the impact of those mechanisms on the state of a hegemon. State of involvement, not costs, indicates the state of hegemon's decline as a result of a foreign policy strategy it applies for its constraining. Thus, costs together with involvement, are the tools for the assessment of the foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon.

Retaining high involvement during the decline, due to the simultaneous necessity to reduce costs, leads a hegemon to the dilemma. Preservation of high involvement requires hegemon to bear high costs related to order maintenance and system protection. Moreover, as mentioned above, the hegemon is only capable of leading the system and maintaining the international order while owning a significant amount of relative power. Thus, the involvement-related dilemma implies that on the one hand a hegemon faces high costs for enjoying high involvement that reduces its power resources and accelerates its decline, while on the other hand, a hegemon's involvement in international relations is affected by the amount of its power. Consequently, in the process of decline, retaining involvement gets a tough issue, since keeping it afloat takes tremendous costs that reduces power that in turn complicates the maintenance of high involvement.

In order to retain hegemonic status, defined on the basis of relative power preponderance of the hegemon and its ability to maintain the world order, which would be impossible in case of undermining its involvement, the hegemon must simultaneously take care of preserving both its power and involvement. Hence, declining hegemon's primary objective becomes finding a difficult balance: on the one hand, it should attempt to decrease the costs relating to the protection of the system, which helps avoiding the exhaustion of its resources and overall power, and on the other hand it should retain its maximum involvement in international relations. A peculiar difficulty of such balance relates to the fact that tighter cost controls lead to the decrease of involvement, while an attempt to retain a high degree of involvement implies high expenditures. Consequently, while selecting the optimal foreign policy strategy, a declining hegemon must not solely seek to cut the expenditures to save power capabilities to constrain its decline. It must also consider the possible effects of expenditures needed for the selected strategy on involvement. As a result, the hegemon not only has just to cut costs but instead, do it without notable harming of the quality of involvement.

Classification and assessment of the foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon based on two variables, costs and involvement is possible through allocating the variables on a two-dimensional axis (see Figure 2-1). The axis enables classification of four foreign policy strategies based on the

four possible balance of the two variables, hence, illustrating the consequences of the strategies on the costs and involvement of a hegemon:

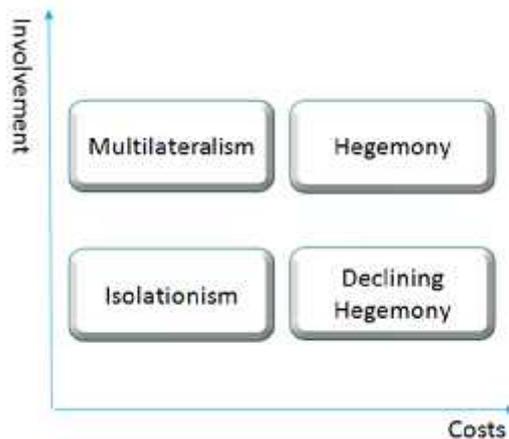


Figure 2-1: Foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon

The horizontal axis demonstrates costs, which as mentioned above, measure the power resources required to be spent in order to carry out a hegemon's certain strategies. The vertical axis demonstrates involvement, measuring the hegemon's ability of achieving desired outcomes in international relations in the scopes of a particular foreign policy strategy it applies.

The axes demonstrate four possible strategies for the hegemon facing a threat of decline: (i) Multilateralism, characterized with high involvement, low costs; (ii) Hegemony, characterized with high involvement, high costs; (iii) Isolationism, characterized with low involvement, low costs; (iv) Declining hegemony, characterized with low involvement, high costs. The labels for each balance of costs and involvement are based on general policy, which a hegemon is expected to follow whenever choosing a certain strategy. Each of the four strategies illustrate how their implementation affect the involvement of a hegemon as well as the amount of costs necessary for their implementation. Hence, an analytical framework enables assessment of each foreign policy strategy's impact on the attributes and therefore, a status of a hegemon as well as the pace of hegemonic decline anticipated by a specific strategy.

The next chapter proceeds with the analyses of the established foreign policy strategies. As the chapter reveals, only low cost strategies, multilateralism and isolationism should be examined to establish the most optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon, as saving costs is critical

for retaining power resources and delaying hegemonic decline. However, among the two low costs strategies, one of them, multilateralism, is optimal foreign policy strategy because, this strategy only, allows keeping involvement, which is necessary for assuring the national interests of a hegemon, with relatively low costs. The remaining two high cost strategies, escalating the decline of the hegemon are disregarded in this dissertation.

Conclusion

Through the synthesis of the definitions of a hegemon presented in the IR literature, this chapter developed a concept of a hegemon, which is defined as a state with relative power preponderance that produces an overwhelming power gap with its potential challengers, enabling it to defeat any of its rivals alone and some of them in tandem. However, power is not an only attribute of a hegemon. It is also defined in terms of its willingness to assume the functions ascribed to a hegemon – establishment and maintenance of international order.

Empirical expression of the two attributes of a hegemon, power and willingness, in the frameworks of the paper is referred as involvement. Involvement measures hegemon's impact on international relations and is affected by the amount of hegemon's power preponderance as well as its willingness to exercise leadership on international relations through the sustenance of world order. Undermining of involvement would be an indication of hegemon's capability to exert influence on international relations, therefore, its decline. As a variable, involvement "measures" a hegemon – implying the willingness of a hegemon to exercise leadership, it would be high as long as it retains significant power preponderance, and lower if it declines.

Hegemonic decline, as established in the chapter, can be addressed by reduction of the foreign policy costs of a hegemon. This will enable a hegemon to avoid the drain of its power capabilities and to check the decline of its relative power. However, because the foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon should be oriented on reduction of costs, preservation of high involvement in the process of hegemonic decline involves a dilemma as maintenance of involvement is costly.

Hence, a successful foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon, should be oriented on finding a balance between the cost reduction and maintenance of the high level of involvement. This leads to establishment of the two variables – costs and involvement – to measure the success of a foreign policy of a declining hegemon. By allocating the variables on the two dimensional axes, an analytical framework is established that enables classification of four possible foreign policy strategies representing the four possible balances of the two variables inhabited in each of the

strategies. Beyond the classification of the foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon, the variables of the analytical framework enable assessment of the established strategies by revealing their impact on the attributes of the hegemon. Hence, the analytical framework enables the analysis of each strategy which will be followed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3. OPTIMAL FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY OF A DECLINING HEGEMON AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS

Within the analytical framework designed in the previous chapter on the basis of four possible combinations of two variables, costs and involvement, foreign policy strategies of the declining hegemon have been classified: (i) multilateralism, (ii) hegemony, (iii) isolationism, (iv) declining hegemony. This chapter, based on the same analytical framework, identifies the impact of general politics related to implementing each of the strategies on the foreign policy costs and the attributes of a hegemon. As a result, the most optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon, as well as its implementation mechanisms are determined.

The chapter starts with excluding the two strategies of the hegemony and the declining hegemony placed on the right side of the two-dimensional axis (see Figure 2-1). The reason for this is high costs implied by these two strategies. On the basis of determination of the causes of decline, it has been estimated in the previous chapter that the declining hegemon's strategies should be directing to reducing costs allowing the hegemon to save its resources and delay the loss of its relative power. Thus, the strategies not oriented on cutting down the costs could not be the right alternative for the declining hegemon.

After negation of the high cost foreign policy strategies, the second part of the chapter proceeds to analyze the remaining low cost strategies located on the left side of the axes. The left side of the axes depicts two options, from which multilateralism offers lower costs alongside with high involvement, while isolationism suggests minimal foreign policy costs and refusal to sustain hegemon's involvement through the maintenance of hegemonic order. Thus, the latter will result in losing the hegemonic status and the privileges associated with it, as well as the impact on international politics. Consequently, while the hegemon in isolation, power and influence shifts in the international system are anticipated to get configured against the interests of the hegemon with worse possible future complications. In this situation, due to the complication of securing its national interests, the hegemon will find it non-feasible to remain isolated. On the other hand, isolationism also proves to be a non-rational strategy as the costs of such endeavor will exceed the ones for saved power resources while in isolation. Accordingly, this dissertation identifies isolationism as non-feasible and non-rational strategy for a declining hegemon.

Having discussed isolationism as the first low cost foreign policy strategy, the last part of the chapter moves to the heart of this dissertation by revealing that multilateralism is a declining

hegemon's most optimal foreign policy strategy. Multilateralism is, the only strategy that renders hegemon a possibility to maintain its relative power by lowering costs and retaining high degree of involvement at the same time. In order to secure its national interests, the hegemon needs to maintain both, power as well as involvement expressing its influence in international relations.

Having unveiled the nature of the most optimal foreign policy strategy, the chapter moves to the development of the implementation mechanisms of the strategy of multilateralism. Implementing multilateralism along with simultaneous preservation of both power capabilities and involvement in international relations could be attained with two possible means. On the one hand, the declining hegemon categorizes the threats deriving from international relations to reveal the ones that could put it in action or not, if unnecessary. The threats fall into two categories wherein first involves threats that necessitate hegemon to act while the second involves ones in case of which a hegemon should abstain from action. Threats are distributed between the two categories based on the two conditions implying the level of danger they pose to the national interests of a hegemon and the correlation of the costs of addressing the threats and the price of hegemon's inaction. On the other hand, for successful implementation of the strategy of multilateralism, a hegemon is supposed to assure the participation of other states in the maintenance of world order. Finally, the strategy will lead the hegemon to both reducing its foreign policy costs as well as maintaining the legitimacy of the hegemonic order. Reduction of costs is assured through avoiding overextension while legitimacy of hegemonic order is assured through multilateralistic foreign policy that translates large states into stakeholders of the order that stipulates their conforming to the very order.

Reduction of foreign policy costs and preservation of legitimacy of the hegemonic order, which in turn, enables the hegemon to save the order maintenance costs, will ultimately lighten the decline of hegemon's relative power. Simultaneously, the multilateralism strategy grants the declining hegemon to retain a high involvement in international relations, necessary for securing its national interests. Thus, the chapter finds multilateralism as the most optimal foreign policy strategy for the declining hegemon.

3.1. Negation of the High Cost Strategies - Hegemony and Declining Hegemony

Foreign policy strategy of the declining hegemon should be oriented on constraining the loss of relative power. Thus, it should not involve high costs leading to spending its power resources and speeding up the decline. Consequently, strategies allocated on the right side of the two-dimensional axis, hegemony and the declining hegemony, involving high operational costs could

not be found optimal for a declining hegemon. Below, the reasons for possible failure of the both strategies are described in more details.

Hegemony that implies a balance of high costs and high involvement, represents a strategy that a capable hegemon follows. Foreign policy strategy of a hegemon implies high costs and involvement for two main reasons. First, a hegemon's initiative to provide the system with stability as well as establish and support the efficient functioning of the rule-based world order requires it to maintain a high degree involvement as well as high costs. However, accomplishment of these functions is not the only reason that the foreign policy of a hegemon may imply high levels of costs. The other reason is, as discussed in the second chapter, the lack of counterbalance, characteristic for the hegemonic international system that creates structural incentives for a hegemon's excessive expansion and pursuit of the luxuries. As a result, a hegemon overextends throughout a globe that establishes new positions to be defended (Jervis, 2009). Such overextension as well as, for the most part, unilateral responsibility for the maintenance of the international order drains the power capabilities of a declining hegemon, accelerating its decline. Respectively, this strategy cannot be an appropriate choice for a declining hegemon, which should be attempting to preserve its resources.

Declining hegemony on the other hand, is hardly a strategy, but a state a declining hegemon will discover itself in case of inactivity or in other words a choice, during a dynamic fall of its relative power, not to reconsider its strategy of the period of ascendance that usually implies excessive expansion and costly unilateralism. Such decision leads a declining hegemon to a threat of discovering itself in a condition where despite high foreign policy costs, high degree of involvement is impossible to maintain.

As involvement is an empirical expression of the two attributes of a hegemon, defined as power and willingness, it is undermined in case of diminishing of either or both of the attributes. If a declining hegemon continues to overextend on the pursuit of luxuries and/or to support the stability of international system mostly with its own costs, it will accelerate undermining of its power. Undermining power leads to cutting involvement, which expressing the impact of a hegemon on international relations derives from its power. Therefore, even though a hegemon's costs may still be high within the strategy of declining hegemony, its involvement in international relations will gradually weaken due to undermining of hegemon's power. Hence, in case of a declining hegemon, maintenance of the costs from the period of its prime serve as a drain to its economy without enabling it to sustain the level of involvement characteristic to its prime.

Alongside the further erosion of its power, the declining hegemon will find increasingly costly to maintain high involvement in international relations. Power gap that was making it unrealistic to counterbalance a hegemon mostly allowed it to achieve goals without using any force as its power preponderance made states vividly realize the consequences of opposing it. Besides, the strong hegemon faces reduced costs for convincing and winning over other states. Concurrently to the reduction of hegemon's influence, which are conditioned with the loss of its relative power, a declining hegemon will find the maintenance of world order increasingly costly. Hegemonic decline, alongside undermining of the relative power of a hegemon, implies the rise of the new power centers. In proportion with the rise of the latter, increases their demand to find appropriate influence within international relations, be more actively involved in the formation of international agenda and decision-making processes. As a result, states with growing powers are expected to start questioning a hegemon's exclusive rights and privileges, for which it becomes increasingly difficult for a hegemon to achieve desired outcomes through international bargaining while it still bears the costs for the order sustenance. Consequently, a hegemon will face obstacles to lead collective actions, achieve desired outcomes within international relations, or define rules of the game. Such undermining of its authority will complicate the order maintenance for a hegemon through encouraging the actors with the breaching motives to act even more so, thus, causing the hegemon to spend more to sustain the system stability. As a result, this leads to the drain of hegemon's power capabilities and acceleration of its decline, contrary to the rise of the new power centers. Therefore, a declining hegemon will have to face the reality of limited involvement irrespective of its desires if it does not attempt to invoke the strategies involving relatively lower costs, oriented to the constraining of its decline.

Therefore, both strategies, hegemony and declining hegemony, are irrelevant in case of hegemonic decline. Strategy of hegemony is unattainable for a declining hegemon - if it takes no action to reduce the foreign policy costs associated with the strategy, it will eventually find itself in a condition described as declining hegemony, which drains economy and power resources of a hegemon without of enabling it to sustain a high involvement and therefore, its status as a hegemon.

3.2. Isolationism

The following subchapter analyses the strategy of low costs and low involvement within the analytical framework given on the Figure 2-1, matching to the one known as isolationism in the IR literature. This strategy allows a declining hegemon to reduce the foreign policy costs and save

its power resources. However, while pursuing isolationism, the hegemon significantly concedes much of the involvement in international relations as well as its status of a hegemon that implies not only having power resources but to exercise influence over the international relations through establishment and maintenance of the hegemonic world order.

Through the subchapter it is revealed that despite the reduction of foreign policy costs, the strategy of isolationism is not optimal for the declining hegemon, as while implementing it the hegemon loses involvement in international relations, which is a key to securing the its national interests. To justify this claim the subchapter first provides arguments of isolationism to explain why the hegemon's national interests of security and prosperity remain undamaged by dissociation from international affairs, and then relying on the arguments of structural realism, it refutes the ideas of the supporters of isolationism and solidifying the arguments that putting the very strategy in effect would ultimately damage the chances of securing the national interests by the hegemon.

3.2.1. Isolationism – Definition, Major Claims and Assumptions

In the IR literature isolationism is defined as a foreign policy strategy that implies sparsest possible use of military force, rejects peacetime military commitments and permanent military presence at any given place outside state borders, opposes entering bounding treaties and alliances and promotes maintenance of freedom of action and strategic independence (See Nordlinger, 1995; Posen & Ross, 1996; Gholz et al., 1997; Art 2004). In the scope of the chapter, isolationism is discussed only with regard to a hegemon, as one of the foreign policy strategies it can resort to.

While defining isolationism, it is important not to equate it with the non-use of force or complete disengagement from international relations. As Art (2004) notes, “isolationism does not totally rule out the use of force; it is not morally indifferent to political events abroad; it does not seek national economic self-sufficiency (autarky). ... What isolationism entails is the sparsest possible use of military power to shape the international environment” (p.173). Isolationists believe that force should be used by a hegemon only to protect the nation's vital interests, in other words, a hegemon should go to war only for the most compelling reasons – in order to defend the nation and its citizens from an attack.

Isolationist in relation to the hegemon relies on two major assumptions that make the supporters of this strategy believe that deployment of military power by the hegemon is not necessary for its security and prosperity. Furthermore, the isolationists argue that first, a hegemon is safe from the conquest of its territory due to the power gap it enjoys with the rest of the world; second, a hegemon

can achieve its economic interests with economic means and the role of force in protecting them is rejected (Art, 2004).

According to the first assumption, international events have no significant influence on the hegemon's security leading isolationism to paying no attention to such events. The definition of isolationism involves no need to deploy military forces outside the borders to protect its national interests. The first assumption argues that both the hegemon's security and territorial integrity are secured by the degree of its relative power – no other state would ever initiate the military confrontation with the hegemon while the power gap between them clearly defines the winner. The supporters of isolationism pay a significant attention to the existence of nuclear weapons in the modern world as a guarantor of both the hegemon's security and international peace. According to Posen & Ross (1996), nuclear weapons not only assure political sovereignty and homeland security of the current hegemon, but the fact that majority of the contemporary great powers possess nuclear retaliatory forces, makes war among them unlikely. As great powers are capable of deterring each other, risks are reduced that any of them will achieve regional hegemony and militarily exploit economic resources of their regions.

Isolationists believe that military presence outside the borders is not only unnecessary, but also counterproductive for two reasons. First, if a hegemon stays out of the political conflicts and wars abroad, it will not draw animosity and fear of its capabilities. In such conditions, isolationists believe, that many of the contemporary threats, including threat of terror attacks on hegemon's homeland, would simply disappear, as isolated hegemon would not be a "magnet for trouble" (Posen & Ross, 1996, p.11). The very threat of dragging in international disputes motivates the isolationists to oppose entering bounding treaties and alliances. Such decision grants the hegemon freedom of action and strategic independence to decide the application of military power or the type of engagement with the rest of the world.

Another reason, why the isolationists believe that costly international military adventures as well as the forward deployment of troops are counterproductive, is based on their conviction that economic decline is the biggest threat that hegemon faces. According to isolationists,

in today's world it is technological innovation that holds the key to a nation's economic competitiveness, and in this competitive race the [hegemon] should steer its resources to where they will do the most good - its own economic competitiveness - rather than squandering them to protect the states that are its fiercest economic competitors. (Art, 2004, p.175)

Hence, isolationism opposes military commitments associated with hegemon's responsibility to protect an international order. They believe that such commitments are harmful to its long-run competitive position and lead to the decline of a hegemon's relative power as they drain the economy of a hegemon while enabling other great powers to rise.

Isolationism's second assumption, as mentioned above, implies rejection of the role of military power for securing economic interests of a hegemon. Isolationists believe that economic interests do not necessitate projection of military power outside state borders as they are best achieved through economic means. Preservation of economic interests by economic means is accomplished "through the unimpeded movement of capital, technology, and goods when economic intercourse among nations is free and fair and through economic retaliation when it is not" (Art, 2004, p.175). Such economic retaliation implies "denying foreigners access to the [hegemon's] market when access abroad is denied, or subsidizing its industry at home when industry abroad is subsidized" (p.175). Hence, isolationists believe that even if the international economic intercourse is not fair, a hegemon can fight an economic discrimination without resorting to its military power capabilities.

The degree of interdependence in the modern world makes the isolationists believe that denial of access to its market or strategic subsidy, rather than exertion of political leverage through military power, are the most effective instruments to protect the economic interests of a hegemon (Nordlinger, 1995). The asymmetry of interdependence keeps economically most sound countries in favorable conditions with their partners. Since the economy of the hegemon is generally the dominant one in the world, the asymmetry of interdependence equips the hegemon with considerable levers to prevail over other states. Thus, the isolationists believe that the hegemon possess sufficient range of economic means to satisfy its economic interests without any use or threat of force.

On the basis of the two assumptions defined, the isolationists believe that the hegemon has no need to apply military power or threat of force to protect either its security or prosperity. This aspect, according to isolationists, makes strategy most optimal for a declining hegemon as it is the best means to reduce the foreign policy costs without damaging the hegemon's national interests. The next section reviews the criticism of the isolationists' ideas on the basis of refuting their assumptions by the arguments of structural realism.

3.2.2. Isolationism as a Non-Feasible and Non-Rational Foreign Policy Strategy for a Declining Hegemon

The following section analyses isolationism's prospects for the declining hegemon in the anarchic international system. Though isolationism is the least economically costly foreign policy strategy and would allow the hegemon to save its power resources while experiencing decline, within the section based on the structural realism, it is determined that isolationism is not the best foreign policy strategy for the declining hegemon because it is identified as both non-feasible and non-rational strategy. Isolationism is non-feasible because its realization would damage the hegemon's vital interests in the long run leading it to complete abandoning of this strategy in the future. Likewise, isolationism is non-rational strategy because its realization costs in terms of damaged national interests and necessary compensation resources would outnumber the saved ones while being isolated. Moreover, it is dubious the hegemon would ever manage to cover the loss and retain its pre-isolationist status quo.

Based on the arguments of the structural realism the prospects of isolationism are defined for both hegemonic and non-hegemonic international systems within the section. The different prospects of isolationist strategy within these very systems derive from the specificity of world orders characteristic to them which in case of the former implies hegemonic order, while balance of power is an anticipated form of world order in case of the latter. In its turn, the shaping of different world orders within the hegemonic and non-hegemonic systems is caused by different structural consequences characteristic to two systems that ultimately affect the state behavior.

The section identifies that within the conditions of international order based on the balance of power the successful operation of the isolationist strategy by a great power (including a unipole) is impossible. The only system where the form of the world order can be different from the one resting on the balance of power, is hegemony. Within a hegemonic system, as discussed in the previous chapter, a hegemonic world order is established where the hegemon performs central government-like functions, thus softening anarchy as well as the effects of anarchic structure over the behavior of states in the international relations.

Since the prospects for success of isolationism could only take place within the hegemonic system, the current section identifies that successful realization of isolationism is unimaginable for a unipole (hegemon, pursuing isolationistic foreign policy strategy turns itself into a unipole) as

while applying the isolationist strategy, the hegemonic system and accompanying hegemonic order based on the hegemon's military and financial commitments discontinues existence.

Within the next sections the difference between hegemonic and non-hegemonic systems is discussed in terms of structural consequences impacting the feasibility of isolationism. First, a non-hegemonic system is analyzed and anarchy driven reasons are discussed that ultimately make the feasibility of isolationism unimaginable due to the existence of international order within the very system based on balance of power. While discussing non-hegemonic systems, emphasis will be made on multipolar system, being especially interesting for the purposes of this dissertation since it analyzes the foreign policy strategies of the declining hegemon when after the hegemonic system, arising of a multipolar system is anticipated.

After the non-hegemonic system a hegemonic system is discussed which enables softening of anarchy through establishing hegemonic order that creates favorable conditions for successful realization of isolationism for great powers. Though the dissertation should not be focused on discussing the hegemonic system to bring out the advantages of the isolationist strategy, this need arouse as a response to the claim of the isolationism supporters who provide the successful USA 19th century example of applying this very strategy to prove its feasibility. The discussions beneath illustrate that the success of the USA isolationism was possible due to the existence of British hegemonic system. Thus, the success of the USA isolationism is no counterargument against the claim of structural realism regarding the feasibility of the strategy in relation to a hegemon.

Consequently, within the next subsections, it is identified that isolationism could not be found as the best foreign policy strategy for the declining hegemon since it is both non-feasible and non-rational in non-hegemonic systems. Structural realism assumes the chance of success of isolationism for any great power within the alternative hegemonic system that stops its existence once the hegemon enters isolationism.

3.2.2.1. The Prospects of Isolationism under the Non-Hegemonic International Systems

The current subsection refutes isolationism's assumptions based on the arguments of structural realism. Particularly, it is justified that the isolationists' claim for no need to use either threat or actual application of military power by the hegemon to protect its security and prosperity is wrong. For this purpose, systemic consequences of anarchy are analyzed that keep any isolated great power outside the hegemonic order from securing its national interests, including a former

hegemon². Analyzing these systemic consequences, the subsection discusses and examines the causes that make the involvement of the hegemon in international relations necessary to protect its security and prosperity, which according to structural realism, could be attained through the influence based on power.

Anarchy conditioned systemic consequences due to which isolationism is not considered within the scope of rational choices of a hegemon, is linked to the self-help condition. According to structural realism, the so-called 911 problem characteristic for the anarchic international system, which in case of need considers impossibility to invoke international help against a party breaching the world order, stipulates self-help condition where states rely on their own power capabilities (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001). Under these circumstances, special importance is given not to absolute power of a state, but to its relative power instead in terms of its security and extent of influence over international relations. Furthermore, striving for power is a zero-sum game – states can only gain power at the expense of other states.

Therefore, under the structural realism, establishment of international order and maintenance of system stability within the anarchic system (excluding the hegemonic system, the reasons for which will be discussed in details below) could only be achieved on the basis of the balance of power. The participants of this kind of balance attempt (i) to take advantage of the changes within the balance of power to increase their own power, since under the self-help condition imposed by anarchy, the states can only rely on their own power to secure their national interests; (ii) deriving from zero-sum thinking, to prevent other nations from getting more powerful whenever they will find it favorable; (iii) get united against strong states or coalition of states to counterbalance them, as in the anarchic system states are doubtful towards each other's capabilities since goals remain unclear.

Deriving from the systemic consequences characteristic to the anarchic system impacting state behavior in the international affairs, the isolationist strategy could not be considered as optimal for the declining hegemon due to three reasons linked to securing national interests of a unipole implementing the strategy. Out of these three reasons, which will be discussed in details in the rest of this section, the first is related to the process of collapsing the hegemonic international order and replacing it with the alternative balance of power order. In this situation, the emergence of a

² As discussed in the first chapter, while entering isolationism, a hegemon, by abandoning the maintenance of international order, loses its status and is referred as a unipole.

regional hegemon and/or an unfavorable distribution of power in terms of securing the national interests of a unipole is expected. The second reason is about the fact that the isolated unipole takes no part in the international balance of power and respectively does not perform the three functions of the states participating in the balance of power, described above, that are vital for the security of states under the anarchic system. The third reason associated with the complications of implementing isolationism is about the economic interests of a hegemon and refutes the other isolationist assumption that argues that prosperity of a hegemon takes no need to either threaten or actually use military power.

These reasons make the isolationist strategy non-feasible while the extent of the damaged national interests that may exceed the possible benefits gained from implementation of the isolationist strategy, ultimately makes the very strategy irrational. Below the analysis of these three reasons for expected failure of the isolationist strategy is discussed and the arguments are provided to explain the factors in each case.

Possible instability in the international system that could turn the balance of power against the hegemon is number one factor that impedes the hegemon to pursue the isolationist strategy. According to the arguments of the structural realism, the discontinuation of maintenance of the international system by the hegemon jeopardizes the system stability. Under the hegemonic system, the international order relies not on the balance of power but the rules and institutions instead, backed by the military power of a hegemon committed to maintain them. Since the order is provided without the balance of power and the balancing of a hegemon is unimaginable, the nations do not group themselves in order to attain the balance of power under the hegemonic system. Therefore, if a hegemon refuses to maintain the order and plunges into isolationism, both the stability of the international system and the hegemonic international order collapses until the rest of the states manage to establish the balance of power. The period between the hegemon's abandoning of the support for the system stability and the establishment of balance of power in the system could be extremely dangerous for the system stability. Posen & Ross, developing the same ideas in the case of the USA isolationism argues that

the disappearance of the United States from the world stage would likely precipitate a good deal of competition abroad for security. Without a U.S. presence, aspiring regional hegemons would see more opportunities. States formerly defended by the United States would have to look to their own military power; local arms competitions are to be expected. (Posen & Ross, 1996, p. 13)

Therefore, plummeting of the hegemon into isolationism could be followed by intensive security competition that might turn into a major war among the great powers.

No matter, intensive security competition turns into major war or not, both cases involve the possibility of emerging a regional hegemon that as mentioned previously, is dangerous for the hegemon itself as it distorts the regional balance of power against the interests of the hegemon. In the modern world, states possess multiple means to enhance their relative power without territorial expansion or military actions. Therefore, intensive security competition could be enough to cultivate the emergence of the regional hegemon and shift the balance of power against the interests of the hegemon without any major war. Big regional states are capable of weakening other regional states by restricting their access to resources, putting them into unfavorable economic and trading conditions, applying asymmetric interdependence to gain more influence and get the best deals in bargaining. In the modern world, the construction of the artificial islands by China against the interests of other regional states has set a novel precedent of territorial expansion without actually occupying other states' territories. Through the construction of islands Chinese territorial waters expand enabling it to master the energy resources in the Southern Chinese Sea and place military installations, enhancing China's influence and power projection capabilities in the region representing one of the busiest sea trade routes in the world (Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2018).

The cases of the balance of power changes and expansion of large regional states are dangerous for the interests of the hegemon for two reasons. Consequently, it is in hegemon's interest to prevent both, intense security competition, as well as great power wars. First, as a result, a new regional hegemon may arise, which will be threatening the national interests of a hegemon. According to Mearsheimer,

States that achieve regional hegemony seek to prevent great powers in other regions from duplicating their feat. Regional hegemons, in other words, do not want peers. Thus the United States, for example, played a key role in preventing imperial Japan, Wilhelmine Germany, Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Union from gaining regional supremacy. Regional hegemons attempt to check aspiring hegemons in other regions because they fear that a rival great power that dominates its own region will be an especially powerful foe that is essentially free to cause trouble in the fearful great power's backyard. (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 41-42)

It leads Mearsheimer to believe that the hegemon would only be the status quo power (isolated hegemon has no other choice) if there were no rival regional hegemon(s) in the international system. The hegemon

would go to considerable lengths to preserve the existing distribution of power. ... But if [a hegemon] is confronted with a peer competitor, it would no longer be a status quo power. Indeed, it would go to considerable lengths to weaken and maybe even destroy its distant rival. Of course, both regional hegemons would be motivated by that logic, which would make for a fierce security competition between them. (Mearsheimer, 2001, p.42)

Mearsheimer believes that the hegemon has no choice but to get involved into the regional balance of power, where a regional hegemon would arise otherwise. Such regions are considered to be the ones where the distribution of power forms “unbalanced multipolarity”. Mearsheimer uses this very term to describe the multipolar distribution of power in the region that involves a distinctively powerful nation that could become a regional hegemon. Simultaneously, there is no need for a hegemon to engage itself in the regional balance of power where balance of power is attained by the regional states impeding the emergence of a regional hegemon with their own effort.

Second reason why a hegemon should engage in preventing the possibility of sharp redistribution of power in the regions is that they upset regional balances, which may not be favorable for a hegemon for non-security considerations. Such upset of balance would be likely to diminish a hegemon’s global influence and complicate to protect both its national and economic interests as while diminishing the influence, conforming to the leadership of a hegemon declines as well as its bargaining possibilities.

Similar phenomena to these theoretical discussions took place in the first half of the twentieth century when the upset in the international order produced the two world wars. The reason for this upheaval was the loss of its status of a hegemon by Britain at the beginning of the century that finally put Pax Britannica to the end. The upset balance of power was failed to be quickly restored by other big states, especially while the new and most powerful state of that system was pursuing an isolationistic strategy and refused to neither participate in the formation of the international system nor establishing its own international order.

If not the USA devotion to the isolationistic strategy that according to the distribution of power was a unipole in the system after the First World War and its failure to make peacetime military commitments for supporting allies and international order in general, Art (2004) believes that at least the avoidance of the Second World War was possible. Art maintains that the USA foreign policy strategy of that time was particularly unreasonable as the given theoretical discussions show that the unipole cannot avoid great power wars for their consequences for its security and prosperity. Therefore, the USA should have avoided the war rather than getting involved in that costly war later to ensure the most desirable outcomes for itself.

Both, the arguments of the structural realism and examples of the first half of the twentieth century show that the international order downgrades after the hegemon terminates supporting it no matter the latter declines or enters isolationism. Moreover, the hegemon's entrance into isolationism could prove more dangerous for the international stability than the lengthy gradual decline of the hegemon. Isolation of the hegemon leads to the abrupt end of the hegemonic system and other states remain unprepared for the new reality, making the international system unstable until the new order emerges. Consequently, while the hegemon in isolation and before establishing a new order that could be attained through the balance of power, intense security competition is expected within the system that could finally turn into great power war. The hegemon will not manage to avoid both great power war and intensive security competition go beyond its attention in the regions where a potential regional hegemon may arise. Under these circumstances a dangerous distribution of power could shape itself that may pose a threat to the hegemon's national interests. Therefore, the hegemon has to participate in any regional balance of power where unbalanced multipolarity may take place. Art (2004) maintains that through the participation in such kinds of regional balances that involves peacetime military guarantees for regional states against the potential regional hegemon, the hegemon maintains peace among the great powers that would exclude a possibility for either large wars among them or intense and sustained security competitions.

However, the consequences of the hegemon's military presence mean not only avoiding wars and big states' territorial expansions making others fearful of their power, but enhancing the degree of cooperation and interdependence among other nations. The security guarantees provided by the hegemon diminishes worries regarding the asymmetric spread of economic advantages by assuring them that the advantages will not be used to expand at each other's expense and therefore, lead to the mitigation of the security dilemma. Consequently, the hegemon's military presence in unbalanced multipolar regions not only simply reduces the chances of war but also assures the establishment of so called 'deep peace' in such regions that keeps the possibilities of conflict and security competition at low under anarchic conditions (for similar arguments, see Art, 1996, 2004). Additionally, as being discussed alongside with the third reason for failure of the isolationist strategy, performing such duty makes the hegemon's presence in the region desirable and increases its influence and bargaining power.

The hegemon's peaceful military commitments and in-theatre presence not only prevents conflicts and expansions of big states in the unbalanced multipolar regions from arising, but such very

presence is vital even if conflicts go unchecked and war erupts. According to Art, alliances and forward deployed forces provide the hegemon with valuable bases, staging areas, intelligence gathering facilities, in-theater training facilities, and most important, close allies with whom it continuously trains and exercises. These are militarily significant advantages and constitute valuable assets if war must be waged. Therefore, through forward military presence the hegemon would undoubtedly find it easy to launch military campaigns and win over them providing it with the necessity to keep its military presence in the region.

In contrast to preserving peacetime military commitments, leaving the unbalanced multipolar regions and returning there when a need arises due to the establishment of dangerous distribution of power, as discussed by offshore balancing, would be more risky and costly for a hegemon in the long run. Enhancing a preexisting presence is always easier while emerging a crisis rather than re-establishing a foot. In addition, forward presence, preventing a regional hegemon from emerging could prove less costly in the long run if considered the fact that opportunity cost for the emergence of a regional hegemon could be running into a costly war later.

Besides, the hegemon can take advantage from manipulating the regional politics and events to the benefit of its interests thanks to its regional presence. Exiting the region deprives the hegemon of that chance. Consequently, exiting the region, the hegemon loses its opportunity to prevail in the regional affairs, especially under adverse circumstances to its interests. If this scenario ever takes place, the manipulation over the regional politics by the hegemon would be both costly and hard. Thus, it is rational for a hegemon to make peacetime military commitments in order to prevent intense security competitions as well as great power wars than to suffer their consequences and restore the commitments afterwards.

Another reason for the possible failure of the isolationist strategy, as discussed earlier, concerns with non-participatory stance of the former isolated hegemon in the balance of power. According to the arguments of the structural realism, isolationism is not a rational strategy for large states, including a hegemon even if the upset balance of power during the transitional period starting from its isolation would pass without a major war among great powers and balance of power would be restored by the rest of the states leading to establishment of the a multipolar system.

According to the arguments of the structural realism, a multipolar system is the least stable one out of the existing systems in terms of power distribution making isolationism the most irrational

foreign policy strategy under this situation. As Mearsheimer states, multipolar system is unstable than other types of system for three reasons:

first, there are more opportunities for war, because there are more potential conflict dyads in a multipolar system. Second, imbalances of power are more commonplace in a multipolar world, and thus great powers are more likely to have the capability to win a war, making deterrence more difficult and war more likely. Third, the potential for miscalculation is greater in multipolarity: states might think they have the capability to coerce or conquer another state when, in fact, they do not. (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 338)

Isolationism is particularly dangerous for the unipole under such circumstances as watching and in case of necessity, responding to the changes in the balance of power in such an unstable international environment gets vitally important for great powers, including the unipole. According to realism, in the multipolar world, balance of power becomes the sole guarantor for ensuring both stability of international system and security of states. Therefore, the active involvement in international relations by large states becomes especially vital to avoiding undesirable changes in the balance of power or turn those changes to the benefit of their interests.

Posen (2009) also warns about the dangers of isolation in the multipolar international system. According to him, a multipolar system, with three or more consequential powers,

produces one basic pattern of behavior: The arithmetic of coalitions influences matters great and small. The overall balance of capabilities, and the military balance in particular, are easily altered in a significant way depending on who sides with whom. Internal efforts cannot accomplish nearly as much change, at such a low cost, in such a short time. ... In a multipolar system, states should lack confidence that significant military buildups can help them much, because other states can combine against them. (p. 337)

For these reasons, Posen concludes that isolation is perhaps the most dangerous situation in multipolarity, so states should pay close and constant attention to the game of coalition building.

According to the structural realism, an isolated unipole that takes no part in the balance of power jeopardizes its own security. This situation arises not only because the unipole pays less attention to the changes in the balance of power or strengthening rival nations diminishing its security in the world of self-help, but due to the fact that other states of the system are not able to leave an isolated state with significant power capabilities beyond their attention. They will attempt to weaken the isolated unipole, since as mentioned above, anarchy driven conditions make nations fearful not only to other states' goals but their capabilities instead. According to Mearsheimer (2001) such structural consequences are driven by the fact that

when a state surveys its environment to determine which states pose a threat to its survival, it focuses mainly on the offensive capabilities of potential rivals, not their intentions. ... intentions are ultimately unknowable, so states worried about their survival must make worst-case assumptions about their rivals' intentions. Capabilities, however, not only can be measured but also determine whether or not a rival state is a serious threat. (p.43)

Therefore, Mearsheimer concludes that great powers balance against capabilities, not intentions. This claim of realism, have been a foundation for Art (2004) to conclude that one of the reasons why the United States could not stay aside and got dragged into Eurasia's major great power wars was the fact that it was too large economically: "America's trade, capital, and raw materials were weapons to be exploited to fight the enemy, or crucial resources to be denied to it." (p.193) Because America's economic resources were too important to be left alone, Art believes that neutrality was a luxury that the Eurasian powers would not allow the United States to enjoy - they could not just ignore the isolated superpower.

Therefore, isolationism would fail to be either feasible or rational foreign policy strategy for the hegemon, even if the international system overcome the turbulence driven by the isolation of the hegemon, and the hegemonic order would get replaced painlessly with the one based on the balance of power. Isolationism remains as a non-feasible strategy in this case too, since under the conditions of the balance of power the hegemon would undoubtedly find hard to ensure its security and prosperity and would shift finally from isolationism into either participating in the balance of power or reestablishing its own hegemonic order (depending on the degree of power gap with other states of the time). Additionally, compensating the costs of damaged national interests and restoring its dominance over international politics would also prove costly and complicated, making the strategy non-rational.

The third reason for possible failure of the isolationist strategy provided by the arguments of structural realism highlights the importance of military power to achieve economic interests. The arguments of structural realism refute the claims of the supporters of isolationism that prosperity takes no need for military commitments and it could be achieved without relying on their military power.

According to the structural realism, the prospect of achieving economic objectives with economic means could only take place in an international economic order allowing international openness, trade and investments. As claimed by the theory, such economic order could take place within the hegemonic system only as a part of the hegemonic order supported by its military might and commitments. As Art (2004) states, "markets depend on a stable political order: they operate

efficiently when their participants share expectations that the rules governing their economic interactions will be stable and fair. Stable political frameworks in sum help produce these shared expectations” (p.55). According to the structural realism, a stable political order described by Art is conditioned by the hegemon. Under the hegemonic order the so called hegemonic peace get established that decreases chances of large scale wars, fosters and protects international standards and rules. This, in the tradeoff between guns and butter makes it more or less possible for states to increase a share of butter and states have a possibility to concentrate their resources on their economic development and engage in mutually beneficial cooperation (for major statements of the hegemonic stability theory, see Kindleberger, 1973, 1983; Gilpin, 1981; Keohane, 1980). Within the hegemonic order, cooperation is achieved in a stable international environment free from fear for wars among the big states (see Mearsheimer, 2001), allowing states to peacefully pursue economic interests within the rules established by the hegemon’s economic order. Though, the structural realism excludes such an occasion in a non-hegemonic system.

Arguments of structural realism, recognizing the hegemonic order as a prerequisite for the economic order as well as the domination of cooperation, are based on the anarchy driven systemic consequences, making cooperation of states in non-hegemonic system “sometimes difficult to achieve and always difficult to sustain” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p.55). According to Mearsheimer, in the anarchical system “two factors inhibit cooperation: considerations about relative gains and concern about cheating. Ultimately, great powers live in a fundamentally competitive world where they view each other as real, or at least potential, enemies, and they therefore look to gain power at each other's expense” (p.56). Therefore, due to its asymmetric nature, of the benefits of cooperation, it is usually favorable for a single party only. Threat of defection hinders cooperation, as according to Mearsheimer, “such a development could create a window of opportunity for the state that cheats to inflict a decisive defeat on its victim” (p.56). Considering these factors, structural realism finds cooperation and economic openness impossible beyond the hegemonic order under anarchical system.

Therefore, within the international order based on balance of power, taking place in case of the hegemon’s isolation, the chances of achieving economic ends through economic means diminish. Under these conditions, economic interests are secured with the influence based on power and not the economic means such as denying foreigners access to the isolated unipole’s market when access abroad is denied, or by subsidizing its industry at home when industry abroad is subsidized

(Art, 2004) – found sufficient by the supporters of isolationism to sustain economic interests, in case of emergence of unfair economic intercourse.

As mentioned earlier, the basis for the isolationists' claim is the opportunity of a unipole to take advantage from asymmetric interdependence it enjoys as non-military coercive lever over the economically connected countries. However, the supporters of isolationism ignore the fact that while transforming asymmetrical interdependence into military levers, the unipole risks becoming a threat to other nations which have to interact with it under unfavorable conditions for them. To tackle this threat, those nations might take two directions. First, the nations would try to reduce the extent of interdependence on the unipole that would diminish the possibility of using interdependence as a punishing instrument by the unipole. Second, the dangers coming from the unipole would enhance the balancing tendencies against it – the nations would attempt to weaken and balance the unipole to prevent any future pressure it may pose. Though, the structural realism identifies the power capabilities as the major motivator in balancing relations among the states, the theory also admits that while the states engage themselves into balancing each other, they are influenced by such factors as perceived intentions and possible threats coming from other countries. In turn, those perceptions are influenced by geography and the national interests of states. A state within a specific region would not identify a powerful state in another region as a threat if their interests are met due to the latter's disinterest in territorial expansion in the former's region. Consequently, according to the arguments of the structural realism, the unipole that already generates motivation for balancing for its power resources, would accelerate the balancing tendencies if becoming a real threat towards others states. As a result, a declining hegemon could apply asymmetric interdependence as a coercing instrument against other states for a limited period only.

While assessing the rationality of isolationism, it should be considered that not only the hegemon will find it hard to sustain its prosperity while implementing isolationism but will lose the benefits gained from the economic order functioning in its best interests. The economic order is a part of the world order maintained by the might of the hegemon. While isolating, the hegemon withdraws its military commitments previously supporting the hegemonic world order. As a result, the hegemonic order together with the open economic order, being a constituent part of the order, demolishes, hampering international cooperation in turn.

It is important for the hegemon to support both the international order and its integral part international economic order based on economic openness for two main reasons. First, a hegemon

benefits more than any other state from the international order it establishes and maintains. Second, because the rest of the states benefit from the hegemonic order, they become conformers of the order as well as the influence of the hegemon who maintains the order. Consequently, establishing and maintaining international order with the hegemon's military commitments serves the very hegemon's interests including the benefits gained from functioning of the international order as well as expansion of its influence over international relations that would ultimately sustain its economic interests in two ways. First, due to the conforming of the majority of states nurtured by the hegemonic order, dominance costs get significantly reduced (see the discussions in chapter one). Second, the influence generated by the maintenance of international order boosts the hegemon's bargaining power including over economic issues as well.

Thus, military power to sustain its prosperity is important for the hegemon in two ways: First, military commitments are needed to sustain its economic interests that would otherwise be deteriorated since who gets the best deals depend on the influence which is achieved through power. Consequently, isolationism is non-rational for the declining hegemon as it would damage its national interests by depriving of it the needed levers for sustaining prosperity and retaining influence over international relations.

According to the three circumstances described in this subsection, within the international order based on the balance of power characteristic to the anarchic system, isolationism is both non-feasible and non-rational strategy for the declining hegemon. For an isolated unipole, prospects for the provision of its own security and prosperity are extremely low. It all makes the unipole abandon this very strategy and regain its involvement in the international relations, thus the strategy is found non-feasible. Simultaneously, Isolationism is found non-rational due to the high costs and complications related to the compensation of the damaged national interests and restoration of the lost involvement in international relations. On the contrary, it is better for the hegemon to keep itself involved in the international relations and prevent any harmful events from arising, rather than take care of fixing their negative consequence later. Therefore, the isolationist strategy could not be considered as an optimal foreign policy strategy for a declining hegemon, as its implementation is unimaginable within the international order based on the balance of power that would replace the hegemonic order in case of its isolation.

3.2.2.2. Prospects of Isolationism under the Hegemonic System

The subsection discusses the prospects of isolationist strategy under the hegemonic system. This might seem irrelevant to the goals of this dissertation as, once the declining hegemon isolates, the hegemonic system comes to end. Therefore, it is impossible for the former isolated hegemon or the unipole to function within the hegemonic system. Despite this, the prospects of isolationism will be still discussed within the hegemonic system in this subsection to reveal the factors that exclusively within the hegemonic order make the successful implementation of isolationism possible. The main aim of this undertaking is to show that successful USA isolation in 1815-1885 was possible exactly under the hegemonic order and the same would not happen otherwise. Thus, the subsection refutes the case the supporters of isolationism rest on to prove isolationism's feasibility and possibility of its successful implementation.

Though, successful realization of the isolationism is unimaginable within the non-hegemonic system, according to the structural realism, the very strategy becomes feasible and even potentially successful if certain specific conditions are met described below. As discussed in the previous chapter, within the hegemonic system by creating public goods, such as stable security and economic order, a hegemon fulfills functions that are similar to the ones of a central government. As a result, the consequences of anarchic structure within the hegemonic system change and the self-help condition is mitigated. Hegemonic order, by maintenance of stable international system, formation of regimes that establishes repetitive cooperation and reduction of the defection threat, mitigates the obstacles for cooperation and allows peaceful cooperation to take place (on possibility of cooperation under anarchy see Oye, 1985; Jervis, 1978; Keohane, 1998). For these reasons, environment in a hegemonic system implies better prospects for an isolated great power that does not confront the interests of a hegemon, to retain its peaceful co-existence with the rest of the world and pursue its national interests successfully.

However, despite being the most important condition, benevolence of a hegemon towards an isolated great power is not an only prerequisite for successful implementation of the foreign policy strategy. According to Art (2004), additionally to a benevolent hegemony, success of an isolationistic foreign policy of a great power is affected by geopolitical conditions, such as: how distant a state is from menacing great powers and its potential allies, how resource-rich or resource-poor the state is, how much military power the state can extract from its society and how much natural protection its frontiers provide it. Art believes that success of the USA 1815-1885

isolationist strategy was the product of such geopolitical coincidence and British benevolent hegemony towards the US:

The geopolitical factors that most affected America's security, and ultimately its prosperity, were the nation's great distance from Europe, which was the only area of the world with sufficient military power to harm the United States; the benevolence or malevolence of British seapower toward the United States; and the ability of the United States to extract usable military power from its huge industrial base, and how rapidly it could do so if circumstances demanded it. (Art, 2004, p.178)

British benevolent hegemony towards the USA and presence of its navy in the Atlantic ocean that secured peace in the Southern Hemisphere would not be a sufficient precondition for the successful implementation of isolationist strategy by the USA without the coincidence of the above-mentioned geopolitical circumstances, although it definitely was a necessary condition and major determinant for the success. It is noteworthy that with the same geopolitical circumstances the USA efforts to implement isolationism before 1815 or after 1885 was unsuccessful. The failure of USA pre 1815 isolationist strategy is linked to the then-hegemon Britain's hostile stance towards the US, while post 1815 set-back is conditioned by the end of the British hegemony. Since 1880s the international environment changed as British hegemony declined, its maritime supremacy came under attack and security competition among the great powers of Eurasia intensified. For the reasons discussed above, the United States was not able to stay aside from the great power wars erupted from the tensions that followed the end of the British hegemony.

The example of the United States' implementation of the strategy of isolationism shows that its success depended on the benign hegemony of Britain and international order it has maintained. After the end of the British hegemony, the United States had to step in to ensure the favorable outcomes in the two world wars, after which it had to assume the role for establishment and maintenance of the new international order itself. Consequently, the isolationists are wrong to apply the case of successful USA 1815-1885 isolationism to justify their claim to feasibility of isolationist strategy. On the contrary, the USA experience of isolationism only confirms, not refutes the claims of non-feasibility of isolationist strategy within non-hegemonic order, maintained by structural realism.

Both the USA case and the arguments of structural realism indicate that the prospects for the isolationism's success could only be connected with the hegemonic order. This totally excludes the chances of feasibility of this very strategy for the hegemon. If the latter isolates, the hegemonic order demolishes, while within its sole alternative type of order established through the balance of

power, isolationism is non-feasible for great powers, including the unipole due to the three reasons discussed in this subsection that relate to the ensuring of security and prosperity by the isolated unipole.

According to the first reason, the former hegemon will find it difficult to cut its involvement in international relations due to the turbulence expected to arise if the hegemon isolates, especially during the painful transitional period of the balance of power replacing the collapsed hegemonic order. Intensive security competition with possible development into the great power war is anticipated to take place in this transitional period. In any case, possibilities of arising regional hegemon(s) or negative shifts in the balance of power towards the hegemon's interests increase rapidly that drives the hegemon to quit isolation and get re-involved in international affairs to provide a new favorable distribution of power for its national interests.

Another reason discussed in this subsection that predicts the failure of isolationism in case of a declining hegemon concerns the hegemon's elimination from international relations. Within the order attained through the balance of power, it is vitally important for the former hegemon to watch potential changes in the distribution of power within the international system. Like in the previous case, the consequences would be the negative changes in the distribution of power and jeopardized national interests of the hegemon. Moreover, isolationism within the non-hegemonic order is impossible to be realized by any great power due to their huge power capabilities being a threat to other nations under the anarchic system. For this reason, other nations would not allow the former hegemon to enjoy being isolated and attempt to weaken it to insure any future complications if the hegemon changes its foreign policy strategy again.

The third reason for identifying isolationism as a potentially failing strategy for a hegemon is about sustaining its economic needs. The isolationists' claim that an isolated former hegemon is capable of satisfying its prosperity through economic means without military commitments was refuted by the arguments of structural realism maintaining that economic interests are defended by the power-based influence in the anarchic international system.

Due to the three reasons described above, the unipole will ultimately have to abandon isolationism and return to regional or international balancing to secure its national interests making isolationism a non-feasible strategy. Additionally, isolationism is also a non-rational strategy as the hegemon is expected to find that the value of the resources it saved while being isolated is lower than the costs of regaining its diminished influence. Consequently, despite the implied possibilities of the

strategy to decrease costs and preserve its power resources, isolationism cannot be considered as an optimal foreign policy strategy for a declining hegemon.

3.3. Multilateralism

This subchapter develops an optimal foreign policy strategy for a declining hegemon called multilateralism. The name of the strategy originates from the fact that, despite not being limited by traditionally distinguished multilateralism entailing collective and cooperative actions for addressing the issues of common interest (Keohane, 1990), multilateral foreign policy, as an exclusive instrument of attaining the objectives of the strategy, is fundamentally important for its implementation.

Multilateralism is developed based on the optimal combination of the two variables, costs and involvement, of the analytical framework designed for the classification and assessment of the foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon. Multilateralist strategy, as evident by the analytical framework, implies low expenditures and high level of involvement, hence, providing a declining hegemon with a simultaneous possibility of decreasing costs and retaining involvement. Such kind of balance of costs and involvement is optimal for a declining hegemon in terms of securing its national interests necessitating both, power as well as influence. Diminishing costs is vital in terms of saving the power resources of a hegemon and constraining its decline. Simultaneously, if willing to exercise leadership in international relations, the power preserved through sustaining low expenditures would allow the hegemon to attain a high degree of involvement, indicating its impact on international relations. In turn, high involvement provides the hegemon with an opportunity to keep favorable world order for the sustenance of its national interests as well as capability to draw international support for its global agenda issues.

Simultaneous maintenance of power and involvement is a complicated endeavor for a declining hegemon, which, as noted in the second chapter, is related to a dilemma: on the one hand involvement implies high costs needed for maintaining a hegemonic order and influence over the international relations, on the other, preserving power requires reduction of costs. Accordingly, an optimal foreign policy strategy should be concerned with the consequences of reduced costs to the quality of involvement in order to avoid its decrease to a critical level in terms of securing national interests of a hegemon. Respectively, the hegemon should carefully select the means and occasions of cost reduction.

Theoretical strategy of multilateralism developed within the scope of this subchapter manages to keep tough balance with two mechanisms aimed at reducing costs. First, multilateralist strategy applies to threat categorization by the hegemon to reduce costs. The threat categorization involves revealing two types of threats: the first when the hegemon has to take action or the other not to. Since primary bases for the threat categorization is their level of significance towards the hegemon's national interests, the second or avoidance category involves relatively minor, non-direct threats to the national interests of a hegemon. Consequently, saving foreign policy costs through threat categorization helps avoid unnecessary overextension, conditioned by the permissive structure of international system. Thus, a hegemon will refrain from acting only in cases when its national interests and its involvement in international relations is not endangered.

On the other hand, multilateralist strategy applies to multilateralist foreign policy to reduce the hegemon's costs. Multilateralism as an implementation mechanism of the strategy achieves reduction of costs on the one hand by increasing the level of support for the sustenance of the hegemonic international order from the participant nations, on the other, by legitimizing the leadership of the hegemon. The latter, as discussed in the second chapter, achieves reduction of foreign policy costs by the hegemon through making attainment of its foreign policy objectives easier, or, alternatively, enables a hegemon to avoid the increase of its foreign policy expenditures by avoiding the complication of attainment of its foreign policy objectives, which would be anticipated in case of inflicting legitimacy. Therefore, since the type of overextension, conditioned by the unchecked power of a hegemon is addressed through threat categorization, multilateralistic foreign policy allows a hegemon to address the remaining two determinants of decline. Namely, multilateralistic foreign policy addresses the two causes of increased foreign policy expenditures deriving from (i) overextension, conditioned by the increasing costs of order maintenance and (ii) natural balancing tendencies, by addressing its fueling factor – diminishment of hegemon's legitimacy.

Unlike threat categorization, as discussed below, multilateralism impacts on hegemon's involvement in both positive and negative ways. On the one hand, multilateralism allows the hegemon to legitimize its leadership and order increasing its influence and respectively involvement in international relations. Simultaneously, through multilateralism, a declining hegemon manages to protect its order and address challenges better than it could have done independently. Thus, multilateralism is the best way for the declining hegemon to maintain its world order. Consequently, multilateralism has a positive impact on the degree of involvement of

the hegemon since as noted in the second chapter, hegemonic order serves as a structural mechanism for a hegemon to exercise its influence and involvement in international relations. However, at the same time, multilateralism harms the hegemon's involvement by further empowering the rising powers. Specifically, multilateralism implies maintaining international order and sustaining the hegemon's foreign policy agenda through cooperation with other states, especially with new power centers, that as it is discussed below, will result in expanding their influence while reducing that of the hegemon.

However, in this subchapter it has been established that multilateralist strategy is optimal for the declining hegemon, since all other available alternatives to the policies and implementation mechanisms within its scope would damage the hegemon's power as well as its legitimacy to a higher extent, leading to subsequent decline in influence and involvement in international relations.

Finally, within the scope of this subchapter, it has been revealed that multilateralism despite being an optimal foreign policy strategy for a declining hegemon is a transitional strategy between declining hegemonic system and post-hegemonic multipolar system time period. Multilateralist strategy offers the hegemon most optimal ways available to constrain decline making it an appealing strategy. Though it does not offer reversing of decline, making multilateralism a temporary, transitional strategy assisting the hegemon with retaining its status as long as possible, managing the decline and influencing the development of post-hegemonic world to take place in compliance to its interests.

Next two sections discuss the two major implementation mechanisms of multilateralism, threat categorization and multilateralism, as a foreign policy strategy mechanism. The last section reviews theoretical arguments for regarding multilateralism as optimal but still transitional strategy for a declining hegemon.

3.3.1. Threat Categorization

Through threat categorization, the hegemon decides whether to take action under specific conditions to secure its national interests. Thus, for the hegemon, threat categorization is a kind of way to avoid overextension conditioned with the permissive structure of international system.

Threat categorization involves revealing two types of threats: the first category covers the cases when the hegemon has to take an action, while the second one means the opposite. There are two

basic factors defining the rationale for threat categorization – (i) their importance in terms of securing the hegemon’s national interests and (ii) the costs for addressing them. The first category is supposed to contain the vital and highly important threats towards the hegemon’s interests, while the second one should be about harboring minor and indirect threats addressing costs of which would be higher than those of the incurred damages in case of hegemon’s inaction.

As for the indirect threats towards the hegemon, which could be addressed by a hegemon with relatively small costs, it is in hegemon’s best interests to address them multilaterally. Since the hegemon bears responsibility for maintaining international order, the challenged actors expect its action in addressing the international challenges, especially if they are not capable to address them independently, without hegemon’s assistance. Thus, taking actions would solidify legitimacy of the hegemon’s leadership. However, a declining hegemon in this case may engage itself into action if the costs and responsibility of that action is shared with others, and it would not be costly for the hegemon in terms of its resources or its legitimacy. As discussed in the next section, weakening of legitimacy should be avoided by the declining hegemon. Otherwise, according to the theoretical arguments presented in the second chapter, fierce opposition towards the hegemon’s leadership is anticipated, that will inevitably result in increasing its foreign policy costs.

Multilateral action allows both provision of reducing challenge addressing costs and action legitimacy. Multilateral action, as revealed in the coming section, on the one hand provides reduction in action costs through their sharing, while on the other hand it allows action legitimacy. The latter is achieved by multilateralism through putting challenge affected stakeholders into action while addressing those challenges, thus, facilitating opposition against the hegemon’s actions.

Threat categorization is necessary to avoid overextension caused by permissive structure of the hegemonic system. It allows sorting out the kind of threats, handling of which is crucial for securing a hegemon’s national interests. Consequently, a hegemon should keep itself distant from dealing with the less serious threats, especially if addressing them is costly and/or jeopardizes its legitimacy. However, the hegemon might find it difficult to classify threats into one or the other category based on their importance for its national interests. At its prime, the hegemon’s interests are broadly defined, since as discussed in the previous chapter, state interests expand along with its power. Consequently, threat categorization will not be easy in the beginning of hegemon’s decline, but it is undoubtedly needed, as opportunity costs of wasting a declining hegemon’s power

resources, along with accelerating loss of its relative power, would be their deficiency if a necessity for securing more important national interests arises.

Threats posed to hegemon's vital and highly important interests, falling into first, or the action category, are the ones that endanger (i) the hegemon's security and prosperity and (ii) status quo of the international system and the hegemonic order, being the means to secure the hegemon's national interests. Through maintaining the status quo, the hegemon retains the power distribution pattern within the system, extending its hegemonic rule. Simultaneously, maintaining the status quo is a key precondition to retaining hegemonic world order as well, since changes in the distribution of power and empowerment of hostile nations would jeopardize the hegemonic order. In turn, the hegemon maintains international order as it represents the structural mechanism of exercising its influence over international relations and securing its national interests including retaining the status quo within the system or providing security and prosperity for itself.

The first category includes vital and highly important threats to the hegemon's national interests, such as: (i) rise of a regional hegemon; (ii) formation of unfavorable economic order for the hegemon (beyond trade of natural resources and its investments) in the regions of concentration of hegemon's financial and economic relations; (iii) formation of unfavorable balance of power in the regions of natural resources being vital to hegemon's national interests; (iv) NBC proliferation; (v) terrorism; (vi) dissolution of world economic order; (vii) global ecologic disasters.

Emergence of a regional hegemon, as discussed in the previous sub-chapter, will pose an existential threat towards the hegemonic order and weaken the hegemon's influence over international relations as well as its ability to assure its national interests through the involvement in international relations. As revealed during the discussions of isolationism, the hegemon should not admit any war between the big states and intensive security competition – the two events potentially resulting in sharp change of distribution of power. Therefore, the hegemon should participate in regional balance of power in cooperation with regional allies in the form of peacetime military commitment, especially in so called unbalanced multipolar regions where regional hegemon may emerge if left unattended (Mearsheimer, 2001). The hegemon's military presence in such regions provides deterrence of unfriendly countries and maintenance of favorable conditions for sustaining its national interests.

The hegemon is supposed to maintain favorable conditions for securing its interests in the regions where its financial-economic relations are concentrated. As discussed in the next chapter, such

regions, in case of the current hegemon, the USA, coincide with the unbalanced multipolar regions of Europe and Asia-Pacific where the USA is militarily present. This coincidence is not accidental. Deriving from the arguments of neorealism about the factors hindering cooperation, discussed in the second chapter, the regions with flourishing economic cooperation and growth that can be attractive for trade and financial relationships should either match the location of a hegemon, or the one where the hegemon engages itself with forward presence to maintain the status quo (the region of the hegemon's location is found to be naturally such one). As discussed in the previous subchapter, such regions are usually characterized with prosperous economic cooperation and rise, conditioned by the so called deep peace due to the hegemon's military presence enabling nations to overcome anarchy-driven negative factors for cooperation and focus on economic development.

Since according to neorealism, deep peace cannot take place without the hegemon's security guarantees provided by its military presence, while negative factors for cooperation could not be eradicated without deep peace (for similar argument, see Art, 1993), the regions with flourishing economic cooperation and growth will necessarily match with the regions of the hegemon's military presence. Simultaneously, the regions with flourishing economic cooperation and growth are most attractive in terms of trade and investment. These regions are expected to witness the concentration of a hegemon's financial-economic relations, as the influence gained through the hegemon's military presence as well as the trade and investment capabilities made possible by its sound economy provide the hegemon with unique chance of exploiting the benefits of cooperation with such regions.

The hegemon's major goal should be to participate in shaping economic architecture in relation with the regions of concentration of its financial-economic relationships. Regional economic architecture provides regional economic order and regulates regional economic interactions. Therefore, involvement in activities of regional financial economic organizations or tight cooperation with them would allow the hegemon to keep regional economic order and its economic relations compatible with its own interests finally enabling it to take maximal advantage from financial-economic relations with the region.

Importance of putting the regional economic order and relations under its own interests increases in the case of a declining hegemon. Manipulation of economic order in the way to place itself into most advantaged position with the competitors would not just enable the hegemon to assure the maximal benefits of its financial-economic ties with the regions of its interest, but diminish the rising challengers' opportunities to exploit the benefits of regional cooperation and further enhance

their empowerment. A good example of forming a regional economic order by a hegemon is discussed in the next chapter when the Obama Administration encouraged the emergence of new Asia-Pacific organization called Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). As indicated in the next chapter, through forming TPP setting a free trade regime for the participant nations, the USA eyed to establish an economic order within its interests in the Asia-Pacific region (OPS, 2016a). It was made possible by requiring the participant states of meeting high standards including labor rights, environmental protection, copy rights etc. Meeting such high standards would lead rapidly developing regional nations, including China, to significantly losing their own comparative advantages in relation with the USA and put the latter in more favorable conditions.

As for the regions of concentration of vital natural resources for the hegemon, the latter should not allow domination of neither internal nor external hostile forces in such regions enabling them to take over the access of the hegemon to the region's natural resources. When it comes to as precious natural resources as energy resources are for the current world, gaining access to it is a vital national interests of any powerful state. Notwithstanding the capability of maintenance of balance of power by local states, it will not be stable due to the specific interests of external powers to such regions. Because of high risk of falling significant portion of resources key to the hegemon's national interests to the hostile hands, the hegemon should maintain an in-theatre presence in the regions of concentration of such resources providing the hegemon with guaranteed and unlimited access to vital resources to its national interests. Otherwise, the impediments with accessing to resources could get exploited by hostile forces as sabotage or undermining lever.

Provision of stability in the regions where important natural resources are concentrated, falls into the interests of not only the hegemon, but the whole world as well, since unlimited access to natural resources is equally important to the hegemon's allies, stability of world economy and international system in general. The latter, as discussed in the dissertation on multiple occasions, falls into the category of highly important national interests of a hegemon. Therefore, the hegemon finds it equally important to provide both its own and global access to natural resources to avoid world instability and economic crisis.

NBC proliferation also falls into the category of urgent attention by the hegemon for two main reasons. First, in case of NBC proliferation, the threat rises that such weapons will be acquired by the hostile states to the hegemon and its allies, as well as the non-state actors, such as terrorists. Consequently, action against proliferation is crucial for the hegemon, especially if so called 'rogue states' attempt to either produce or otherwise acquire the weapons. Moreover, as acquiring nuclear

weapons by the new states changes the status quo in terms of the power distribution, NBC proliferation and nuclear proliferation in particular, would jeopardize the system stability due to the security dilemma characteristic to the international relations. In this regard, nuclear non-proliferation falls not only into the hegemon's own security but the world stability as well.

The hegemon should also fight against terrorism, which, as it will be later discussed, represents the most feasible threat against its homeland security due to its power gap with the rest of the world. The hegemon is expected to be a target for terrorist organizations. There are two factors for this: ability to influence over large number of states and their fate increases opposition and even, hostility among some of them, most negatively affected, while futility of conventional assault onto the hegemon leaves only one option of retaliation in the form of a terrorist attack. Therefore, fight against terrorism is crucial for the homeland security of a hegemon.

Another threat that would tremendously harm the hegemon's interests is deterioration of open economic order. This would endanger the national interests of a hegemon in two ways. First, demolition of economic order, being an integral part of the hegemonic order, would deprive the hegemon of the means of promoting its economic interests. Second, as discussed in the second chapter, an open economic order together with international stability is the benefit of a hegemonic order that makes other states conform to the hegemonic leadership. Consequently, the demolition of the economic order established by the hegemon would result in the loss of both economic benefits generated by the order constructed in the interests of the hegemon as well as its means of influence over other states as well as conforming to the hegemon's leadership.

To maintain its own economic order, the hegemon should take care of preserving the status quo within the system in terms of distribution of power. Change in distribution of power within the system and strengthening of hostile states is the biggest threat against the hegemonic order, including the economic order. However, preserving the status quo and stability within the system is not adequate for the maintenance of economic order. For stability of economic order and hegemonic order in general, it is needed from other states of the system to conform to it, which cannot take place unless the order is perceived as legitimate and beneficial by the states. Accordingly, the economic order should be necessarily well institutionalized and operate on the basis of the mutual benefit. Consequently, the hegemon should provide support to those institutions, rules and settings which the hegemonic economic order is based on. Besides, to maintain the economic order, as discussed in the second chapter, the hegemon should play the role

of financial stimulus in case of emergence of any major world economic crisis (See Kindleberger, 1973 for further information regarding the hegemon as world financial-economic crisis manager).

As for the global ecological disasters, which in current world is represented by the threats posed by global warming, they are equally dangerous to both the hegemon and the rest of the states and it could not be dealt with by a single nation regardless its power. However, the hegemon is the sole nation who is positioned to lead and assure international collective effort to tackle the global challenges. Consequently, the hegemon's function in this case is to provide leadership for ensuring the cooperation of states and coordination of their efforts to prevent the global ecologic disasters.

Beyond the discussed events, as noted at the beginning of this section, the hegemon could act multilaterally only if the action costs are low and material and/or non-material benefits (e.g. strengthened legitimacy, reputation and soft power) compensate the spent expenses. Humanitarian intervention is one of these kinds of actions, which could be taken multilaterally by the hegemon under a coalition member status if due to the sharing of action costs by the coalition members, the endeavor do not prove too costly for the hegemon and legitimacy of its action is ensured. Under such circumstances, the hegemon should be even interested in taking an action, as it will have a positive impact on its reputation as a world order guarantor and its soft power.

Any other events fall into the second category of action avoidance. As noted earlier, this category includes type of events that are minor in terms of posing threat towards the national interests of the hegemon; also, events that pose an indirect threat to the hegemon's interests but the costs of actions for their prevention would prevail the costs of inaction. Such threats may not be vital or highly important in terms of the national interests of a hegemon.

An example of the second category threats is local conflicts that are not directly dangerous either to the hegemon's national interests or overall stability of the system and the status quo within it in terms of distribution of power. Also, the cases when the hegemon intervenes in a developing country with a low level of political culture to address the non-direct threats to its national security. Anticipated subsequent regime change there would bind the hegemon to the country to stay with a post-war peace-keeping mission. Not only war actions are costly but peace-keeping missions due to their duration drain the economy and combat forces of a hegemon (this is why George H. W. Bush restrained from removing Saddam Hussein from power after the 1990-1991 war against Iraq. Alternative decision would either result in a long-term commitment of the USA to rebuild peace in a war-ravaged country or a post-war chaos destabilizing the highly important region for

American as well as world stability, undermining the legitimacy of the USA as a hegemon). Therefore, the hegemon should be very careful with starting the costly wars, especially the ones with no clear “exit strategy” and apply force only in cases when its vital and highly important interests are endangered. Otherwise, opportunity cost of spending resources on issues of lesser concern would be their deficiency in case of the issues of serious concern.

To determine the **cases for war**, due to their high costs, are no less important for a declining hegemon than the categorization of international threats in general in order to define the ones that should be avoided by a hegemon. Not all of the challenges ascribed to the action category in this section necessitate military actions from a hegemon. Moreover, the range of actions for the above-described first category threats is wide and mostly does not require running into a war. As for some specific cases, like fighting against global warming or supporting an open economic order, waging a war is not even an effective or appropriate means to satisfy the hegemon’s interests. On the contrary, in case of maintaining open economic order, any pressure will push states towards closure, not openness or cooperation. According to Art, “insecurity pushes states away from openness and interdependence toward closure and autonomy. Economic openness flourishes, instead, when the international political environment is stable and states feel secure” (Art, 2004, p.148). Consequently, due to high costs of war, the declining hegemon should carefully sort out the cases of waging a war and apply force only when it is a necessary and single effective means of addressing the vitally important challenges.

The cases for war defined in this dissertation coincides with the ones defined by Art (2004), who earlier described the inevitable cases of war to secure the hegemon’s national interests. Art’s cases, that ultimately necessitate military action from a hegemon, could be divided into three categories: counterattack for attacks against it, preventive action against attacking it and defense of allies. Due to the hegemon’s relative power preponderance, terrorist attacks are more likely to occur than conventional ones on its territory. Fight against terrorism does not usually involve waging wars and implies to disrupt the planned attacks and to destroy the terrorist organizations. As Art states, some of those actions will require military strikes, but prevention will more often involve penetration of terrorist cells, careful intelligence, and patient police work. Counteractions against terrorism should imply waging war against another regime only in case when it is “willingly providing sanctuary to terrorists, the way that Afghanistan’s Taliban were, or against one that has been taken over by terrorists” (Art, 2004, p. 227). Therefore, military strike against a nation in order to dismantle terrorist networks is mandatory in specific cases only. Mostly the mission could

be completed through non-military means or targeted air strikes to the locations of the terrorist cells without formally declaring a war to a certain country.

Another case for waging a preventive war by a hegemon is when a hostile state appears close to, or on the verge of, acquiring NBC weapons, especially nuclear weapons, and when an NBC attack on a hegemon's territory or one of its allies "appears likely or imminent, or when the regime has been proven to have aided terrorists in acquiring NBC weapons, or when highly credible evidence suggests that it is likely to do so" (Art, 2004, p. 230). Art believes that other than such compelling circumstances, deterrence should be the major strategy against such states and preventive wars to depose such regimes should be avoided as highly dangerous.

The third clear-cut case for waging war is defense of allies. If the hegemon does not get involved into a war when its ally, whose security it had guaranteed under a collective or bilateral treaty arrangements, the credibility of the whole forward presence of a hegemon and a hegemon itself will be shaken. Subsequently, the hegemon will not only provoke further assaults on its other allies but lose both influence among the allies and all the benefits it had enjoyed before due to this very influence.

Beyond the described cases, the declining hegemon should avoid either getting involved or launching a full-scale war as it is not the optimal, most effective, or necessary means of securing its national interests. As noted above, only multilateral military actions could serve as an exception to this rule, exclusively if the legitimacy of a hegemon is not undermined, action costs are shared by a multilateral coalition and hegemon's share of burden does not drain its economic or military power capabilities.

Categorization of threats as well as identification of cases for waging war implied by the strategy of multilateralism will enable a declining hegemon to avoid wasting its power capabilities, conditioned by an unnecessary overextension, mostly conditioned by a permissive structure of the international system, and guide it to direct its limited resources towards vital and highly important challenges to its national interests.

3.3.2. Multilateralist Foreign Policy

Another direction of multilateralist strategy is multilateralism as a type of a foreign policy action or a strategy implementation mechanism. It involves reduction of foreign policy costs of a declining hegemon by sharing the overall burden with other states and ensuring conforming for

the hegemonic order and leadership through enhancing its legitimacy. Legitimacy, as discussed in the second chapter, assists the hegemon with saving foreign policy costs, on the one hand, through drawing support to its foreign policy agenda, on the other, through avoiding opposing that would make achieving foreign policy goals both harder and more expensive for the hegemon. Therefore, while, threat categorization is applied for preventing the type of an overextension, conditioned by a permissive structure of the system, multilateralistic foreign policy enables a hegemon to address the remaining causes of the hegemonic decline. Namely, through the cost sharing multilateralism addresses the type of overextension conditioned by the increasing costs of order maintenance while through retaining legitimacy, it addresses an aggravating factor of the balancing tendencies that in its turn, would result in increased foreign policy expenditures of a hegemon.

Multilateralism, as a strategy implementation mechanism, involves collective and/or coordinated actions while conducting foreign policy that enables both action cost sharing among the participant states and legitimacy of hegemon's action and its leadership. The latter, as it will be discussed below, is attained through integrating new power centers to the international architecture as well as involving the actors, having an interest in a particular case, in the decision making processes and consequent actions.

Maintenance of legitimacy, within the scope of the strategy of multilateralism, is considered to be an opportunity for a declining hegemon to save its foreign policy costs. However, maintenance of legitimacy is a common goal for any hegemon regardless their declining status. Otherwise, as discussed in the second chapter, hegemon's power resources would be inadequate to address ever-growing international opposing towards its leadership. Since, if being deprived of legitimacy, a hegemon is only able to realize its foreign policy objectives at the expense of draining its power capabilities, it would soon lose its power, influence and capability to sustain the international order. Therefore, preserving legitimacy takes even more serious place in the foreign policy agenda of a declining hegemon as a possibility of avoiding the rise of its foreign policy costs due to the complication of attaining the foreign policy goals and securing its national interests.

In order to maintain legitimacy a declining hegemon should significantly cut down unilateral actions in international relations and apply to multilateralism to sustain its foreign policy agenda. At its prime, hegemon usually enjoys excessive unilateralism created by a huge power gap between the hegemon and the rest of the states tempting it to act unchecked. Excessive unilateralism frustrates both allies and non-allies of a hegemon. Since it is impossible to balance hegemonic power by other states, their relative peace is assured only if the hegemon restrains itself and

remains faithful to the rules within the international order created by the hegemon itself. Counter actions, as discussed in the second chapter, cause decline in legitimacy and tendencies to balance a hegemon that would be depicted as soft balancing at hegemonic prime, however, in case of a declining hegemon, it might take a form of a hard balancing along with diminishing power gap.

Unlike unilateralism, multilateralism positively impacts on the legitimacy of a hegemon and conforming to its leadership. Multilateralism involves legitimacy of hegemonic actions and decisions through putting stakeholder actors into the decision-making process, keeping them loyal to the hegemonic order. Additionally, multilateralism provides international engagement and deepening of ties both with allies and non-allies of the hegemon, thus improves hegemon's international standing and goodwill towards it being an essential part to preserving legitimacy. Accordingly, preserving legitimacy is important in relation with foreign policy costs in two ways: first, legitimacy allows a hegemon to avoid rise of its foreign policy costs through averting opposition. Second, the hegemon finds it easier to draw international support to its own agenda through gained goodwill that makes saving/reduction of its foreign policy costs possible.

Besides allowing a hegemon to keep foreign policy costs low through expenditure sharing and legitimacy preservation, multilateralism is often an optimal way of conducting its foreign policy agenda as well. As noted earlier, unilateralism is an ill-favored form of leading a foreign policy for a declining hegemon due to its high costs and level of legitimacy damage it imposes. Moreover, unilateralism is often an inefficient way of achieving the goals of a declining hegemon. Shifts in distribution of power in international system conditioned by the hegemon's decline involves rise of new power centers that fiercely compete with the hegemon in terms of exercising influence. They will gain an increasing influence in international relations and concurrently to their rise, issues of their national interests will expand as well. Consequently, declining hegemon's foreign policy agenda implies increasing number of issues of mutual interest with the rising powers, addressing which necessitate the hegemon to cooperate with the latter. Accordingly, multilateralism is often the best means of realizing the hegemon's international agenda and exercising leadership.

Though multilateralism is an optimal and effective way of conducting foreign policy agenda for the declining hegemon, it is still not supposed to totally abandon unilateralism. As noted in the previous subchapter, hegemon, if necessary, has to act unilaterally and decisively to protect its national interests but should always remain willful to replace it with multilateralistic foreign policy when possible.

As for the implementation mechanisms of multilateralistic foreign policy, its number one objective of cost sharing is resolved through multilateralistic maintenance of international order. However, realization of this goal in the hegemonic system is quite complicated. Despite the fact that rising developing countries tend to demand increasing influence in decision-making processes of international affairs, it is extremely difficult for the hegemon to distribute the costs of order maintenance among them. This is caused by free riding problem characteristic for a hegemonic system. A hegemonic international system entails that a hegemon undertakes most of the responsibility for the maintenance of international order, which allows other states to benefit from the stable international environment created at a hegemon's expense and apply their efforts towards own development (see Kindleberger, 1973, 1983; Gilpin, 1981; Keohane, 1980, 1984).

Two occasions allow the existence of free riding within the hegemonic system and issues related with its uprooting. First, states are aware of the fact that the hegemon will provide the public goods for its private interests at its own expense, as disproportional costs of common goods are compensated by the deriving disproportionate benefit it enjoys. As discussed in the second chapter, the hegemon's investments in public goods serve its objectives, such as maintenance of the international system stability and preservation of status quo; assurance of conforming to the hegemonic order; gaining influence and designing structural mechanisms of its practical application in the form of international order and accompanying institutions and regimes; assurance of economic interests. As a result, other states of the system remain as free riders spending few resources to contribute to creating public goods. Free riding practices are further fueled by the fact that hegemonic public goods are either non-excludable or the hegemon reserves from using exclusion as a leverage as it will complicate maintenance of conforming towards the hegemonic order (as discussed in the second chapter, benefits gained from public goods created within the hegemonic order are a substantial source of conforming to the order).

Moreover, a kind of paradox characteristic to the hegemonic order makes it difficult for a hegemon to fight against free riding – since the hegemon's allies face no counter threats leading them to necessitate the hegemon's assistance, the latter's leverage to persuade them decreases (Mearsheimer, 2001, Walt, 1989; Ikenberry et al., 2009; Finnemore, 2009, Mastanduno, 1997). Considering this, it is reasonable to expect that a hegemon's allies as well as non-allies will tend to remain in the role of free riders as long as the international order is provided on the expense of a hegemon.

A declining hegemon will have to apply to measures to eradicate free riding, as contributions from its allies and rising powers to the international order would significantly save the hegemon's foreign policy costs. Otherwise, as discussed in the second chapter, hegemon's expenditures for the order maintenance will exceed the benefits gained from its functioning. However, the leverage of the hegemon for free riding eradication is limited by two factors – persuasion and incentivization.

Traditionally, influencing the second parties to undertake certain actions involves application of either positive or negative incentives. Although, considering the specificity of the occasion, it can be suggested that a hegemon can resort only to positive incentives for two reasons. First, a hegemon, as mentioned above, cannot restrict other states that have not contributed, to benefit from the stability maintained at a hegemon's expenses due to impossibility or non-favorability of such decision. In addition, a hegemon cannot set punishments for the states that inadequately contribute to international order since such penalty would invite alienation of big states, turn them into challengers of a hegemon's influence and its world order, and respectively lead them to incentives relating to formation of an alternative international order, which would accelerate the hegemon's existing decline and lead to the collapse of its order (see Ikenberry, 2011a, 2011b). For this reason, remedies left for a hegemon to provide support from big states within the system involve persuasion and positive incentives only.

Persuasion is the kind of mechanism that could be used for allies only. The hegemon, as discussed above, possesses soft levers over the actions of its allies in the absence of counter threats at its prime. However, it all changes during hegemonic decline, since in the subsequent process of redistribution of power systemic consequences to the behaviors of the states are altered. During the hegemon's decline, implying the rise of the new power centers, counter threats increase, putting the allies in the need of the hegemon's support. Therefore, to reverse the argument on the shortcomings of hegemon's levers to influence the behavior of its allies during its prime, the declining hegemon's influence on its allies increases due to the enhancement of the counter threats they are facing. At the same time, hegemon's capability to protect its allies diminishes during the decline. Thus, it falls into the interests of the hegemon's allies to speed up contributions to addressing the common challenges as well as to the maintenance of their regional orders, which protect them from counter-threats, including arising potential regional hegemons. Accordingly, no matter how paradoxical it may sound, the hegemon possesses more levers to impact its allies and diminish their free ride practices during its decline than at its prime.

There are two directions a declining hegemon needs to be supported by its allies with. First, support of the allies is necessary to address common challenges and share the burden of the costs and responsibilities of the respective action. Second, the allies have to make a growing contribution to regional balancing in their own regions for backing a larger hegemonic order.

To solidify ties with and among allies as well as respective regional balances during decline, it is advised for the hegemon to form a regional security organization (similar to NATO) that would institutionalize the security cooperation. Institutionalized regional organizations involve considerable benefits compared to the bilateral security agreements. Such organizations are rule-based, including the situations for taking an action. Accordingly they make more clearance to the expectations of both allies and rival states. In case of allies, clarified expectations provide reassurance and tranquility in relation to the dangers coming from hostile nations. As for rivaling states, clarified expectations provide better instruments of their deterrence since regional security organizations audibly declare red lines with their corresponding responses if crossed. Moreover, rivaling states will be aware of the fact that they are countering not just a single state, even if its security is guaranteed by a hegemon, but a strong coalition united on the basis of common national interests. Therefore, retaliatory actions are expected to be significantly more multilateral and organized than in case of non-existence of a regional security organization.

The major objective of a declining hegemon should be a gradual diminishment of its own contributions to regional balances and security architecture at the expense of its allies. Respectively, the hegemon may provide a periodic military assistance or cooperation to its allies to support them become capable of maintaining regional balances. With diminished contribution to regional balances, the declining hegemon would not only save expenditures but prepare the regions to handle local balances with their own powers that will be a reality in a long run alongside the hegemon's decline. In this respect, the formation of architecture for regional multilateral security cooperation and establishment of partnership traditions take a vital importance for a declining hegemon (similar arguments are presented by Art, 2004 regarding the significance of empowering regional security architecture). Otherwise, probability of demolishing regional balances increases alongside with the hegemonic decline, negatively affecting the stability of international system.

To obtain international support, apart from persuasion, a hegemon can also refer to the use of positive incentives. This means should be applied mostly with non-allies, as their persuasion chances are low. Unlike allies, persuasion is made less probable by the fact that non-allies are not

protected by the hegemon against specific threat putting hegemonic public goods more non-excludable in cases of the non-allies. Accordingly, the hegemon possesses less levers to persuade them. If rising non-allies agree to undertake a contribution to maintain the world order, they will spend significant amount of resources that would be saved in case of free riding and directed to their own development. Consequently, the hegemon would have to offer significant incentives to persuade non-allies into sharing the costs of order maintenance.

Incentives could be specific one-off deals between the hegemon and non-allied states in the form of mutually benefited actions. This form of incentivization of the non-allies would be optimal at the hegemon's prime, as before decline the hegemon needs their support in specific cases only. However, throughout the hegemon's decline, number of cases when a hegemon will be in the need of assistance of the non-allies increases as a declining hegemon will increasingly necessitate to share the burdens for the maintenance of world order as well as to cooperate with the rising powers to provide legitimacy of its actions and leadership. Moreover, along with the rise of new power centers, as noted earlier, their influence over the regions of their national interest will dramatically increase (e.g. regions of concentration their financial-economic relations and natural resources rich regions) as well as their impact on decision-making in international forums. Consequently, number of cases when a declining hegemon will have to cooperate with the rising powers for the realization of its foreign policy agenda, due to the overlap with the interests of the latter, will increase.

Under such circumstances deals between the hegemon and rising non-allied powers could not be confined to one-off agreements related to specific cases. On the one hand, the rising powers along with gradual increase in capability and changed distribution of power within the system, attempt to expand their relevant influence within the international order. On the other, in case of sharing commitments related to the maintenance of world order, the rising powers will try to promote their privileges as the stakeholders of the very system. This claim of the rising powers involves their growing role in international agenda formation and decision-making (for similar argument, see Ikenberry, 2011a, 2011b).

Meeting the demands of the rising powers and offering them significant privileges as incentives within the international system at the expense of hegemon's own privileges, get the rising powers empowered while create barriers to the hegemon's international agenda, leading to the decline of its involvement. In this respect, incentivization is a problematic means of cost reduction. Though it allows power resources to be saved, it also diminishes involvement indicating the hegemon's capability to secure its national interests in international relations. However, the declining

hegemon has to satisfy the needs of the rising powers, otherwise the latter would turn themselves into challengers to the hegemonic system, posing an existential threat to the order in two ways. First, as discussed in the second chapter, would cause balancing tendencies and increase costs for order maintenance and attainment of the foreign policy objectives. Consequently, the hegemon would find it increasingly difficult to preserve the order and secure its national interests.

Second, if newly empowered states fail to satisfy their interests and convert their increased power into corresponding influence within the existing hegemonic order, they might not only challenge the latter by rejecting its rules of game but form alternative regional and international orders. The same case took place in the modern world by the members of so called BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) when they established New Development Bank (also referred as BRICS Bank) as an alternative to one of the key hegemonic institutions, World Bank, that was resulted by the initial failure of both, World Bank and IMF, to reorganize their governance bodies in order to give bigger voice to rising developing countries (MBI Research, 2013).

Consequently, incentivization, apart from burden sharing, by giving bigger voice to rising powers within the international system, contributes to another goal of a declining hegemon - accommodation of rising powers in order to ensure their conformance to the hegemonic order. Thus, integration of rising powers into international architecture is the means to legitimize a hegemonic order. Adaptation of institutions within the framework of the international order, which at the end of the day had to be done anyway in order to accommodate the rising powers and save the system, in this case, could be used by a hegemon as a positive incentive in exchange for the support from the new power centers to provide international order collectively. As a result, the rising states of the system will become worthwhile stakeholders of the international system in exchange for the responsibility to protect it.

Respectively, multilateralistic foreign policy strategy provides constraining the hegemonic decline through cost reduction by sharing it with other states and legitimizing hegemonic order and leadership. Therefore, it addresses two out of the three determinants of hegemonic decline established in the second chapter: (i) overextension, conditioned by the rising costs of order maintenance and (ii) increase of the foreign policy expenditures as a consequence of the balancing tendencies against a hegemon, which as discussed earlier, is fueled by the diminishment of its legitimacy. Simultaneously, considering the limitations of unilateralism caused by the hegemon's decline, multilateralism remains as an optimal way of implementing its foreign policy agenda.

3.3.3. Multilateralism as a Transitional Strategy

Multilateralist strategy is the most optimal one for a declining hegemon as it is an efficient way of constraining its decline and dealing with the corresponding systemic consequences. However, it is still a temporary, transitional strategy in the condition of a concurrent decline of relative power of a hegemon and rise of multiple powerful nations, anticipating an emergence of multipolar system after the decline of the hegemonic one. Under such conditions, multilateralism is just a constraining means of hegemonic decline and not the stopping or reversing one. Although, the mechanisms of the strategy allow the reduction of the hegemon's costs and saving its power resources, both the hegemonic involvement in international relations and its relative power keep gradual diminishment. Decline in relative power continues as multilateralist strategy fails to notably affect the rise of new power centers though being the means of avoiding spending of the hegemon's power. The strategy contributes to the enhancement of hegemon's rise through making resources available for productive investments that increase the power capabilities of a hegemon. However, despite the fact that the hegemon's own growth might be exceeding the growth of any other single state in the system, degree of its rise will ultimately fail to match the collective rise of other power centers. Consequently, power gap between the hegemon and the rest of the world will diminish, resulting in the decline of the hegemon's involvement. Apart from diminishing relative power, as discussed above, multilateralist foreign policy also conditions the decline in the hegemon's involvement due to the strategy's contribution to the rise of the privileges of the new power centers within the international order.

Despite the fact that multilateralist strategy involves only delay of the decline and extension of hegemony, it still remains as the most optimal foreign policy strategy for a declining hegemon for three main reasons in case when the emergence of a multipolar system is anticipated as a result of its decline. First, reversing the decline would be possible if a hegemon through its foreign policy strategy, could not only contribute to its own enhancement, but constrain the rise of the multiple new power centers as well. However, systemic consequences of the decline in respective circumstances make such an endeavor non-feasible, since, there is not one, but multiple rising powers, challenging the leadership of a hegemon. Due to the fact that most of the major powers in the contemporary world possess nuclear weapons, it is irrational for a hegemon to attempt to weaken them through a conventional military confrontation as consequences of such action would be devastating not only for its rivals, but for the hegemon as well. This serves as a significant deterrence for a hegemon to wage a conventional war against its nuclear armed challenger, or even

more so, its nuclear armed challengers, to prevent their rise. Despite the fact, a hegemon, through the diverse levers available at its disposal, could prevent the rise of a single challenger without the use of force. However, hegemon's resources would not be adequate to obstruct the rise of the multiple power centers as well as to deal with the consequences of such action in the form of the aggravated alienation and opposing to its leadership. Consequently, under the circumstances, when as a result of the hegemonic decline multiple new power centers are emerged, a foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon is mostly directed against the drain of a its own power capabilities.

Second, if a declining hegemon continues pursuing excessive unilateralism, applies no burden-sharing mechanism and voluntarily rejects the rise of privileges of the new power centers, more dramatic decline of involvement is anticipated than in case of accommodating the interests of the latters. Such turn, as mentioned above, is, one the one hand, conditioned by the anticipated drain of hegemon's power capabilities while implementing its foreign policy agenda and securing its national interests due to the systemic consequences of hegemonic decline. On the other hand, consequent inflicting of hegemon's legitimacy, would further complicate attaining of its foreign policy objectives and lead to the aggravation of the balancing tendencies, posing an existential threat to the hegemonic order.

Third, multilateralism is an optimal transitional foreign policy strategy for a declining hegemon in two ways. First, through ensuring the balancing of rising regional powers, it allows smooth transition from hegemonic order into the one based on balance of power. Hence, post-hegemonic turbulence will be avoided that could create destabilization of the international system before introducing the balance of power order. Moreover, established balance of power during the hegemonic decline, will serve the former hegemon's interests in post-hegemonic system - if the strategy of multilateralism is implemented successfully, regional powers that could turn into potential regional or global hegemons are contained.

Another reason that makes multilateralist strategy optimal for transitional period is the possibility of a former hegemon to retain its absolute power while experiencing decline through avoiding unnecessary overextension. Respectively, retained power will allow the former hegemon to stay an important pole in multipolar world, being capable of securing its national interests and exercising its influence over international relations.

In conclusion, the strategy of multilateralism can be evaluated through long-term and short-term scopes. From a relatively short-term standpoint, the aim is to retain hegemony for the maximum

period of time. Although the overall goal of the strategy entails keeping distribution of power in favor of the former hegemon in the emerging multipolar world and retention of as much power as possible for a post-hegemonic world, where power becomes even more valued resource in order to secure the states' national interests.

Conclusion

This chapter has described and assessed the foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon developed on the basis of the analytical framework given in the second chapter. Since it has been established in the previous chapter that the pace of the hegemon's decline is affected by the amount of costs for foreign policy conditioned by three determinants, in the first subchapter negation of two expensive foreign policy strategies of *hegemony* and *declining hegemony* takes place. Subsequently, the remaining two subchapters analyze the two low-cost strategies of *isolationism* and *multilateralism* in order to reveal an optimal foreign policy strategy. The discussion has revealed that multilateralism represents the optimal foreign policy strategy for the declining hegemon that unlike isolationism, enables not only reduction of foreign policy costs but preservation of the hegemon's involvement that in turn, determines the hegemon's capability to secure its national interests.

Subsequently, before discussing the strategy of multilateralism, negation of isolationism takes place on the basis of its inability to preserve a high degree of involvement which plays a critical role in the hegemon's capability to maintain its security and prosperity. This very circumstance makes the isolationist strategy non-feasible, as in order to sustain its national interests, the hegemon will have to abandon the strategy and actively engage itself in international relations. Simultaneously, isolationism is a non-rational strategy as well since its operational costs and loss, as revealed in the description of the strategy, will exceed the costs of saved resources, while implementing the strategy.

Unlike isolationism, multilateralism provides addressing both, consequences of the decline and preservation of hegemon's attributes, revealing itself in high level of involvement. The mechanisms of the strategy are not only simply oriented on cost reduction, impacting the pace of the hegemon's decline, but preserving the hegemon's relative power and capabilities of practicing its influence. Accordingly, each separate means of preventing decline is evaluated based on two criteria of reducing foreign policy costs of the hegemon, and its influence on the hegemon's

involvement. Moreover, multilateralism applies to the mechanisms focused on not only costs reduction, but addressing the factors responsible for their rise.

Threat categorization and multilateralist foreign policy strategy are two key mechanisms of putting the strategy in practice. Threat categorization allows determination of either taking an action or not in case of the hegemon's national interests being under direct threat on the bases of its cost calculation and significance. This very mechanism involves avoidance of overextension conditioned by the permissive structure of international system. The multilateralist foreign policy involves multilateralist addressing of common challenges to allow maintenance of the order. The mechanism is oriented on reduction in the hegemon's foreign policy costs through sharing them with other states, and preserving the legitimacy of the hegemon. Legitimacy reduction increases opposition against the hegemonic order and leadership, making the conduction of the latter's foreign policy agenda difficult and costly. Consequently, multilateralism provides both addressing overextension conditioned by the ever-growing costs of order preservation and avoiding the legitimacy reduction, which is a moderating factor for fueling the balancing tendencies against the hegemon. Thus, multilateralist strategy implies addressing all factors determining the hegemonic decline as described in the second chapter.

The mechanisms of multilateralist strategy save costs with minimal damage against the degree of involvement. However, resulting from the systemic consequences associated with the case of hegemonic decline discussed within the scope of this dissertation (emergence of multipolar system along with the decline of the hegemonic system), the strategy only allows constraining and not complete cease of the hegemonic decline. The reason for this layout is the fact that the strategy only impacts the status of the hegemon's own power capabilities and affects less the rise of the new power centers. Consequently, even if the growth of the hegemon exceeds the growth of any separate major power, the total output of the alternative power centers will ultimately leave the hegemon's rise behind resulting in the latter's ultimate decline.

Thus, multilateralism is a temporary transitional strategy. Its short-term goal is to prevent the hegemon's decline and preserve its status for a long period of time. The ultimate long-term objective of this strategy is to get post-hegemonic system fit to its interests through managing decline-related processes and preserve most of its power, which becomes even more important for states in terms of securing their national interests in the multipolar system, due to its anarchy-conditioned consequences.

Though multilateralism is a transitional strategy, it still remains an optimal foreign policy strategy for a declining hegemon, since any other alternative would ultimately result in more serious damage against the degree of hegemon's involvement and accelerate the decline of the latter. Subsequently, within the scope of this dissertation, it has been revealed that the optimal foreign policy strategy for the declining hegemon is the one that allows cost reduction and sound involvement, saving its power resources in the face of emerging a multipolar system as well as the capabilities for exercising its influence.

CHAPTER 4. CASE STUDY: REVEALING THE COMPLIANCE BETWEEN MULTILATERALISM, THE OPTIMAL THEORETICAL FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY OF A DECLINING HEGEMON AND FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY OF THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

This chapter studies the foreign policy doctrine of the Obama Administration in terms of compatibility with the theoretical strategy of multilateralism developed in the dissertation, being found the optimal foreign policy strategy for the declining hegemon. Drawing an analogy between the two strategies, on the one hand, endorses the validity of the theoretical strategy of multilateralism by establishing the fact that the current hegemon has applied a similar strategy to it in terms of the foundations, objectives and implementation mechanisms. On the other hand, as a result of studying foreign policy strategy of the Obama Administration, it is possible to observe execution of the theoretical mechanisms that are suggested for the implementation of the strategy of multilateralism.

The chapter reveals that similarly to the strategy of multilateralism, foreign policy strategy of the Obama Administration is based on the changes in the distribution of power within the international system and addresses the started USA decline. To adapt with the changes, analogously to the theoretical strategy, the Obama Administration strategy is aiming at optimizing the USA foreign policy costs and maintaining the USA leadership through two major means – threat categorization and multilateralist foreign policy.

The chapter contains two subchapters. The first subchapter concerns with drawing an analogy between the foundations of the theoretical strategy of multilateralism and the foreign policy strategy of the Obama Administration. Within the scope of this subchapter determining factors for both strategies are compared as well as the introduced foreign policy adaptations to address those factors. In case of both strategies, primary determining factor is the changed distribution of power that defines the needs of expenditure optimization, which is also attained through the analogous types of means: avoidance of overextension, burden sharing and maintenance of the legitimacy of the hegemonic leadership. Moreover, the strategic goals, in case of both strategies, are achieved through same two mechanisms – threat categorization and multilateralism.

The second subchapter reviews mechanisms of threat categorization and multilateralism defined by the foreign policy strategy of the Obama Administration to reveal an analogy with the theoretical strategy of multilateralism. Similar to the theoretical strategy, threat categorization

serves to avoid overextension in the USA instance as well, while multilateralism involves the reduction of foreign policy costs by allocating them with other states and maintaining the legitimacy of the USA leadership and its order. The latter considers not only the attainment of conforming through cooperation but averting the damage to USA legitimacy done by alternative, unilateral actions.

Together with the general frameworks of threat categorization and multilateralism, within the scope of the second subchapter, an analogy between the actions needed for their successful implementation is revealed. Not only the declared foreign policy strategy of Obama Administration has been studied in terms of strategy implementation mechanisms but its politics too, reflecting related actions and decision-making of the Administration.

As a result of studying the foreign policy strategy of the Obama Administration and comparing it with the strategy of multilateralism, the current chapter reveals that both strategies are significantly identical. The analogy is practically identical between the declared foreign policy strategy of Obama Administration and the theoretical strategy. As for the analogy in terms of implemented policy, the actions and decisions of the administration do not fully cover all the cases for which the strategy provides instructions and rationale. For example, according to the strategy, the USA has to apply military action against the aggressor of its allies. However, since no attack has ever taken place against the USA allies under the Obama Administration, discussions regarding the compatibility with the strategy of multilateralism is possible on the bases of the declared strategy only. Accordingly, in case of the Obama Administration politics, compatibility with multilateralism has been revealed for the instances described in the strategy when the Administration had to take action.

4.1. Foundations of the Obama Administration Foreign Policy Strategy

The major purpose of the following subchapter is to juxtapose the foundations of the foreign policy doctrine of the Obama Administration with the theoretical strategy of multilateralism discussed in the previous chapter. The subchapter starts with the review of the changes of the international politics that have set the stage for modification and adjustment of the USA foreign policy strategy. The subchapter reveals that likewise the theoretical strategy of multilateralism, the changes in international relations that have underlain the Obama foreign policy strategy are the redistribution of power in the international system and consequent limitation of USA unilateralism that binds the latter in partnership with other countries to sustain its leadership and handle the world challenges.

After revealing the analogy between the foundational factors, the subchapter reviews the mechanisms designed to facilitate the adaptation of the USA foreign policy strategy with the changed international environment. According to the review, the Obama Administration's foreign policy adaptations are identical to those of the theoretical strategy of multilateralism. Both strategies maintain that in order to sustain national interests and leadership in the changed international environment, the hegemon has to reduce foreign policy costs and launch multilateral leadership, likewise achieved through threat categorization and multilateralism.

The Obama Administration names the current and recent changes in international relations that require new type of USA leadership to be the reason for the updated foreign policy strategy presented in its National Security Strategy (NSS): "Time and again in our Nation's history, Americans have risen to meet – and to shape – moments of transition. This must be one of those moments. We live in a time of sweeping change" (Obama, 2010 [preface]). According to the Strategy, the United States must build a stronger foundation for its leadership in order to "shape the change instead of being shaped by it". For this purpose, the United States must renew its leadership in the world "for the world has changed at an extraordinary pace, and the United States must adapt to advance [its] interests and sustain [its] leadership" (Obama, 2010 [preface]). Thus, the foundation of the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy is the changes in international relations that lead the USA to exploit the ways of adjusting itself to the changed international environment to sustain its national interests.

According to the Obama Administration, the need for restructuring the USA foreign policy strategy, or as the Administration defines it, 'new type of USA leadership', arose out of the major changes in international affairs, implying the redistribution of power in the international system and emergence of new power centers:

More actors exert power and influence. Europe is now more united, free, and at peace than ever before. The European Union has deepened its integration. Russia has reemerged in the international arena as a strong voice. China and India – the world's two most populous nations – are becoming more engaged globally. (Obama, 2010, p.8)

Consequently to the rise of new powers, the NSS 2015 continues description of the foundational changes in international relations for the renewed foreign policy strategy of the USA:

power among states is more dynamic. The increasing use of the G-20 on global economic matters reflects an evolution in economic power, as does the rise of Asia, Latin America, and Africa. As the balance of economic power changes, so do expectations about influence over international affairs. (Obama, 2015, p.4)

Therefore, the first change in world politics implies shifts in the distribution of power, giving rise to the new power centers that will compete with the USA for the influence in international relations.

Such a shift in the international power distribution is visible through examining the twenty-first century dynamics in the capabilities of the major powers. Figures 3-1, 3-2, 3-3, 3-4 illustrate the high-speed diminishment of the current hegemon's economic power gap with the multiple rising powers, especially, China as well as the reduction of the USA share of world economic output (see Appendix 1, 2, 3, 4). Figure 3-5 illustrates the dynamics of military power growth in the current century (see Appendix 5). In case of military power the USA gap remains unattainable to be balanced in the foreseeable future, however trend for its diminishment is visible as well.

According to the Obama Administration, the other change in international relations that has led to adapting the USA foreign policy strategy is linked to the nature of contemporary challenges. The complicated challenges of the 21st century cannot be met without coordinated and collective actions (Obama, 2010, 2015; Office of the Press Secretary (OPS), 2010b, 2016b). However, although in some specific cases such as challenges to the international economy or global warming, it is the nature of challenges that conditions the necessity of collective actions for their addressing, in other cases, challenges of our times, e.g. terrorism and NBC proliferation, in extreme cases, could be addressed by a single powerful state. However, as they are common for many states and addressing them by a single state would result in drain of its capabilities, Obama Administration believed, that they should have been addressed collectively. The Administration believed that collective responses to the common challenges were both, effective in terms of addressing the challenges, and fair as the action costs would be shared by all participants and would not be borne solely by the USA (Obama, 2010, 2015; OPS 2014a).

Thus, changes in the distribution of power and need for global cooperation for addressing the contemporary challenges, were the reasons that according to the Obama Administration has led to updating USA foreign policy strategy. Though the Administration attempted to regard these two phenomena of the contemporary international relations separately, we argue, that the latter has significantly conditioned the former. The change in distribution of power, involving the rise of the new power centers and decline of the USA's relative power, limits the USA unilateralism and requires of the acting hegemon to cooperate with other states for common addressing of the world issues. There are two aspects for this situation. The first one is limited USA freedom of action in world affairs due to the rise of new powers. As admitted by president Obama himself,

rising power centers develop ascending influence on certain world regions and issues: “from Brazil to India, rising middle classes compete with [the United States], and governments seek a greater say in global forums” (OPS, 2014a, para.7). Concurrently to this process, the interests of the USA and the rising powers will ultimately overlap acutely in the future, leading to the limited freedom of action of the current hegemon and jeopardizing its unilateralist prospects. While pursuing its foreign policy agenda, the USA will have to gain support from powerful world actors that finally means for the acting hegemon to take into account other states’ interests.

The other reason for limited USA freedom of action is conditioned by concerns for maintaining its legitimacy, which is challenged by the new power centers that emerge due to the change in the distribution of power. As discussed in the previous chapter, the excessive USA unilateralism including disregard of the rules and limits within its own order would diminish the degree of its legitimacy and conforming to its leadership. This situation gets more dangerous for the USA under the conditions of declining power preponderance as rising powers become increasingly capable of challenging its power. Consequently, while addressing the international challenges the USA has to cooperate with other states and consider their interests in order to sustain legitimacy for its own actions.

Though the Obama Administration defined the necessity of common effort for handling global issues due to their complicated nature, it is mostly conditioned by the changes in distribution of power. Presenting the need for addressing modern challenges multilaterally as a separate event in international relations by the Obama Administration is presumably conditioned by the effort to avoid declinist rhetoric. Specifically, drawing parallels between the changes would reveal that USA leadership in current international affairs is limited due to its decline. Such admission would be both unpopular for domestic audience and damaging for the USA global standing. Thus, the fundamental change, that has conditioned the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy, is the change in distribution of power in the international system that implies the rise of new power centers concurrently with declining USA relative power. The USA decline in its turn, implies limitations to its leadership.

The Obama foreign policy strategy realizes both reduction of foreign policy costs and “new type of leadership” in two ways likewise the theoretical strategy of multilateralism: through categorizing threats and multilateralistic foreign policy that will be discussed in details in the next subchapter. The above-mentioned mechanisms collectively provide reduction in USA foreign policy costs through avoiding overextension, sharing the costs for order maintenance and

sustaining the legitimacy of the USA leadership. Simultaneously, multilateralism in the Obama Administration strategy is a new style of USA leadership through which it addresses systemic consequences caused by the changes in international relations. Accordingly, the Obama Administration strategy like the theoretical strategy of multilateralism is directed towards constraining the decline and addressing its consequences.

Though the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy is oriented on reducing foreign policy costs through addressing the determinants of hegemonic decline, it never referred to the USA decline as the reason for the change in foreign policy strategy. Instead of decline, the Obama Administration referred to the changes in power distribution and rise of new power centers that involves the USA decline in relative power due to zero-sum nature of power and anarchic structure of the international system. Thus, the application of the term 'decline' by the Administration was avoided that would ultimately irritate the domestic audience and send negative signals throughout the world, affecting its global standing.

Instead of using the term 'decline', the Obama Administration named political realism, requirements for efficiency and fairness, and need for providing USA legitimacy to solidify its global standing as the rational for its foreign policy strategy. Political realism argued by Obama required of the USA admitting that even being the most powerful state, it cannot solve world challenges alone: "we can't, at any given moment, relieve all the world's misery. ... We have to choose where we can make a real impact" (Obama, 2016, para. 46). This explains categorizing threats in the Administration's foreign policy strategy that, similar to the theoretical strategy of multilateralism, implies selective actions against threats and challenges. Therefore, categorizing threats enabled the Obama Administration to avoid unnecessary costs and let the USA save its power resources. According to the NSS 2015, despite the fact that the USA leads from a position of strength,

this does not mean we can or should attempt to dictate the trajectory of all unfolding events around the world. As powerful as we are and will remain, our resources and influence are not infinite. ... [W]e have to make hard choices among many competing priorities, and we must always resist the over-reach. (Obama, 2015 [preface])

Thus, categorization of threats explained by political realism, implied by the Obama Administration's foreign policy strategy, aimed to reduce USA foreign policy costs and save its power resources. Otherwise, opportunity cost for spending power resources would be their deficiency when the vital USA interests are threatened.

On the other hand, through the requirements of fairness and efficiency the Obama Administration substantiated its multilateralist foreign policy (Obama, 2010, 2015; OPS, 2009a, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c 2006b, 2016c). According to the Administration, multilateralism is effective, one the one hand, due to the nature of contemporary challenges, demanding collective actions of the states for their resolution. On the other hand, multilateralism is effective due to the multiple actors' influence on the USA foreign policy agenda issues – in many cases, the outcomes of the USA international activism depend on its ability to attain support of the influential states related to the specific issues of its interest. (Obama 2010, 2015; OPS, 2010c, 2016b). Moreover, According to the Obama Administration, multilateralism is fair since not only benefits from removing common threats are shared but the related costs as well (Obama 2010, 2015; OPS 2009a, 2010a, 2014a, 2016a).

The Obama Administration foreign policy strategy regarded the multilateralist foreign policy optimal not only for being efficient and fair but for providing legitimacy as well. As mentioned earlier, under the conditions of rising power centers, the USA unilateralism is limited in the contemporary world and finally leads to diminishing the degree of conforming towards its leadership. As the former president explained during his 2009 speech to the UN General Assembly, the reason many around the world had come to view America with skepticism and distrust was partly

due to misperceptions and misinformation about my country. Part of this was due to opposition to specific policies, and a belief that on certain critical issues, America has acted unilaterally, without regard for the interests of others. And this has fed an almost reflexive anti-Americanism, which too often has served as an excuse for collective inaction. (OPS, 2009a, para.3)

As described in the second chapter, the need for legitimacy for the hegemon to sustain its leadership is conditioned by limited resources. In absence of conforming towards its leadership, the hegemon would not be able to retain the status for a long time as it would only be possible through coercion of other states, resulting in the drain of its power capabilities. In this sense, diminishing legitimacy is more dangerous for the declining hegemon, experiencing the reduction of its relative power. Alternatively, maintaining legitimacy provides conforming of other nations to both its influence and order, making it easier for the hegemon to attain its foreign policy goals and preventing the rise of costs for securing its national interests conditioned by enhanced international opposing.

The importance of maintaining legitimacy is recognized by the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy which considers building goodwill among other nations as “invaluable to sustaining

American leadership” (Obama, 2010, p.12). Obama believed that “without building international support and legitimacy for our action ... we face terrorist propaganda and international suspicion, we erode legitimacy with our partners and our people” (OPS, 2014a, para.28). Consequently, according to the Obama Administration, the new systemic consequences make multilateralism the most optimal form of exercising the USA leadership in order to provide conforming to its influence and legitimize its order.

As revealed in this subchapter, the Obama Administration never used the term ‘decline’ while describing the determining factors for its foreign policy strategy or the objectives of its implementation mechanisms. Nevertheless, the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy is directed to constraining decline. It is evident in two ways. First, though the Obama Administration never mentioned the USA decline among the factors for changes in its foreign policy strategy, in this context, it boldly referred to the changes in distribution of power and rise of new power centers that is essentially identical – rise of new power centers could not take place without the USA decline due to the zero-sum nature of power. Consequently, the USA decline has been a determining factor of the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy.

Another confirmation of the USA decline being indeed the factor of the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy is the objectives of its implementation mechanisms. As discussed above, the Obama Administration named the rational for its foreign policy strategy mechanisms to be avoidance of foreign policy overextension, and cooperation with other nations to handle the global challenges, share the related costs and retain its legitimacy. In this sense, the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy refers to all the means of constraining decline and maintaining a status of a hegemon described in the second and third chapters of this dissertation, confirming that the Administration has been oriented on achieving these very goals.

Within this subchapter, through revealing USA decline being the determining factor of the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy, compliance of its foundations with the theoretical strategy of multilateralism has established. The next subchapter establishes the compliance of the two strategies in terms of their implementation mechanisms, categorization of threats and multilateralist foreign policy.

4.2. Implementation Mechanisms of the Obama Administration Foreign Policy Strategy

Beyond common foundations, an analogy between the theoretical strategy of multilateralism and the foreign policy strategy of the Obama Administration reveals itself in terms of the

implementation mechanisms as well. Specifically, similar to the theoretical strategy, threat categorization and multilateralism, the implementation mechanisms of the Administration's foreign policy strategy, provide avoidance of the USA overextension, reduction of foreign policy costs and maintenance of the legitimacy of USA leadership and its order. Simultaneously, the mechanisms of implementing both strategies offer analogous actions to provide these results.

In this subchapter the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy is described and evaluated to reveal its compatibility with the theoretical strategy of multilateralism in terms of implementation mechanisms, threat categorization and multilateralism. Therefore, the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy is analyzed in terms of both declared goals and objectives as well as the implemented actions.

To illustrate an analogy, the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy is described in accordance with the structure of the multilateralist strategy. First, overextension avoidance opportunities through threat categorization are discussed and revealed categories of threats are compared. Then, the compatibility of multilateralist foreign policy goals and implementation mechanisms are discussed in relation to the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy and multilateralist strategy. In case of both threat categorization and multilateralism, next sections reveal that the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy is analogous to that of multilateralist strategy.

4.2.1. Threat Categorization as an Implementation Mechanism of the Obama Administration Foreign Policy Strategy

This section discusses compatibility of threat categorization of the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy with the multilateralist foreign policy strategy. Within the scope of the section an analogy is drawn in terms of the goals of threat categorization, cases of inevitable action and means to secure the hegemon's interests in those cases, and the rationale of use of force. Under the section, compatibility with the theoretical strategy of multilateralism is illustrated in terms of both the declared foreign policy strategy and subsequently conducted policy.

Similar to the theoretical strategy of multilateralism, the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy applies to categorization of foreign policy threats to optimize expenditures. Threat categorization defines the cases when the USA should either take an action or not in order to avoid overextension. As a result two categories of threats are defined: one, when the USA will have to act and the other when it will not.

According to the Obama Administration, the USA is supposed to categorize the threats the global events and international relations pose based on two factors. First, putting the threats into either the first or the second category should be defined by the degree of the threat in relation to the USA national interests: “our resources will never be limitless. Policy tradeoffs and hard choices will need to be made. In such instances, we will prioritize efforts that address the top strategic risks to our interests” (Obama, 2015). Thus, sensitive threats to the USA national interests fall into the first category, while the other contains relatively minor issues. In case of the latter as discussed below, the Obama Administration considers action only collectively, if the USA portion of the action costs are limited and responsibilities shared. Another factor that defines the decision when to take an action is connected with costs. These costs involve not only the actual costs related to the action, but the damage to the USA legitimacy, indirectly conditioning the final increase of expenditures as losing legitimacy makes it difficult for the hegemon to secure its national interests in international relations.

Accompanying costs should always be taken into consideration when it comes to decision for taking an action but it becomes vital if action implies the use of military power. According to NSS 2010, “[w]hile the use of force is sometimes necessary, we will exhaust other options before war whenever we can, and carefully weigh the costs and risks of action against the costs and risks of inaction” (p.22). Subsequently, decision on military action should be made in cases when the costs of action are not higher than that of inactivity. Otherwise, the USA could apply to (i) non-military less costly means; (ii) restrain itself from action if threats pose no direct threat to its national interests; or (iii) only in extreme cases, use force through multilateral, collective actions if the related costs and responsibilities are shared by the members of the coalition:

when issues of global concern do not pose a direct threat to the United States, when such issues are at stake – when crises arise that stir our conscience or push the world in a more dangerous direction but do not directly threaten us – then the threshold for military action must be higher. In such circumstances, we should not go it alone. Instead, we must mobilize allies and partners to take collective action. We have to broaden our tools to include diplomacy and development; sanctions and isolation; appeals to international law; and, if just, necessary and effective, multilateral military action. (OPS, 2014a, para.18)

Therefore, according to Obama, when no national interest is directly challenged the USA could apply to military action if the costs are reasonable: “If it is possible to do good at a bearable cost, to save lives, we will do it” (Obama, 2016, para.58). As Obama notes in his final State of the Union Address, leadership does not mean to take over and rebuild every country that falls into crisis: “[t]hat’s not leadership; that’s a recipe for quagmire, spilling American blood and treasure that ultimately will weaken us” (OPS, 2016a, para.49). Thus, if action costs are high, president

Obama does not believe that the USA should put at risk American soldiers or American welfare in order to prevent crises like humanitarian disasters, unless they pose a direct security threat to the United States.

Consequently, according to the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy, the first, or the action category will contain vital and highly important threats to the USA national security. Additionally, the USA could take an action in case of minor threats if related costs are relatively low. In such cases, threats must be addressed collectively, which ensures both, sharing costs as well as the responsibilities, providing legitimacy of the action.

The Obama Administration puts relatively minor and indirect threats to the USA national interests into the second, or inactivity category. This category also contains the cases when the USA action costs could exceed the ones of inactivity. Thus, this category covers the cases when the USA action is either unnecessary to sustain its national interests and/or acting would harm the USA national interests due to the accompanying high costs and damages to its legitimacy.

The rationale of threat categorization by the Obama Administration is identical to the theoretical strategy formed within the scope of this dissertation: in both cases putting threats into either category depends on two factors – importance of threats to the hegemon’s national interests and related costs of action.

Beyond the categories of action and inactivity, the USA national interests defined by the Obama Administration is also identical to the theoretical strategy of multilateralism. Subsequently, the two strategies similarly define the key threats to national security, when the USA has to take an action. The Obama Administration strategy defines the USA national interests as security of the USA, its citizens, and allies; a strong, innovative, and growing USA economy in an open international economic system; and a rules-based international order advanced by USA leadership (Obama, 2010, 2015). Thus, the foreign policy doctrine of the Obama Administration defines the USA national interests same as formulated by the multilateralist strategy that major national interests of the hegemon is to protect its security, prosperity and hegemonic international order.

Moreover, due to long tradition of isolationism, the Obama Administration is attempting to highlight the importance of maintenance of international order as top USA national interest. According to NSS 2015, the USA responsibilities for underwriting international security “serves our interests, upholds our commitments to allies and partners, and addresses threats that are truly global” (p. 7). President Obama believes that isolationism as a foreign policy strategy in the

modern world is non-feasible. To provide its security and prosperity, the USA must be involved in international relations:

It is absolutely true that in the 21st century American isolationism is not an option. We don't have a choice to ignore what happens beyond our borders. If nuclear materials are not secure, that poses a danger to American cities. As the Syrian civil war spills across borders, the capacity of battle-hardened extremist groups to come after us only increases. Regional aggression that goes unchecked – whether in southern Ukraine or the South China Sea, or anywhere else in the world – will ultimately impact our allies and could draw in our military. We can't ignore what happens beyond our boundaries. (OPS, 2014a, para.11)

Thus, similar to multilateralist strategy, the Obama Administration foreign policy also dissociates itself with isolationism and underlines importance of involvement in international relations and maintenance of the international order suited to its national interests.

Not only the definition of national interests within the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy is identical to the theoretical strategy of multilateralism, but considerable similarity could be found regarding potentially dangerous threats to the national interests. Below, the cases of USA inevitable action are given considered by both the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy, analogously to the theoretical strategy of multilateralism.

Rise of a regional hegemon – the Obama Administration has continued applying traditional USA policy of forward presence and reassurance of partners in the unbalanced multipolar regions implying the threat of regional hegemon's emergence. Simultaneously, as predicted by the theoretical strategy of multilateralism, the unbalanced multipolar regions with USA forward presence match **the ones of concentration of USA financial economic relations – Europe and Asia-pacific**. In these regions, the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy is directed to preserving favorable distribution of power and rules of game to protect the USA economic interests. The description of the Obama Administration policy towards Europe and Asia-pacific with revealing its compatibility with the theoretical strategy of multilateralism is given as a separate subsection at the end of this section due to its diversity and importance.

Protection of the USA homeland security, due to its huge relative power preponderance, almost excludes any conventional attack and implies avoidance of either terrorist or NBC assaults. Consequently, protection of the USA homeland includes **fight against terrorism and NBC non-proliferation, especially nuclear non-proliferation**. The Obama Administration foreign policy strategy directed to protecting the USA homeland from either terrorist or NBC attacks is given in

coming section while discussing the Administration's attitude towards the cases of the use of force. In the scope of the subsection, it is revealed that similar to the theoretical strategy multilateralism, the Obama Administration demonstrates readiness to retaliate including unilaterally if both of the threats are ever presented to the USA homeland security.

Simultaneously, similar to the theoretical strategy of multilateralism, the Obama Administration finds NBC non-proliferation dangerous not only for the USA or its allies' homeland security. Obtaining such weapons by either terrorists or rogue nations also pose threat to the regions of the USA special interests in terms of emerging unfavorable distribution of power or instability. Nuclear proliferation also comes into clash with the USA interests through threatening the world order and weakening of NPT (Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons) with further intensifying proliferation. Therefore, the Obama Administration embracing America's unique responsibility to promote international security, has been committed to support the sustainable international order by strengthening the NPT regime (Obama, 2010).

Attack on the ally or protecting it from assault, according to the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy, also represents the case when the USA will definitely act, including, militarily and if necessary, unilaterally. The Administration's attitude and policy regarding attacks on allies is given in the next section while describing its policy of applying military power.

Maintenance of open economic order – readiness to support open economic order by the Obama Administration is confirmed both at the level of declarations and specific actions of the Administration. According to NSS 2010, “[t]he foundation of American leadership must be a prosperous American economy. And a growing and open global economy serves as a source of opportunity for the American people and a source of strength for the United States” (Obama, 2010, p.28). According to the Obama Administration, American leadership is central to strengthening global finance and economy. Hence, the Administration was committed to reinforce the core architecture of the international financial and economic system through the G20, which supported by the Administration has evolved as the world's major economic forum. The Obama Administration managed to address the world financial crisis started in 2008 due to providing cooperative and coordinated actions of the participant countries within G20 summit under the USA leadership. Within G20 development and implementation of recommendations regarding the world financial stability (Financial Stability Board (FSB), 2014, 2017) was also done under the Obama leadership that has strengthened the resilience of the global financial system.

Averting global environmental disasters, implying **confronting climate change** in the contemporary world – the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy pays a significant attention to fight against climate change both at the level of declarations and specific actions. The first national security strategy of the Administration names the importance of fight against climate change 23 times and the second one being relatively smaller document 14 times. According to NSS 2010,

The danger from climate change is real, urgent, and severe. The change wrought by a warming planet will lead to new conflicts over refugees and resources; new suffering from drought and famine; catastrophic natural disasters; and the degradation of land across the globe. The United States will therefore confront climate change ... we will seek to implement and build on the Copenhagen Accord, and ensure a response to climate change that draws upon decisive action by all nations. (NSS, 2010, p. 47)

In accordance with the goal included in the national security document, a large scale multilateralist cooperation against climate change was an important part of the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy. Due to the Administration's efforts, the Paris Agreement has been reached within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in December 2015. The Agreement was negotiated by the representatives of 196 states and by the end of Obama Presidency, was signed by 194 states. The Agreement is signed by 195 states and ratified by 171 states as of November 2017 (United Nations, n.d.). The Paris Agreement, considered as a legacy of the Obama Administration, is the most representative multilateral binding agreement against climate change ever reached.

As for the USA strategy for sustaining its national interests towards the **regions of vitally important natural resources**, compatibility between the Obama Administration and the theoretical strategy of multilateralism is vague but not contradictory. Traditionally, such regions for the USA represent the Middle East and Persian Gulf that has been an energy provision source for both the USA and its allies.

According to the theoretical strategy of multilateralism, the hegemon should secure national interests and favorable distribution of power in the regions rich in significant natural resources. Identification of the Obama Administration's compatibility with multilateralism in relation with the Middle East is complicated by two events. First, since 2014 the USA energy dependence on imported oil dropped, especially that of Persian Gulf countries' due to increased homeland production of oil under the Obama presidency. Only 25% of the USA petroleum consumption was imported while 75% of the total consumption was American petroleum by 2016. Moreover,

only 18 percent of imported oil came from the Persian Gulf countries being only 4.5% of total USA consumption of petroleum that year (US Imports by Country of Origin, n.d.).

Consequently, it's controversial to argue that the Middle East could be considered as the region of USA special interest for its richness in natural resources. Therefore, the driving forces behind the Obama Administration's policy towards the region is unreasonable to be discussed in this respect as well. Traditionally, the USA policy towards this region was not always motivated by natural resources only but with multiple factors instead, especially under the Obama Administration, that will be discussed below.

It is intelligible to note the Administration's decision to deviate the traditional USA policy of conserving homeland energy resources at the expense of the imported ones. No rationale for this action is ever depicted in the documents of the Administration or the president's foreign policy speeches. However, in his final extensive interview about foreign policy doctrine, president Obama emphasizes his administration's attempt to diminish USA action in the Middle East and direct available resources to rebalancing policy in Asia. As the president notes in his interview, Asia represents the future, while the Middle East is a region to be avoided and which will soon be of negligible relevance to the USA economy thanks to America's energy revolution³ (Obama, 2016). Subsequently, reduction of the USA dependence on energy resources of the Middle East and the beginning of using its own petroleum supplies signal the minimization of addiction to one of the world's most unstable region and redirecting the USA resources to more serious national interest areas. The above-mentioned objectives fully match those of the multilateralist theoretical strategy.

Reduction of the USA dependence on energy resources of the Middle East, generally done to dwindle reliance on the region by the Administration, confirms the ideas of the theoretical strategy of multilateralism about the hegemon's policy towards of regions rich in natural resources. Namely, the underlining logic of the Administration's actions reveal that the USA would fail to avoid the Middle East without decreasing its dependence on the energy resources of the region. On the other hand, as under the Obama Administration, the USA freed itself from dependence on any region for their vital resources, establishing the compatibility of the Administration's foreign

³ The article 'The Obama Doctrine' in the Atlantic magazine explains the Obama Administration foreign policy doctrine relying on the interviews with both President Obama and his high officials. The explanation partially refers to either quotations from interviewees' answers to the interviewer's questions, or the interviewer's own interpretations of the interviewees' answers. In this case, the President's response is paraphrased by the interviewer.

policy strategy with the theoretical strategy of multilateralism regarding the policy towards the regions of abundant natural resources is obscured.

Another circumstance that complicates drawing an analogy between the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy and multilateralism in relation to the resource-rich regions is the USA's multiple interests in the Middle East, including the ones not linked to energy dependence. Moreover, among its declared interests towards the region the Obama Administration did not directly mention its richness in natural resources. These circumstances obscure specific reasons behind the Administration's actions towards the region and make it difficult to determine whether the actions of the President towards the region have been conditioned by its energy resources.

The NSS, 2010 and NSS, 2015 of the Obama Administration have named supporting Israel, Iran's nuclear program, threat of terrorism and free flow of energy from the region to the world as reasons for USA interest in the Middle East. The same interests are named by President Obama while outlining the USA policy towards the Middle East and North Africa in his 2013 UN speech (OPS, 2013). Free flow of energy also falls into multiple issues that drive the USA policy in the Middle East. Even in the absence of its own energy-dependence, assurance of free flow of energy is critical to the USA as a hegemon in order to support the stability of international economics and the system in general. According to President Obama, the USA "will ensure the free flow of energy from the region to the world. Although America is steadily reducing our own dependence on imported oil, the world still depends on the region's energy supply, and a severe disruption could destabilize the entire global economy" (OPS, 2013, para.25). Respectively, despite reducing its own energy-dependence, as predicted by the theoretical strategy of multilateralism, the Obama Administration has still been confirming its interest in guaranteeing the free flow of energy due to high dependence of both its allies and world economy on the region's resources. Major crisis in the region disturbing free flow of energy would cause a world crisis that should also be avoided by the USA as a hegemon.

Beyond the goal of ensuring the stability of both its allies and the world economy, none of the Obama Administration's strategy documents stress on vital importance of energy resources of the Middle East for the USA's own national interests. Moreover, Obama's last foreign policy related interview in 'Atlantic' argues that it is not oil but another of the Middle East's exports, terrorism, that shapes Obama's understanding of his responsibilities there (Obama, 2016). According the interview, energy resources of the Middle East also do not fall into the categories of threats worked out by Obama involving possible USA military intervention in the region.

The Middle East remains active in the foreign policy strategy of the Obama Administration despite getting diminished in importance in terms of energy security for the US. Beyond motivating goals, the Obama Administration's actions to the Middle East significantly match the theoretical strategy of multilateralism involving maintenance of distribution of power in resources-rich regions. Specifically, the Obama Administration has kept traditional American policy of forward presence and preservation of distribution of power in the region. After a short interval, the USA restored military assistance to Egypt and reassured GCC (Gulf Security Council) allies on Iran Deal – that America would support its traditional regional allies and freeing Iran from sanctions would not result in the change of balance of power in the region.

Thus, the Obama Administration's Middle East policy is compatible with the theoretical strategy of multilateralism. However, there is no sufficient basis for drawing an analogy between the Administration's foreign policy strategy and the theoretical strategy of multilateralism in terms of the policy towards the regions rich in natural resources. Considering the reduction of USA dependence on the Persian Gulf energy and multiple interests in the Middle East, it is hard to establish whether USA policy towards the region is determined by its energy resources or speculate what the USA policy would look like in terms of different rate of energy dependence on the region. Subsequently, unlike other instances of necessary actions defined through the threat categorization, in relation to resources-rich regions this subchapter fails to identify compatibility between the Obama Administration and the theoretical strategy of multilateralism.

Except for the energy resources related strategy, within the scope of this section, identity between the Obama Administration and the theoretical strategy of multilateralism has been revealed in terms of threat categorization mechanism, its objectives and corresponding actions. In order to reveal additional compatibility between the two strategies, two cases are discussed in the coming subsections. The first subsection involves the comparing defined cases of the use of force of the Obama Administration with the theoretical strategy of multilateralism. The other subsection demonstrates the compatibility of the two strategies through illustrating the Obama Administration's policy to Europe and Asia-pacific.

4.2.1.1. Cases for Use of Force in the Foreign Policy Strategy of the Obama Administration

Within the scope of this subchapter compatibility between the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy and the theoretical strategy of multilateralism has been revealed regarding the cases of the use of force. Both strategies are similarly identifying the cases of military action.

Specifically, the Obama Administration, analogously to the multilateralistic strategy maintains that there are two cases for the unilateral use of force: protecting the USA homeland from either terrorist or NBC attacks, and preventing or responding to an assault against its allies. In all remaining cases, the USA should act militarily only multilaterally, if the following conditions are met: costs and responsibilities of the action are shared by coalition member states; the action is not costly for the US; and non-military means prove ineffective. Also, similar to the multilateralist strategy, the Obama Administration's primary goal to restrict the scope of the use of force implies saving resources for more serious threats.

For better demonstration of compatibility between the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy and the theoretical strategy of multilateralism, the subsection first discusses the cases of use of force reflected upon the Administration's foreign policy strategy, and proceeds with the analysis of actual cases of the Administration's use of force and restraint from military actions.

The Obama Administration has been very careful with using military power either unilaterally or multilaterally. This is conditioned by the related high costs that would drain its power resources. As Obama explains, "Almost every great world power has succumbed to [overextension]. What I think is not smart is the idea that every time there is a problem, we send in our military to impose order. We just can't do that" (Obama, 2016, para.64). Another reason for restraint from the use of force is related to the legitimacy-related issues that get particularly acute in case of unilateral actions. Moreover, military decision-making should consider the assessment of appropriateness of the military action as a means for achieving a particular goal – according to the Obama Administration, military actions are not always the best or the most effective means of problem solution:

Our military will remain ready to defend our enduring national interests while providing essential leverage for our diplomacy. The use of force is not, however, the only tool at our disposal, and it is not the principal means of U.S. engagement abroad, nor always the most effective for the challenges we face. (Obama, 2015, p.4)

Accordingly, the threshold of the Obama Administration regarding unilateral use of power is very high and is reserved only to the cases when the significant USA national interests are endangered and they could not be otherwise protected. In the rest of the cases, as discussed above, the Obama Administration views application of military power only multilaterally when the costs and responsibilities are commonly shared. According to the Administration, even the decision on multilateral use of force should be adopted if the non-military means for eliminating threats prove ineffective.

The threats that, in case of necessity, will be addressed unilaterally by the USA are identical to the multilateralism strategy and concern core interests defined by the administration such as national security, prosperity and protection of the world order. Such threats are identified by the Administration to be (i) protecting the USA homeland from attacking, which as discussed earlier, due to almost impossible conventional assault implies terrorist and NBC attacks and (ii) assisting the allies both while under direct or potential threat of assault. Protection of the USA homeland is related to its national security and prosperity, while defending its allies, is about the sustenance of world order. If the USA fails to protect its allies either from potential or direct attack, its peacetime military commitments and forward military presence become meaningless, as well as devaluates its bargaining power among its allies and non-allies. This will lead to the emergence of unfavorable international conditions for the sustenance of USA interests, delegitimation of its influence and demolition of its order.

Similar formulation of threats against core interests defined by Obama was confirmed by his extensive interview about evaluating his foreign policy at the end of his presidency. Specifically, while explaining the reasons for restraining himself from using military actions in the Middle East, he argues that “only handful of threats in the Middle East conceivably warranted direct USA military intervention. These included the threat posed by al-Qaeda; threats to the continued existence of Israel; and, not unrelated to Israel’s security, the threat posed by a nuclear-armed Iran” (Obama, 2016, para.14). The President’s reasoning reflect his Administration’s foreign policy doctrine implying the USA military action only for protecting either its homeland through averting terrorist and NBC attacks, or its allies.

Though, the Obama Administration remains careful with applying military power, it always stresses on readiness to do so if the core USA interests are threatened. As President Obama’s 2014 West Point speech implies,

The United States will use military force, unilaterally if necessary, when our core interests demand it – when our people are threatened, when our livelihoods are at stake, when the security of our allies is in danger. ... International opinion matters, but America should never ask permission to protect our people, our homeland, or our way of life. (OPS, 2014a, para.17)

Similar statement can be found in his national security strategies or other presidential foreign policy speeches (e.g. Obama, 2010, 2015; OPS, 2009a, 2010a, 2014a; 2016c). The Obama Administration emphasized that changes directed to foreign policy cost reduction found in his foreign policy doctrine should not mislead both allies and adversaries that the USA will keep

itself distant from unilateral military action if its national interests are threatened. Respectively, such statements by the President and his Administration serve the purpose of avoiding misconceptions of possible translation of limiting military actions into USA general reluctance to use force. Such misperception would damage the USA image and influence among its allies as well as its adversaries.

The attitude towards applying military power described by The Obama Administration makes his foreign policy strategy identical to the theoretical strategy of multilateralism regarding this very issue. Specifically, the rationale for the use of force of both strategies as well as the cases for the unilateral military actions are analogous. The Obama Administration's actions also prove relevance with the declared attitudes. Despite President Obama have been careful with using military power, he has shown a willingness to act decisively and unilaterally whenever the certain events had jeopardized the USA national interests.

The Obama Administration's actions are particularly relevant to the declared strategy regarding the fight against terrorism. The President has removed the leadership of the most dangerous terrorist organizations, including Al-Qaeda. During his two terms, Obama has ordered total of 542 drone strikes, targeting the terrorist groupings in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, which is 10 times more than George Bush did. In the first year of his presidency, Obama has ordered 33000 more troops to be sent to Afghanistan, consequently, USA troops fighting against terrorists in the country has reached 100000 in 2010. This has enabled Obama to dismantle the major terrorist networks of the country and bring the war to an end by reducing the number of USA troops in Afghanistan to 9800 in March, 2015. Due to Obama's decisive action, fighting against terrorism is one of the major accomplishments of his Administration.

As for avoiding NBC attack and confronting its proliferation, relevance with the declared strategy is not as much noticeable as with that of fighting against terrorism. No threat of the NBC attack has ever presented itself throughout the Obama Administration. Respectively, President Obama has never faced any need of addressing such a threat. However, during his Administration, due to Iranian and North Korean nuclear programs the world was under the threat of nuclear proliferation as a result of which the most dangerous weapons of our times would be owned by the regimes that might not have been deterred from using them.

In case of Iran, Obama managed to address the problem through the Iran nuclear deal. Hence, further escalation of situation was avoided that could increase threat to the level making the USA

to strike Iran. Obama has confirmed such a readiness in his Atlantic interview. To a question, whether he would strike Iran's nuclear facilities if the deal failed, the President replied, "I actually would have, if I saw them break out. ... This was in the category of an American interest" (Obama, 2016, para.217). Since no actual strike on Iran has ever occurred, it is difficult to speculate what the Administration would have done. However, by confirming that the possible strike on Iran in the face of failure of the deal was in the USA interest, as well as keeping the military strike as a last resort to deal with the problem further solidify the relevance between the Obama Administration strategy and the multilateralist strategy.

As for the North Korean nuclear program, the Obama Administration managed to unify the world to impose the series of sanctions on North Korea through UN Security Council. The multilateral sanctions that have isolated North Korea and deteriorated its condition, were aimed at forcing North Korea to start negotiations and abandon its nuclear program in exchange of removing sanctions. Though this goal was not achieved during the Obama Administration, the issue had not reached the critical boundary either to prompt the USA military response to protect both itself and its allies from North Korean nuclear strike. Therefore, before ending the Obama Presidency, attempts have been actively made to solve the problem though non-military means.

During the Obama Presidency, the case of possession and use of chemical weapons was reported by the hostile regime towards the USA – specifically, the Assad regime in Syria. Possession of the weapons by the Assad regime by itself was dangerous to both the USA and its allies. However, considering the existing chaos in Syria and participation of terrorists in military actions created even more serious threat of falling it into the terrorists' hands. Though the use of chemical weapons by Syrian regime was the red line set by Obama that would provoke USA strike, he broke his promise drawing international and domestic criticism even from his own Administration. The critics argued that Obama's inaction had shaken the Administration's credibility with potential negative impact on the USA future capability to advance its national interests. However, in return for restraining from strike, Obama achieved a deal with Assad's major ally Russia to convince the Syrian President into abandoning the chemicals weapons.

As a result, Obama managed to solve the problem related to Assad's chemical weapons diplomatically without waging a war against the regime, which fully comply with the theoretical strategy of multilateralism. According to the strategy, a hegemon should be ready to use force to prevent an NBC attack on its own territory or against its allies, however, military action should be a last resort and applied in the cases when non-military means prove ineffective. In case of

Assad, Obama's military threats forced him to get rid of the weapons that he previously refused to actually possess. In turn, growing threat of USA intervention into the Syrian war led Russia to convincing its ally to get rid of its chemical weapons as urged by the American President.

Except for terrorist or NBC attacks, potential threat or actual assault against allies are found by both the Obama Administration and the theoretical strategy of multilateralism as a prerequisite for prompting retaliation. Throughout the Obama Administration no similar precedent has ever been detected making it non-feasible to draw an analogy between the above-mentioned strategies in this specific case.

Unlike the full compliance of the Obama Administration's declarations with the theoretical strategy of multilateralism regarding the cases implying the use of force, the Administration's actions offer sufficient evidence for establishing relevance only in case of the fight against terrorism. The Administration's actions against NBC proliferation are also relevant to the theoretical strategy of multilateralism, but due to the fact that the problem had not escalated to the level making the war inevitable, no military action for preventing the NBC proliferation has ever been taken by the Administration. Therefore, no relevance is possible to be established between the actions of the Obama Administration and the theoretical strategy of multilateralism. The same can be said about attacks on allies, since no similar incident has ever taken place during the Obama Administration.

Finally, decisions and actions of the Obama Administration are compliant with multilateralism regarding the cases implying restraints from use of force. The best examples of such cases are USA restraint from striking the Syrian regime and involving into the war against Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) only after forming a large multilateral coalition, sharing the costs and responsibilities of the action.

Escalation of the Syrian crisis and emergence of ISIL are often ascribed to the American President drawing intense criticism to the Obama Administration. However, President Obama has named the reasons for his non-intervention to be the ones given in his foreign policy strategy regarding the cases of the use of force. The USA president believes that the Syrian conflict posed no direct threat to the USA national interests. Therefore, threshold for military action was high despite the situation being critical in Syria, and could only be carried out multilaterally with the participation of European and Middle Eastern allies.

President Obama speaks extensively regarding his actions taken in relation with Syria, in the two of his latest foreign policy interviews given to Atlantic (Obama, 2016) and CBS 60 Minutes (Obama, 2017). The President explains his rationale for refraining from striking Assad and fighting against ISIL at the beginning of the conflict as well as the broader policy of his country towards the Middle East.

According to Obama there were four factors that conditioned his restraint from striking when Assad crossed the red line. First, the USA military action was not sanctioned by international law or by USA Congress. Consequently, legitimization issues would arise towards the strike. As frequently noted, the Obama Administration paid a serious attention to the legitimacy of its actions. Second, one of the foreign leaders Obama respects the most, German chancellor Angela Merkel declared her country would not participate in a Syria campaign while British Prime Minister, David Cameron, could not obtain the consent of his parliament. This meant the USA was denied support from two of his major European allies. Third and the most important factor according to Obama was an assessment that while a missile strike could inflict some damage on Assad, it would not eliminate the chemical weapons themselves and the President would then face “the prospect of Assad having survived the strike and claiming he had successfully defied the United States, that the United States had acted unlawfully in the absence of a UN mandate, and that that would have potentially strengthened his hand rather than weakened it” (Atlantic, 2016, para.29). Obama also refused that USA involvement with relatively small force into the Syrian conflict at an early stage would put the Syrian civil war to end:

When you have a professional army, that is well armed and sponsored by two large states [Iran and Russia] who have huge stakes in this, and they are fighting against a farmer, a carpenter, an engineer who started out as protesters and suddenly now see themselves in the midst of a civil conflict... [he paused] The notion that we could have – in a clean way that didn’t commit U.S. military forces – changed the equation on the ground there was never true. (Obama, 2016, para.12)

Obama maintains that the degree to which the various groups in Syria have been armed as well as the existent support of the belligerents by the multiple powerful external actors required huge commitment of forces from the USA if it decided to strike Syrian regime and involve in military actions. In this case, Obama believed that price of direct USA action would be higher than the price of inaction. Hence, by avoiding to strike the Syrian regime, Obama has avoided to overextend in the Middle East, like his predecessor did – the region that the President has chosen to stay away from due to his belief that for USA, involvement in the regional tensions is an

unjustified drain of the country's resources that could be used for more serious issues of USA interests, such as politics of rebalancing to Asia.

In his Atlantic interview Obama reveals that two events had conditioned his negligence of Middle East in his foreign policy strategy. First was his belief in hopelessness of the existing situation in the region. Second, according to the President, in order to secure American interests in the decades to come, it was necessary to involve more actively in the fast growing regions of the world, which required to free the attention of the USA President as well as the American resources that were previously directed to fighting against Middle Eastern terrorists organizations: "If we're not talking to [young Asians, Africans and Latin Americans] because the only thing we're doing is figuring out how to destroy or cordon off or control the malicious, nihilistic, violent parts of humanity, then we're missing the boat" (Obama, 2016, para.114). Thus, Obama believes that through investing in growing regions like Asia-Pacific at the expense of freed resources from the Middle East, he has made the decision in favor of the USA's future.

According to Obama, unlike other regions of the world, the Middle East has limited development perspectives in the short run. As he noted, in Middle East, "[y]ou have countries that are failing to provide prosperity and opportunity for their people. You've got a violent, extremist ideology, or ideologies, that are turbocharged through social media. You've got countries that have very few civic traditions, so that as autocratic regimes start fraying, the only organizing principles are sectarian" (Obama, 2016, para.110). These reasons motivate Obama to say that solving the Middle East problems is bound to take a long time and no replacement of a single leader there, or any kind of short-term commitments of the USA and its allies is going to bring about any result in the region due to the obdurate power of tribalism still impacting the people's consciousness there.

The president believes that whenever American interests are not directly threatened, or the USA just does not have the right tools in its toolkit to have an impact on the events, "we have to refrain from jumping in with both feet" (Obama, 2016, para.135). He regards the Middle East to be one of such cases too. On the one hand, the region is no longer important to the USA interests due to reduced reliance on its energy resources, on the other, even if being actual, Obama believes that there is little the USA President can do to resolve its problems and make it a better place, while desire to fix the sorts of problems that manifest themselves in the Middle East would drag America to inevitable warfare, death of its soldiers and drain of its resources.

Former Deputy National Security Advisor, Ben Rhodes, alongside Obama's extensive interview, gives additional insight to the President's decisions related to the Middle East:

The central argument is that by keeping America from immersing itself in the crises of the Middle East, the foreign-policy establishment believes that the president is precipitating our decline. But the president himself takes the opposite view, which is that overextension in the Middle East will ultimately harm our economy, harm our ability to look for other opportunities and to deal with other challenges, and, most important, endanger the lives of American service members for reasons that are not in the direct American national-security interest. (Obama, 2016, para.228)

Due to the above-mentioned reasoning, the Obama Administration decided to make concentration of limited resources in the regions of the world where success was plausible and which would be vital for securing American interests in future, while restricting America's exposure to the rest. Consequently, Obama's decision not to start a war against Assad's regime is in full compatibility with his foreign policy strategy that sets high thresholds for military actions and sanctions it only when vital American interests are endangered and the military force is an only or the most effective means to secure them.

However, Obama finally had to get involved into Iraq and Syria not to fight against the Assad regime but empowered terrorist group of ISIL. As noted earlier, the Obama Administration paid a significant attention to fighting against terrorism. Moreover, decision to fight against terrorists gets more easily taken than against countries or regimes. The reason for this is that unlike the latter, the previous scenario requires no prolonged conventional war: precise air strikes could be taken to destroy their cells with relatively small ground forces or no necessity of placing boots on the ground at all. Besides, anti-terrorist operations could be ended simultaneously with the end of the military actions unlike conventional wars, where additional presence is needed to stabilize the post-war country and provide formation of a new government through peace building operation.

The Obama Administration made the decision of getting involved in fight against ISIL after the terrorists took the city of Mosul in Iraq and beheaded three American civilians. The two events made Obama to appreciate the severity of the threat posed by ISIL. However, since the USA European and Middle Eastern partners were more endangered and ISIL pose no exclusive threat to the USA vital interests, the Obama Administration provided multilateral military action against the terrorist organization, which also served as a kind of anti-free-riding campaign. The coalition against ISIL consists of 74 members (70 states and 4 organizations) that are mutually reinforcing the five lines of efforts to degrade and defeat ISIL, including (i) providing military support to coalition partners; (ii) impeding the flow of foreign fighters; (iii) stopping financing and funding;

(iv) addressing humanitarian crises in the region; and (v) exposing true nature of the terrorist organization. The Administration ensured the direct involvement of its major European and Middle Eastern allies in the combat operations (Globalcoalition, n.d.).

Through gathering numerous coalition members and getting them involved in fight against ISIL, the Obama Administration provided multilateral leadership and collective action against common threat. The Obama Administration not only provided cost sharing through forming a highly representative coalition, but by involving the Arab League and its Middle Eastern allies, ensured the legitimacy of its action as well. The latter is critically needed while operating in such a sensitive region as the Middle East is, since any illegitimately perceived USA action there causes terrorist recruiting and fueling of anti-American sentiments.

Thus, both refraining from striking the Assad regime and multilateral action against ISIL are in harmony with the Obama Administration's foreign policy strategy as well as the theoretical strategy of multilateralism. Refraining from striking the Assad regime falls into the second category of threats, implying the restraint from action, which means that in this case the Obama Administration managed to play with its own rules of a game. Moreover, despite the controversial opinions on the timing of actions against ISIL (discussion of which is beyond the scope of this dissertation) the form as well as the objectives of the action is fully compatible with both strategies of Obama Administration and multilateralism.

As a result, this subsection has revealed compatibility between the strategies of the Obama Administration and the theoretical strategy of multilateralism regarding the cases of applying military power. Both cases involve unilateral application of power only to protect the hegemon's core interests of security, prosperity and international order, implying the hegemon's readiness to protect its homeland and allies. According to the theoretical strategy of multilateralism and the Obama Administration's foreign policy strategy, in all other cases application of military power is allowed multilaterally only, if costs as well as the responsibilities of action are shared by the coalition members. Moreover, while describing decisions and actions taken by the Obama administration, it has been revealed that not only the official foreign policy strategy of the Obama Administration regarding the use of force is compatible with the theoretical strategy, but its politics as well.

4.2.1.2. The Regions of Unbalanced Multipolarity and Concentration of USA's Financial-Economic Relations

Simultaneous discussion of the unbalanced multipolar regions or the ones involving the threat of arising potential regional hegemon and the regions concentrating USA financial-economic relations is conditioned by their coincidence. In both cases, Europe and Asia-Pacific are considered. These two regions represent not only unbalanced multipolar regions with Russia in Europe and China in Asia-Pacific as potential regional hegemon (Mearsheimer, 2001) but the regions of concentrating financial-economic relations of the current hegemon (Figure 3-8; Census, n.d.).

Coincidence of the unbalanced multipolar regions and the ones of concentrating financial-economic relations of the current hegemon further confirms validity of the theoretical strategy of multilateralism. According to the discussions based on the theoretical arguments of the strategy, if the hegemon, similar to the US, conducts forward presence in unbalanced multipolar regions the latter is anticipated to gradually turn into the concentration of the hegemon's financial-economic relations. The reason for this layout, as discussed in the third chapter, is on the one hand, the 'deep peace' conditioned by forward presence of the hegemon in those regions mitigating the anarchy and weakening the hampering factors for cooperation and on the other hand, hegemon's privileged position due to its economic might and the forward presence, enabling it to exploit the maximum benefits while cooperating with the regions.

Without the USA assistance and military presence in the regions such as Europe and Asia-Pacific due to the existing distribution of power in the regions, there is a high probability of arising regional hegemon of Russia and China respectively. This, as discussed in the third chapter, will cause the establishment of the orders suited to the regional hegemon, damaging the interests of the current hegemon the USA through diminishing the level of its involvement in international relations. The loss made by damaging the USA influence in Europe and Asia will be further intensified by the fact that these regions involve concentration of USA financial-economic partners and significant investments.

Consequently, despite retrenchment favoring discourse of the current period (see literature review), the Obama Administration maintains the traditional USA policy in Europe and Asia which implies forward military presence in the regions and reassurance of regional allies. Similar to the theoretical strategy of multilateralism and unlike the ideas of isolationists, Obama's foreign

policy strategy stresses on the importance of forward presence to sustain the USA national interests and foreign policy objectives: “U.S. forces will continue to defend the homeland, conduct global counterterrorism operations, assure allies, and deter aggression through forward presence and engagement. If deterrence fails, USA forces will be ready to project power globally to defeat and deny aggression in multiple theaters” (Obama, 2015, p. 8). Under the conditions of arising new power centers, emphasis on strengthening forward presence in modern international relations is also put by the first national security strategy of the Administration:

We will work with our allies and partners to enhance the resilience of U.S. forward posture and facilities against potential attacks. We will strengthen our regional deterrence postures – for example, through phased, adaptive missile defense architectures – in order to make certain that regional adversaries gain no advantages from their acquisition of new, offensive military capabilities. (NSS, 2010, p.41)

Respectively, the Obama Administration provides the similar approach towards the unbalanced multipolar regions in its foreign policy strategy as the theoretical strategy of multilateralism does, implying regional deterrence through forward presence.

The above-mentioned approach towards the unbalanced multipolar regions is old and goes back to the end of the World War II. However, during the Obama Administration certain shifts are noticed in the USA attitude towards these regions with transferring of attention from Europe to Asia. The shift does not imply abandonment of Europe. The ‘old continent’ is appreciated by the Obama Administration as “the cornerstone for USA engagement with the world, and a catalyst for international action” (NSS, 2010, p.41). Although, after the Obama Administration announced its rebalancing to Asia, Europe has been major, but no longer the main focus of the Administration’s foreign policy.

Shift of focus from Europe to Asia by the Obama Administration was conditioned by the fact that, as described by Secretary Clinton (2011), in the twenty-first century Asia-Pacific has become a key driver of global politics. In her article “America’s Pacific Century” dedicated to the explanation of the USA politics of rebalance to Asia, Clinton notes:

The future of politics will be decided in Asia, not Afghanistan or Iraq, and the United States will be right at the center of the action. ... In the next 10 years, we need to be smart and systematic about where we invest time and energy, so that we put ourselves in the best position to sustain our leadership, secure our interests, and advance our values. One of the most important tasks of American statecraft over the next decade will therefore be to lock in a substantially increased investment – diplomatic, economic, strategic, and otherwise – in the Asia-Pacific region. (Clinton, 2011, p.56)

Turning Asia into a key region to global politics was conditioned by such factors as rapid Chinese military-economic rise and corresponding challenges to both regional stability and USA global dominance, rise of other emerging regional powers like India and Indonesia, rapid economic development of the regional countries and subsequent unprecedented opportunities for trade and investment in the Asian market and necessity to counter the proliferation efforts of North Korea. Considering these facts, according to Clinton (2011), harnessing Asia's growth and dynamism has become central to American economic and strategic interests and a key priority for President Obama.

The Obama Administration's rebalancing to Asia was not only conditioned by the above mentioned facts of Asian rapid development, but the significant superiority of the rise of this region's potential hegemon China than that of Europe – Russia. Despite Russia being second country in the world with military power after the USA and China being the third one, the latter's 21st century growth considerably exceeds that of the former. In 2000-2016, growth of the Chinese military budget reached 1.8 trillion USD, while Russia's growth constituted 0.7 trillion, making China spend more than 2.5 times that of Russia in the twenty first century (Figure 3-6). Simultaneously, as of 2016, in terms of the size of the GDP (nominal), China is the second largest economy after the USA in the world, while Russia takes only the 11th place. The gap between Russia and China is further deepened by uneven economic growth of these two countries. According to 2016 nominal GDP, China had 6.7 % economic growth, while Russia experienced 0,2% decline (Figure 3-7). Respectively, due to its rapid economic growth, it was logical for the Obama Administration to identify China to be more serious threat to the USA national interests and its global leadership in the twenty first century than Russia.

Moreover, Europe unlike Asia, possesses a well-structured flexible military alliance of NATO offering better deterrence possibilities to the region than Asian security architecture based on bilateral relations (for the benefits of the formal security organizations over the bilateral security ties, see chapter 3, pg. 86). Considering this, as well as the relative growth rates of China and Russia, potential to emerge a regional hegemon in Asia has increased more than in Europe.

Correspondingly, the Obama Administration's rebalancing to Asia is connected with the increased objective, as well as relative threat of the emergence of regional hegemon in Asia-Pacific, compared to the other unbalanced multipolar region of Europe. This very factor further intensifies the degree of compatibility of the Obama foreign policy with that of multilateralism. Similar to the arguments of the theoretical strategy, the Obama Administration has paid attention to the region

where there is a higher chance of emerging a regional hegemon, and whose economic development and dynamism, according to the Administration, turns it into the epicenter of world affairs and provides increasing opportunities of trade and investment for the USA (Obama 2016, Clinton 2011).

Shifts in attention from Europe to Asia by the former president of the United States were conditioned not only due to Asian economic growth but by Obama's so called anti-free-riding campaign as well, being discussed in more details in the next section, while reviewing multilateralism, as an implementation mechanism of President Obama's foreign policy. The President wanted Europe to become the USA partner and shoulder the burden of maintaining the international order. However, Europe chose to remain dependent on the US, leading to Obama's disappointment with European allies. In his interview with the Atlantic, he rebukes Europe that it has been their habit over the last decades, to push the USA to act but then, showed "an unwillingness to put any skin in the game" (Obama, 2016, para.91). Accordingly, Obama's relative negligence of Europeans served the purpose to stir a sense of handling their own problems by themselves and reduce the degree of security dependence on the US. This step of the Obama Administration is also in harmony with the theoretical strategy of multilateralism that involves persuading its allies by the declining hegemon to increase their contribution to the sustenance of regional balances and resolution of the relevant problems for their regions.

However, in the face of shift in attention to Asia, Europe still remains an important USA ally for the Obama Administration. The latter has maintained full commitment for the USA military presence in Europe and realized the importance of the USA security guarantees to the regional security.

The Obama Administration emphasizes the importance of NATO for its members' and global security in its NSS 2010 and confirms that the USA "will continue to anchor our commitment in Article V, which is fundamental to our collective security" (Obama, 2010, p.42). NSS 2010 further maintains both the importance of European allies to the USA and its reciprocal commitment to the well-being of the Trans-Atlantic Alliance.

Considering the growth of Russia's power in the twenty first century, for further security of the region, strengthening of Eastern Europe became central for the USA to deter the potential regional hegemon. Therefore, at the beginning of 2009, Obama has insisted on expanding NATO contingency plan to cover all members of the alliance, including the Baltic States that were not

previously covered. Despite the fact the Bush Administration leveraged acceptance of the Baltic States into the alliance, in order to avoid tensions with Russia, NATO did not include them in its defense planning. With Obama's support at the Lisbon Summit in November 2010, NATO leaders accepted to expand the contingency plan for Poland to include the defense reinforcement of the Baltic States. The initiative of securing the Eastern European border of NATO further intensified by the Obama Administration after Russian military intervention in Ukraine, in 2014. Following the intervention, the Administration started to pay a particular attention to security of the East European allies.

NSS 2015 pays a particular attention to avoiding further Russian aggression and securing the Eastern European borders of NATO:

Russia's aggression in Ukraine makes clear that European security and the international rules and norms against territorial aggression cannot be taken for granted. ... We are reassuring our allies by backing our security commitments and increasing responsiveness through training and exercises, as well as a dynamic presence in Central and Eastern Europe to deter further Russian aggression. (Obama, 2015, p.25)

At the first NATO summit after the Russian intervention, Obama stated the allies reaffirmed the central mission of the Alliance: "Article 5 enshrines our solemn duty to each other – 'an armed attack against one...shall be considered an attack against them all.' This is a binding, treaty obligation. It is non-negotiable. And here in Wales, we've left absolutely no doubt – we will defend every Ally" (OPS, 2014b, para.3). Under Obama's leadership, within the framework of the summit, further alliance action plans and strategies were worked out to deter another Russian aggression. The strategy involved strengthening Eastern European borders and reassurance of NATO members in Central and Eastern Europe with additional equipment, training, exercises and troop rotations; to create a new Readiness Action Plan (RAP) and update Alliance's defense planning to ensure that NATO remains prepared for any contingency; to create a new highly ready Rapid Response Force that could be deployed on a very short notice.

In order to deter further aggression from Russia and reassure the European allies, in June 2014 Obama has introduced the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI), a program which implies to increase the USA presence in Europe for security purposes. Throughout Obama's presidency, budget allocated for ERI has increased from initial 1 billion USD to 3.4 billion USD by the end of this presidency. During last three years of his presidency, Obama increased USA military presence in Eastern Europe; brokered the increased NATO air patrols over the Baltics as well as Naval patrols in the Black Sea; sent F-16 warplanes to Romania and Poland as well as F-15s to Lithuania;

after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, together with European NATO allies, maintained a persistent rotational military presence on land, sea and air along the Eastern border of the Alliance. Moreover, in the face of Russian opposition, Obama backed deployment of an anti-missile system in 2016 in Romania, which is the first land-based defensive missile launcher in Europe. Construction of an additional anti-missile system, initiated by Obama as well, is in process in Poland since 2016 too, expected to be finished by 2018.

In order to ensure the Alliance's readiness to respond to its new security challenges Obama has led to creation of the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) that begun at the 2014 Wales Summit and was implemented by the 2016 Warsaw Summit. The RAP, according NATO, "includes 'assurance measures' for NATO member countries in Central and Eastern Europe to reassure their populations, reinforce their defense and deter potential aggression" (NATO, 2017). Besides, following the 2014 Wales Summit agreement, NATO allies enhanced the NATO Response Force (NRF) by creating a "spearhead force" within it, known as the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). According NATO (NATO, 2017), the enhanced NRF is a highly ready and technologically advanced multinational force made up of land, air, maritime and Special Operations Forces (SOF) components that the Alliance can deploy quickly, wherever needed.

Besides upgrading the security relationships with Europe, in 2013 Obama has called for the establishment of the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) - a free trade agreement between the USA and the EU. The call was followed with the rounds of talks to negotiate the agreement. The negotiations were halted due to the USA presidential elections in 2016, however in mid-2017, both sides have expressed the willingness to resume it. If successfully implemented, the TTIP will be the largest regional free trade agreement in the history, covering almost half of the global economic output (IMF DataMapper n.d.). The TTIP would secure bilateral economic ties and give the USA free access to the world's biggest single market. This would both, promote the USA's economic interests as well as increase its importance as an economic partner for the EU further intensifying and strengthening the trans-Atlantic ties.

Thus, the actions made by the Obama Administration regarding Europe meant to deter the growing Russian influence, eradication of free-riding, participation of European allies in handling common challenges, consolidation of Trans-Atlantic ties and increased economic benefits from relations with Europe. Respectively, the Administration's actions are in harmony with the theoretical strategy of multilateralism implying deterrence of potential regional hegemon, reassurance of

allies, deepening relations with the latter and persuading them to abandon the free-riding practices of the period of hegemonic prime.

The Obama Administration's actions are in harmony with the theoretical strategy of multilateralism in case of the other region of Asia-Pacific as well. The major objectives of the administration in that region were to deter a regional hegemon and secure USA standing and interests. Specifically, USA rebalancing to Asia-Pacific is conditioned by two factors. First, Asia is a fast-growing region with vast trade and investment opportunities to the US. According to former Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, "economic recovery at home will depend on exports and the ability of American firms to tap into the vast and growing consumer base of Asia" (Clinton, 2011, p.57). However, the USA influence in the region as well as prospect of exploiting above-mentioned opportunities are challenged by rapidly growing Chinese dominance in the region.

The Chinese emergence as a regional hegemon is the kind of challenge to the USA that imposes limitations not only to its regional influence but in international relations as well, especially in the areas of overlapping interests of both countries. Such spheres of interest will multiply along with further rise of China. Accordingly, President Obama considers China as the greatest challenge to America in the coming decades, rise of which requires constant attention (Obama, 2010; Obama, 2016). Importance of monitoring Chinese peaceful development is emphasized in both Obama NSS saying that USA will closely monitor China's military modernization and expanding presence in Asia and prepare accordingly to reduce the risk of misunderstanding or miscalculation and ensure that American as well as the interests of its regional allies are not negatively affected (Obama, 2010, 2015).

Deriving from economic and strategic importance of influence in Asia, the USA major objective in the region is to balance and deter the Chinese growth and secure its influence to sustain its interests in the region. In order to achieve that, the basic agenda of the Obama Administration intended to forge its military presence and to build a web of partnerships and institutions across the Pacific that would draw Asian states on USA's orbit and be "as durable and as consistent with American interests and values as the web [USA had] built across the Atlantic" (Clinton, 2011). Implementation of the agenda implied actions in four main directions. First, strengthening military alliances with the traditional regional allies, such as Japan, South Korea, Australia, Philippines and Thailand, and expanding/evolving relationships with the second tier of American security partners, such as India, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore. For this purpose, the Obama Administration updated the legal basis of security cooperation (security treaties, agreements or

memoranda) and consequently, upgraded the cooperation with all listed countries of the Asia-Pacific Region. As a result of the upgraded and diversified security cooperation the Administration has modernized the USA bases in Northeast Asia and enhanced its presence in Southeast Asia and Indian Ocean. This has reinforced USA's defense posture in the region by making its presence geographically distributed and operationally resilient (Heritage, 2017).

Second implementation mechanism of the agenda is what former Secretary Clinton has called 'forward deployed' diplomacy, which means "continuing to dispatch the full range of our diplomatic assets — including our highest-ranking officials, our development experts, our interagency teams, and our permanent assets — to every country and corner of the Asia-Pacific region" (Clinton, 2011, p. 57). The 'forward deployed' diplomacy has intensified ties with the regional states, including ones beyond the list of America's traditional partners in the region and deepened relationships with emerging powers as well as assisted the USA to keep accounting for the rapid developments across most dynamic regions of the world.

Third mechanism for the implementation of USA's agenda in Asia-Pacific is integrating the USA into the regional architecture in order to ensure the consistency of its development with American interests in the region. Asia-Pacific lacks political-security architecture as well as the formal economic integration. Despite the intense economic interactions among its states, as well as existence of several regional forums with dominating economic agenda, the region has no counterpart of the European Union or European Economic Community. However, as the region advances, it is moving towards the development of more mature security and economic architecture in order to enhance its stability and prosperity. Obama Administration considered the USA's commitment to lead in the construction of the regional architecture as essential for securing American interests in the region. According to Clinton, such leadership in the evolution of regional architecture would "pay dividends for continued American leadership well into this century, just as our post-World War II commitment to building a comprehensive and lasting transatlantic network of institutions and relationships has paid off many times over – and continues to do so" (Clinton, 2011, p.56). Simultaneously, the Obama Administration realized that if the USA failed to seize the initiative of forming the regional architecture, it would be done by China according to its preferences. Consequently, cost of the USA's failure to build a US-led trans-Pacific regional architecture would be a gradual diminish of its influence as well as the loss of economic benefits and opportunities that would come with the high involvement in the region.

Aiming to integrate into the Asia-Pacific regional architecture, the Obama Administration made an emphasis on the engagement in regional organizations, such as East Asian Summit (EAS), ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation). The Administration has engaged more heavily with APEC which the USA was initially a member of and promoted the Organization's role of a premier economic institution of the region. Since President Obama declared the USA as an "Asia Pacific Nation" during his first year in office (OPS, 2009b), USA Secretary of State Hilary Clinton attended the 5th annual East Asian Summit in 2010 and the USA has officially become a member of the Summit in 2011. Consequently, since 2011 the Summit has been regularly attended by the USA. Out of the six meetings of the EAS held during the Obama Administration, after the USA has joined the Summit, once attended by the State Secretary and five times by the President himself, emphasizing the importance of the region to the Administration.

The Obama Administration has held annual meetings with the Leaders of ASEAN at the sidelines of ASEAN Summit since 2009. The ASEAN-US Summit was formally institutionalized in 2013 while ASEAN-US Dialogue Relations was elevated to a level of strategic partnership in 2015. In February 2016, Obama has hosted the first ASEAN-US Summit in the United States. Later in 2016, the President has attended the eighth meeting of the Summit in Laos while the trip itself was his ninth visit to the ASEAN region, which is more than any incumbent USA president has made.

Integration of the USA into the Asia-Pacific regional architecture was an implementation mechanism of economic part of Obama's agenda in the region beyond securing the USA standing and influence there. The economic agenda concentrated not just on expanding trade and investment to the Asia-Pacific region but on achieving the balance in trade relationships. The USA trade balance with the region is negative with significant contrast between exports and imports. Improving the trade balance through increased import is crucial for exploiting the benefits of economic and financial partnership with the world's fastest growing region. However, achieving the balance is possible if the economic relations with the region are carried out in the favoring conditions to the USA interests, implying open markets with fewer restrictions on exports and more transparency, rules that protect intellectual property as well as introduction of the standards that would get developing regional markets closer to the framework under which the USA market is operating. This would diminish relative advantages of the developing markets in relation with the USA market that would result in improved trade balance and increased gains from the economic partnership with the region.

Establishment of the rules of game fitting to the USA interests in the Asia-Pacific region required the USA to lead in creating its economic architecture. Therefore, to advance region-wide system of trade and investment rules, the centerpiece of the Obama Administration's economic agenda to the region was to establish the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) designed to lead the financial-economic relations in the region. TPP is a high-standard free trade agreement which beyond tariff reductions includes provisions on intellectual property rights protection, labor and environmental standards, foreign investment, government procurement of goods and services, and state-owned enterprise transparency (Fergusson, 2016). Hence, through TPP, Obama Administration intended to establish an economic architecture that would operate in rules and standards promoting American interests in Asia-Pacific region. The President has confirmed such an intention in his last State of the Union Address, while urging the USA Congress to ratify the TPP which according to the latter enabled the USA to set the rules in the Asia-Pacific Region instead of China (OPS, 2016a)⁴.

The described mechanisms of conducting the regional agenda enabled the Obama Administration to take significant steps to achieve its goals. Though diversification and upgrade of security relationships, the Administration has advanced USA's defense posture and presence in the region. It also helped the USA reassure regional nations amid the security challenges posed by growth of China's power and influence. At the same time, through the 'forward deployed' diplomacy, integration into the regional architecture and financial-economic initiatives, the Administration has advanced USA's standing and deepened its trade and financial ties with the region.

The Obama Administration's policy in the Asia-Pacific region intended to balance China, draw regional states to the USA orbit and advance of USA influence in the region is in harmony with the multilateral strategy. Similar to the theoretical strategy, the actions of the Obama Administration in the Asia-Pacific region intended to deter the possible emergence of a regional hegemon and secure favorable power distribution and rules of economic game in the region.

Thus, within the scope of the section, compatibility has been revealed between the Obama Administration strategy and the theoretical strategy of multilateralism in terms of their common implementation mechanism, threat categorization. Both strategies identically describe objectives and rationale of threat categorization, cases of action and inaction as well as forms of action.

⁴ President Trump has withdrawn the USA from the TPP simultaneously to assuming the Office, due to which the future of the organization was under question. However, recently, Trump has declared that he may reconsider the American membership to TPP.

Moreover, the compatibility of the Obama Administration with the multilateral strategy is revealed not only in terms of declared but actually conducted policy as well.

4.3. Multilateralism as an Implementation Mechanism of the Obama Administration Foreign Policy Strategy

The following section discusses the compatibility of another implementation mechanism of the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy, multilateralist foreign policy with the corresponding mechanism of the theoretical strategy of multilateralism. The subsection has revealed the compatibility between the two strategies in terms of their objectives as well as the means of achieving them. Similar to threat categorization, analogy is drawn between the Obama Administration strategy and theoretical strategy in terms of both declared and conducted policies.

Similar to the theoretical strategy of multilateralism, in case of Obama Administration foreign policy strategy, multilateralism as the strategy implementation mechanism implies preservation of the USA power and reduction of its foreign policy costs. There are two major functions the strategy performs in this regard. First, it allows the reduction of foreign policy costs through their sharing. Multilateralism implies the USA preference to act collectively instead of acting alone in order to share the costs as well as the responsibilities of actions. Second, multilateralism is also a means of providing legitimacy to the USA leadership and its order. The latter, as discussed in the previous subchapter, not only makes the attainment of hegemon's objectives easier but allows diminishment of its foreign policy costs as well. Specifically, preserved legitimacy provides conforming to the hegemon's leadership, thus allows to avoid the aggravated international opposing and consequent increase of the costs of securing the hegemon's national interests.

The implementation mechanisms of multilateralism's objectives of the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy are also in full compliance with the theoretical strategy of multilateralism. Specifically, in case of the Obama Administration too, multilateralism practices the cost reduction through anti-free-riding campaign and convincing the states to share the burden of maintaining the world order. As for preserving the legitimacy, it is achieved through abandonment of unilateralism and replacement of the latter with multilateralistic leadership as well as integrating new power centers into the architecture of world order, turning them into the stakeholders of the order. Turning the new power centers into stakeholders represents their incentivization mechanism to contribute to the sustenance of world order. In this sense, it is a part of anti-free-riding campaign considered in the first objective of multilateralism. Thus, the Obama Administration's mechanisms for putting

multilateralistic objectives into perspective are in harmony with the ones described in the theoretical strategy.

Free-riding and related issues to its eradication is a major problem for both multilateralism and the Obama Administration's foreign policy strategy. Subsequently, the basic task for the Obama foreign policy is to mobilize collective action against common threats and anti-free-riding campaign. In his famous interview with the Atlantic the President says: "Free-riders aggravate me", and explains that part of his mission as president, was to "spur other countries to take action for themselves, rather than wait for the U.S. to lead" (Obama, 2016, para.68). Obama's anti-free-riding campaign, similar to the theoretical strategy of multilateralism, implies means of persuasion and incentivization of other states to contribute to the world order.

To persuade states, the Obama Administration applies two mechanisms. The first implies continued USA emphasis not to spend any of its power to address the common threats involving no direct threat to its national interests. Through this action Administration attempted to demonstrate that no free-riding is possible under the current USA leadership and common issues would only be dealt with multilaterally. Correspondingly, other states benefiting from the world order will also have to contribute to its maintenance. Second, the Obama Administration's actions were in match with the above-mentioned declared position. It further convinced other states into reducing their free-riding practices and dependence on the USA and start contributing to the world order.

The Obama Administration's attitude towards free-riding and modified USA role in sustenance of world order are reflected in its strategic documents and foreign policy speeches. For example, according to NSS 2010, "[t]he burdens of a young century cannot fall on American shoulders alone – indeed, our adversaries would like to see America sap our strength by overextending our power" (Obama, 2010 [preface]). Part of Obama's anti free-riding campaign was messages sent at his very first UN speech, according to which, resolution of the world challenges

cannot solely be America's endeavor. Those who used to chastise America for acting alone in the world cannot now stand by and wait for America to solve the world's problems alone. We have sought – in word and deed – a new era of engagement with the world. And now is the time for all of us to take our share of responsibility for a global response to global challenges. (OPS, 2009a, para.15)

Thus, persuasion, as an implementation mechanism of the anti-free-rider campaign implies convincing world powers that no world issues could be addressed without their participation any

more. Such rhetoric from the Administration serves the purpose of providing readiness of world forces to act in the relevant cases.

Persuasion, as a mechanism of anti-free-riding campaign usually works better in relation with allies. According to the discussions of the theoretical strategy of multilateralism, allies get more benefits from the hegemon than non-allies. They are interested in hegemon being strong enough to provide their protection from the opposing powers. While the hegemon in decline, its support is even more needed by its allies in order to balance the rising potential regional hegemons. In turn, this increases the hegemon's influence over its allies and chances of their convincing. Looming counter-threat also enhances allies' motivation to enhance their own power in order to handle their problems themselves.

The Obama Administration's relations with NATO members proved this phenomenon described in the theoretical strategy of multilateralism. Specifically, in the wake of Russian intervention in Ukraine, defense budget enlargement took place among the NATO members. After the intervention, at 2014 NATO Wales summit an agreement was achieved among the allies under Obama leadership "to reverse the trend of declining defense budgets, to make the most effective use of our funds and to further a more balanced sharing of costs and responsibilities" (NATO, 2014, para.5). In this way, the Wales Summit witnessed the first publicly stated pledge of the Alliance leaders in this century, to reverse the trend of declining defense budgets. In line with the public statements, NATO members, excluding the USA, showed more than 3 percent combined increase in defense spending in 2016 since 2013. Also as a result of the Summit, NATO, excluding the USA, increased equipment spending by nearly 5 percent in 2015 and over 10 percent in 2016, reversing a long-term decline (NATO, 2017).

According to Obama, free-riding was frequently the reason for his criticism towards Europeans. In his Atlantic interview, the President retells how he warned David Cameron that his country would no longer be able to claim a 'special relationship' with the United States if it did not commit to spending at least 2 percent of the DGP on defense and thus, pay his "fair share" (Obama, 2016). Great Britain had subsequently matched the 2 percent threshold.

Part of anti-free-riding campaign was also Obama's attempts to mobilize allies and interested parties to address world issues multilaterally. According to the President, the multilateral operation in Libya to remove Muammar Gaddafi from power "was part of the anti-free rider campaign" (Atlantic, 2016). The situation in Libya, according to the President,

is not so at the core of US interests that it makes sense for us to unilaterally strike against the Gaddafi regime. At that point, you've got Europe and a number of Gulf countries who despise Gaddafi, or are concerned on a humanitarian basis, who are calling for action. But what has been a habit over the last several decades in these circumstances is people pushing us to act but then showing an unwillingness to put any skin in the game ... Free riders. So what I said at that point was, we should act as part of an international coalition. But because this is not at the core of our interests, we need to get a UN mandate; we need Europeans and Gulf countries to be actively involved in the coalition; we will apply the military capabilities that are unique to us, but we expect others to carry their weight. And we worked with our defense teams to ensure that we could execute a strategy without putting boots on the ground and without a long-term military commitment in Libya. (Obama, 20016, para.82)

Although, according to Obama, the military operation in Libya went exactly as he planned, the country now “is a mess”. For continuing chaos in Libya Obama happens to blame Europeans: “[w]hen I go back and I ask myself what went wrong, there’s room for criticism, because I had more faith in the Europeans, given Libya's proximity, being invested in the follow-up” (Obama, 2016, para.85). Getting involved into the Libyan operation was acceptable for Obama only within the coalition of strong European allies. According to the President, the Libyan conflict posed no direct threat to the USA national security, so there was no need for unilateral USA response. Subsequently, European reluctance to follow-up meant the end of the Libyan operation for Obama.

Obama’s evaluation of Libya, presented above, demonstrates full compliance of his attitude towards the case of Libya with both the theoretical strategy of multilateralism and with the foreign policy doctrine of his own Administration. Specifically, the compatibility with the theoretical strategy is noticeable in following points of view:

- (i) The USA restraint from unilateral action occurred in accordance with the threat categorization rationale. Obama stated that he would not act unilaterally in Libya as it posed no direct threat to the USA core interests. This decision of the President responds to the threat categorization rationale, implying restraints from unilateral actions against minor threats to core interests. Subsequently, following the dissolution of the coalition, the USA refused to undertake a unilateral action to avert, or deal with the post-operation chaos in Libya, moreover, while according to the President, certain other members of the coalition should have been more interested in stable Libya than the United States.
- (ii) The USA participation in the multilateral and low-cost action as the Libyan crisis, complies with both the Obama foreign policy strategy and the arguments of multilateralism. The function of world order provider is the key international function of a hegemon, considerably

defining its level of legitimacy. Subsequently, under both Obama foreign policy strategy and theoretical strategy of multilateralism, the USA is supposed to address relatively minor global issues only collectively together with the states interested in problem resolution, with shared costs and responsibilities in perspective.

(iii) President Obama considered the legitimacy-related requirements set by the multilateralist strategy in case of Libya. He sought UN authorization to launch military campaign against Libya and managed to include the countries interested in the problem resolution, namely, European and Arab nations. The motivation of the USA action was also in full match with the multilateral strategy. According to Obama, the collective action aimed to counter the free-riding practices and set precedent to solve common problems with common effort. The Libyan precedent should have served the start of practicing truly, and not just formally multilateral addressing of the common issues.

Thus, the Obama Administration provided persuasion policy towards its allies to boost their participation in promoting the world order and dealing with common issues. Success of the persuasion policy was enhanced by the Administration through matching its actions with its declared strategies. In this way, the Administration has demonstrated that further opportunity of the free-riding practices is limited. Capability of limiting free-riding practices from allies increased concurrently with the decline of a hegemon and rising counter-threats. Pessimistic picture of future motivates allies to boost their own capabilities of confronting threats. It allows increased contribution of allies to balancing common counter-threats.

However, although during the hegemon's decline, chances to persuade allies and limit their free-riding increases opposite is observed in case of the non-allies. The non-allies, as noted in the third chapter, enjoy only non-excludible public goods allowed by the hegemon's international role. The hegemon does not support the non-allies to deal with their challenges. On the contrary, hegemon's interests often come into clash with its non-allies and the former even prevents them from attaining their goals. Subsequently the hegemon has little leverage over controlling free-riding practices of the non-allies and pushing them to contribute to order maintenance. Therefore, according to both the multilateralist theoretical strategy and the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy, the hegemon has to incentivize the non-allies through making them equal stakeholders of world order to soften their free-riding practices.

The same incentive is applied to solve the other objective of multilateralism of preserving legitimacy of world order. The hegemon has to shape rising powers into stakeholders of world

order to extract support from them to the latter. It involves integrating new power centers into international architecture to keep up with the changed distribution of power. Subsequently, this mechanism involves encouragement of new power centers to contribute to order maintenance as well as provides their conforming to the order and thus, legitimacy of the order itself.

Similar to the theoretical strategy of multilateralism, the Obama Administration recognizes the need of adapting international order to provide its maintenance and support from new power centers. According to the Administration's vision, expressed in the NSS 2010, international institutions must be more effective and representative of the diffusion of influence in the 21st century:

Just as U.S. foresight and leadership were essential to forging the architecture for international cooperation after World War II, we must again lead global efforts to modernize the infrastructure for international cooperation in the 21st century. ... To solve problems, we will pursue modes of cooperation that reflect evolving distributions of power and responsibility. (Obama, 2010, p.46)

Accordingly, Obama's ideas regarding modernizing the international architecture are given in his Administration's foreign policy strategy.

We will expand our support to modernizing institutions and arrangements such as the evolution of the G-8 to the G-20 to reflect the realities of today's international environment. ... And we will challenge and assist international institutions and frameworks to reform when they fail to live up to their promise. Strengthening the legitimacy and authority of international law and institutions, especially the U.N., will require a constant struggle to improve performance. (Obama, 2010, p.13)

Through the G-20, we will pursue governance reform at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. We will also broaden our leadership in other international financial institutions so that the rapidly growing countries of the world see their representation increase and are willing to invest those institutions with the authority they need to promote the stability and growth of global output and trade. (Obama, 2010, p.33)

His ideas indicate that he attempts to modernize the international architecture in accordance with theoretical strategy of multilateralism. Specifically, similar to the strategy, changed international reality is named to be the rationale for adapting international order. Moreover, Obama's motivation to modernize international order is also concerned with the multilateral theoretical strategy. Together with the need of adapting the international architecture by increasing the privileges of the new power centers the Administration highlights increased responsibilities of the latter within the renewed order: "[n]ew and emerging powers who seek greater voice and representation will need to accept greater responsibility for meeting global challenges" (Obama, 2010, p. 13). The Administration reveals that reforming international architecture by including

new power centers into it serves the purpose of drawing increased support from them. Simultaneously, the USA reminds new power centers seeking increased privileges of investing more into supporting the order to fulfill their aspirations.

Reformation of international architecture by the Obama Administration was performed in accordance with the stated strategy. Specifically, adaptation of the architecture to changed international reality was noticeable through such actions as G-20's emergence as the premier forum for international economic cooperation and governance reform at the IMF and World Bank.

As for reforming the UN Security Council, as stated in NSS 2010, the Obama Administration fully realizes such a need: "We favor Security Council reform that enhances the U.N.'s overall performance, credibility, and legitimacy" (Obama, 2010, p.46). However, unlike IMF and World Bank, NSS of the Administration says nothing specific about modernizing the UN. Subsequently, no steps have been taken to expand UN Security Council under the Obama Administration.

Avoidance of including the UN reformation in the Administration's agenda, on the one hand, could be explained by complications of drawing agreement from each existing Security Council members. Such an agreement does not fall into interests of the members including the USA itself. Since each member of the Security Council possesses veto right, additional new members pose obstacle to the existing ones to nurture their interests, making the council more inflexible as consensus gets hard to be achieved. On the other hand, changed picture in distribution of power does not yet make reformation of the UN necessary, allowing the states including the USA to avoid this issue. Thus, excluding the reformation of UN Security Council from the Obama Administration's agenda could be explained by the fact that the Administration has avoided creation of such an additional obstacle for provision of its own national interests when the systemic consequences do not yet create the extent of pressure making the modernization inevitable for order maintenance.

On the other hand, reformations of IMF and World Bank governing bodies as well as making G20 the premier forum for international economic cooperation by the Obama Administration were conditioned by the systemic consequences of changed distribution of power. IMF and World Bank reform or the so called 'voice reform' that has increased representation of the rising developing countries in the governing bodies of the organizations was conditioned by the undermining of their legitimacy in the eyes of the developing countries. As both organizations were dominated by the USA, China has gradually started to move to bilateral lending and together with the so

called BRICS countries, sponsored a competing to World Bank institution, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, also known as BRICS Bank. Similar undertakings by China and other developing nations could pose a long-term existential threat to the USA backed global financial institutions.

According to the “2015 Shareholding Review: Report to Governors” prepared by the World Bank Group for the October 10, 2015 joint ministerial committee of the Boards of Governors of the IMF (the Fund) and the IBRD (the Bank) on the Transfer of Real Resources to Developing Countries, increase of the developing countries’ representation in the Fund and the Bank was described as important for the legitimacy of the institution: “the distribution of shareholding is important for the legitimacy of the institution. Our review of the economic weight and shareholding shows that there are countries that are underweight relative to the GDP blend, and others that are overweight” (World Bank Group, 2015). ‘Voice reform’ for IMF and World Bank legitimacy and viability was finally completed at the beginning of 2016. Thus the Obama Administration’s managed to attain its goal to reform the world financial-economic architecture.

The Obama’s Administration also successfully made G-20 as the premier forum for international economic cooperation - the G20 summit in Pittsburgh in 2009 established the G20 as a major decision-making body on matters relating to the global economy. According to NSS 2010, this step was inevitable as “the nations composing the G-20 – from South Korea to South Africa, Saudi Arabia to Argentina – represent at least 80 percent of global gross national product, making it an influential body on the world stage” (Obama, 2010, p.44). Credibility of G20 as a leading economic forum was further increased by successful handling of the financial crisis going back to 2008. Besides, its significance was also boosted by including multiple issues into the summit’s agenda during the Obama Administration. Development policy issues were added to the traditional financial-economic agenda at 2011 Seoul summit; issues such as agriculture and green growth were discussed first time ever at 2012 Los Cabos summit; at the G20 summit in Antalya in 2015, the G20 looked for the first time at migration and refugee movements; issues concerning the spread of the digital technology were highlighted for the first time during the 2017 summit in Hamburg.

The formats of meeting within the scope of G20 also got diversified. Ministerial-level meetings of G20 finance ministers and central bank governors that were established in 1999 were raised to the level of heads of state and government as a result of the financial crisis in 2008. Since then, G20 leaders have met regularly, however, ministerial-level meetings ran concurrently and since 2009 took place twice a year instead of one. In 2010, G20 was first added meetings of the labor and

employment ministers; in 2012, B20, or the summit of business leaders from the G20 countries as well as the T20, or the summit of think tanks from the G20 countries were added to the G20 format; in 2014, the format was further enlarged with C20, or the summits of civil society delegates from the G20 countries; in 2017, the foreign ministers of the G20 countries met for the first time. As a result, under the Obama Administration, G20 turned itself into a major forum global cooperation.

Both motivating rationale and actual reformation of global order by the Obama Administration are in compliance with the theoretical strategy of multilateralism. Adaptation of the international order to the changed reality provides legitimacy of the very system and draws support to it from new power centers.

Another means to legitimize both the leadership of the hegemon and international order, as noted before, is abandoning unilateralism by the hegemon and exercising multilateral leadership instead. Obama calls such leadership as “new type of leadership”, that focuses on strengthening international institutions and galvanizing the collective action. Such renewed American leadership, according the Administration, can more effectively advance its interests in the 21st century (Obama, 2010).

Multilateralism as a leadership style involves getting the USA leadership adapted to the changed international environment. Systemic consequences conditioned by the change in distribution of power limit the hegemon’s unilateralism due to the needs of cost sharing, legitimacy preservation and successful handling of international challenges. Respectively, multilateralism is a new type of the USA leadership in the modern world. According to the Obama Administration, in the changed international environment the USA will continue to undertake the duties ascribed to the hegemon through organizing and leading the collective actions.

Multilateral leadership, according to the Obama Administration, means “rallying the world behind the causes that are right” (OPS, 2016a, para.56) and is undertaken through leading collective actions and strengthening international institutions that set rules of the game and support cooperation among states. In this respect, empowerment of international institutions does not only involve an enhancement of their legitimacy level due to the changed picture of distribution of power. The institutions represent influential international forums for multilateral cooperation, defining the rules of such cooperation. Therefore, empowering the international institutions in a way to support the USA multilateral leadership implies to ally states to sustain rules of the game established through these institutions. Just like in any type of a political order, viability and

effective operation of the international order implies incentivization of conforming behavior through rewards and punishments in order to avoid undesired actions threatening the order. The USA leadership plays a decisive role in preserving the world order through ensuring the effective operation of its incentives.

Empowerment of international institutions serves the very purpose of providing effective rewards and punishments system for the Obama Administration. According to NSS 2010, international engagement of the Administration in terms of empowering international institutions involves incentivizing constructive national steps “so nations that choose to do their part see the benefits of responsible action. Rules of the road must be followed, and there must be consequences for those nations that break the rules – whether they are nonproliferation obligations, trade agreements, or human rights commitments” (Obama, 2010, p.3). According to the NSS 2010, the reason the USA should strengthen enforcement of international law and its commitment to engage and modernize international institutions and frameworks is to ensure that “those nations that refuse to meet their responsibilities will forsake the opportunities that come with international cooperation. ... [I]f nations challenge or undermine an international order that is based upon rights and responsibilities, they must find themselves isolated” (Obama, 2010, p.12). Respectively, rewards within the scope of international order mean the benefits derived from cooperation, while the punishment involves loss of those benefits and further isolation. The USA leadership under the Obama Administration is expected to be the ensure provision of effective incentives to regulate the conduct of other states and preserve the international order.

However, the Obama Administration realized that effectiveness of rewards and punishments system within the international order is a multilateral effort and could not be undertaken solely by the US. Therefore, the renewed USA leadership involves international engagement in order to mobilize support against the offenders of the rules and for addressing the international challenges (this effort of the Administration has served the two purposes of burden sharing and legitimacy provision).

New era of the USA engagement announced by Obama at the beginning of his presidency had aimed at reviving old alliances and establishing new connections (OPS, 2009a). Out of these new connections, most important have been the bilateral relationships with the emerging powers that are increasingly asserting themselves in international relations. According to the Obama Administration, active international engagement is key to the USA leadership since in an interconnected world of our century, the USA should lead with capable partners. As stated in the NSS 2015, “there are no

global problems that can be solved without the United States, and few that can be solved by the United States alone. American leadership remains essential for mobilizing collective action to address global risks and seize strategic opportunities” (Obama, 2015, p.3). The partnerships strengthened or attained through the ‘new era of engagement’ “can deliver essential capacity to share the burdens of maintaining global security and prosperity and to uphold the norms that govern responsible international behavior” (Obama, 2015, p.3). Therefore, international engagement is the mechanism of putting the multilateral USA leadership in practice and provide support to the USA international agenda.

In order to strengthen its partnerships, the Obama Administration paid a special attention to regional cooperation within the regional architecture and invested in further institutionalization of such cooperation. According to NSS 2010, the USA should invest in regional capabilities:

Regional organizations can be particularly effective at mobilizing and legitimating cooperation among countries closest to the problem. ... The United States is encouraging continued innovation and development of enhanced regional capabilities in the context of an evolving division of labor among local, national, and global institutions that seeks to leverage relative capacities. Where appropriate, we use training and related programs to strengthen regional capacities for peacekeeping and conflict management to improve impact and share burdens. (Obama, 2010, pp. 46-47)

Thus, regional states and organizations are important for the Obama Administration in terms of dealing with regional challenges. Their support towards dealing with regional challenges provides the legitimacy of USA actions while it intervenes in regional affairs, as well as the material-logistical support to handle those regional issues. Moreover, under regional formats, tight multilateral cooperation with regional states positively influences the USA regional involvement and enables it to monitor the evolution of the regional architecture to extract most benefits. As noted in the previous section, engagement with regional organizations as well as its initiation of TPP in Asia-Pacific supported by the Obama Administration served the very purpose of evolving the regional architecture in harmony with the USA interests.

Increased importance of regional organizations and states in the international activism of the Obama Administration is visible through their involvement in interventions, such as 2011 Libya military operation and military actions against ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) in Libya and Syria. In both instances, the USA cooperated with the Arab League whose members were also actively engaged in the interventions. 2011 NATO-led Libya intervention included three Arab League countries (Jordan, Qatar, United Arab Emirates (UAE)), while military operations in Libya

and Syria was supported by five Arab League nations (Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE).

The indicator of increased importance of regional organizations for the Obama Administration is the fact of the USA intense cooperation and membership with both traditional and new regional forums. In this sense, as noted in the previous section discussing the Obama Administration's rebalancing policy in Asia, the Administration paid a special attention to the increased USA role in Asia-Pacific regional architecture. Obama was also the first American president who addressed the African Union (including its predecessor, Organization of African Union). He also hosted first time ever a three-day US-Africa Leaders Summit which was the largest event any USA President has held with African heads of state and government. The Summit aimed to foster stronger ties between the USA and Africa. President Obama also intensified cooperation with Central and South American countries within already existing regional architecture and bilateral relations. Obama's careful engagement and regional economic initiatives, as well as the restoration of relations with Cuba, increased both the USA and its president's approval rates in traditionally hostile region (see Figure 3-9).

Through active international engagement policy of the Obama Administration, significant rise in approval ratings of the USA president took place not only in Central And South American countries but in all parts of the world (decrease started only in Russia from 2014, Jordan and Lebanon) (see Figure 3-10). It helped the Obama Administration to practice multilateral leadership and draw support towards its global agenda to deal with the hardest crises of its period. The examples of multilateral leadership of the Obama Administration are such US-led coordinated and coalition actions as the above-mentioned interventions against Libya and ISIL; handling the world financial crisis in tight cooperation with G-20; solution of Iranian nuclear crisis through historic Iran Deal that was preceded by significant toughening of sanctions against Iran, through UN Security Council Resolutions; in 2015, USA leadership ensured the historic Paris Agreement to combat climate change with the unprecedented participation of 187 countries, including the previously major opponent of the anti-climate change deals, China, who ratified the agreement in 2016.

The concept of multilateral leadership of the Obama Administration is compatible with the theoretical strategy of multilateralism involving limits to unilateralism and deepening ties with both traditional and new allies through international engagement. Multilateral leadership in both

the theoretical strategy and the Obama Administration implies mobilizing support to the hegemon's international agenda and its leadership.

Thus, the Obama Administration's multilateralist foreign policy is analogous to the one of the theoretical strategy of multilateralism in terms of its objectives and implementation mechanisms. In both cases, the goals strategy mechanism are to curb costs through sharing them with others and preserving the legitimacy of the hegemon and its international order. Moreover, the above-mentioned goals in both strategies are fulfilled through identical mechanisms such as actions against free-riding, persuasion and incentivization; the adaptation of the international order and multilateral leadership, sustained through empowering international institutions and active international engagement.

Conclusion

This chapter has studied the foreign policy strategy of the Obama Administration and revealed its compliance with the theoretical strategy of multilateralism developed in this dissertation. Compatibility of the strategies are established through analyzing both, declared policy as well as the actions of the Administration. Consequently, the two strategies have been proved to be similar in terms of their foundations, objectives and implementation mechanisms.

Foundations of the both strategies are the declining trend of the hegemon's relative power, thus both strategies are directed to constraining of the hegemonic decline. Hegemonic decline being the foundation of the Obama Administration's foreign policy strategy is established through two means. First is the examining of the trends in the distribution of power capabilities in contemporary international system, namely, observing the trends in the economic and military growth rates of the major powers that indicate the diminishment of the USA's relative power preponderance. Second, the foundations of the Obama Administration strategy are broadly described in the first NSS of the Administration, as well as the numerous other strategic documents as well as the speeches and remarks of the President. Conducted analysis of these documents illustrates that the foundational factor of the Administration's strategy is the changes in the distribution of power in the contemporary international system that has resulted in the rise of the new power centers, competing with the USA for influence in international relations.

After establishing the hegemonic decline to be the common foundational factor of the both strategies, the chapter has proceeded with revealing the compliance of the strategies in terms of their objectives and implementation mechanisms. As the study of the Obama Administration

strategy revealed, similar to multilateralism, it applies two major implementation mechanisms, threat categorization and multilateralist foreign policy, aimed at reducing the foreign policy costs of the USA and provision of its international leadership. Moreover, the mechanisms of both strategies address analogous determinants and moderating factors of hegemonic decline. Namely, threat categorization addresses the overextension stimulated by the permissive structure of international system, while multilateralist foreign policy, on the one hand, deals with the overextension conditioned by the order sustenance costs and preservation of the hegemon's legitimacy on the other.

Beyond implying the similar two major implementation mechanisms, the two strategies apply analogous means for executing these strategy mechanisms. The Obama Administration strategy identifies similar threats that need or need not be addressed by the USA as the strategy of multilateralism. Accordingly, the Administration took actions or restrained from acting based on the same rationale discussed in the theoretical strategy of multilateralism. Multilateralist foreign policy as the implementation mechanism the Administration's strategy, also similar to the theoretical strategy, realized its burden sharing objective through addressing free-riding through persuasion and positive incentivization, implying accommodation of the rising powers. Whist, preservation of USA legitimacy is provided through ensuring conforming to its leadership and order through turning the new power centers into the stakeholders of the order by rising their privileges within it.

Thus, the chapter has revealed the significant compliance between the foreign policy strategy of the Obama Administration and the theoretical strategy of multilateralism, which is demonstrated on the level of both, declarative policy and actions of the Administration. Establishment of the compliance has enabled the observation of the practical implementation of multilateralism's mechanisms as well as endorsed the validity of the letter through proving the fact that it was applied by the Administration of the current hegemon in order to constrain the USA's decline.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation has examined the nature of the optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon under the conditions when the emergence of a multipolar system is anticipated after the hegemonic decline. It has developed an analytical framework for the assessment of the optional foreign policy strategies, established the optimal one and defined its implementation mechanisms.

Literature review, conducted in the scope of this study has identified the **gaps of the existing foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon, leading to establishment of the necessity of further research to reveal the most optimal strategy. Namely, lack of theoretical reasoning has been ascertained as the major gap of the existing strategies**, making them look more like the practical action recommendations for the current hegemon, the USA. The existing strategies do not imply theoretical conceptualization of hegemony and/or hegemonic decline, neither the extensive analysis of the systemic consequences of hegemony and hegemonic decline. This, as revealed in the first chapter of this dissertation, results in three major deficiencies of the existing strategies, addressing which has been established to be the major objective of this study: (1) incapability of the strategies to assure that the causes of hegemonic decline are addressed without damaging the attributes of a hegemon and affecting its capability to secure its national interests; (2) lack of the analysis of the optimal possibilities of constraining hegemonic decline allowed by the specificity of respective systemic consequences; (3) incapability to illustrate the theoretical foundations of the foreign policy action recommendations given in the strategies that result in the vagueness of their relevance whenever the status-quo, or the IR settings of the time of their elaboration change.

To address the gaps of the existing strategies, **this dissertation has aimed to reveal the most optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon through the comprehensive theoretical reasoning, based on the theoretical conceptualization of hegemony and hegemonic decline and establishment of the specificity of systemic consequences of the case of hegemonic decline under examination** (entailing the transition of hegemonic system into the multipolar one). This goal of the study has been set in order to develop a strategy that implied the complex addressing of the determinants as well as the moderating factors of hegemonic decline by the most optimal mechanisms allowed under the specific systemic consequences, without affecting the attributes and capabilities of a hegemon to secure its national interests.

To attain the goal of the dissertation the **major research question, inquiring the nature of an optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon** has been divided into **five sub-questions**. First sub-question has aimed to establish the attributes of a hegemon; second, means and capabilities for sustaining hegemon's international influence and securing its national interests; third, the determinants of hegemonic decline and possibilities of its constraint; fourth, assessment criteria of the optional foreign policy strategies of a hegemon; and fifth, the implementation mechanisms of the optimal strategy.

Consequently, the **second chapter** of the dissertation, has started to address the research questions through conducting theoretical conceptualization of hegemony and hegemonic decline, **enabling to address the first four of the research questions**. The chapter has ascertained the attributes of a hegemon (power and willingness), as well as the determinants of hegemonic decline (overextension, natural tendency of restoring the balance of power in the international system) and established the necessity for the maintenance of the legitimate hegemonic order for sustaining its international influence and national interests. Consequently, an analytical framework has been developed through the establishment of the variables, costs and involvement, used for the classification and assessment of the foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon. Costs, affecting the state of hegemon's power resources, are empirical expression of decline determinants and moderating factors, established through the prior theoretical conceptualization of hegemonic decline, performed in the chapter. Respectively, the empirical expression of the means directed against the decline determinants are reflected upon the cost reduction. Subsequently, the costs as a variable indicate the extent of the influence of foreign policy over the volume of the hegemon's power resources (getting exhausted by high costs and preserved by relatively low ones) and gets diminished if right strategy is applied against the determinants of the decline.

Involvement is an empirical expression of the hegemonic attributes of power and willingness, established through the prior theoretical conceptualization of hegemony, performed in the chapter, and indicates the hegemon's impact on international relations. If costs demonstrate the pace of spending power resources of the hegemonic power, involvement is an indicator of successful foreign policy strategy of the declining hegemon, since it shows the latter's relative power and the chances of its impact on international relations. Integrating involvement as a variable into the analytical framework assessing the foreign policy strategies of the declining hegemon made it possible to appreciate the hegemon's strategy on its own decline and not just on its power resources that could also be saved through significant damage to the hegemon's involvement.

As a result, analytical framework entailing the two variables, costs and involvement, has enabled the assessment of the optional foreign policy strategies of a declining hegemon and establishment of the optimal one, implying the high involvement alongside the low costs. Therefore, at the end of the second chapter, the **major argument of the dissertation** has been developed: **the most optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon is the one that enables it to decrease its foreign policy costs draining its power resources, and at the same time, retain its involvement in international relations expressing its impact on international relations. Simultaneous attainment of cost decrease and involvement preservation has been established to be a key to a successful foreign policy of a declining hegemon as avoidance of the drain of its power resources is necessary for constraining the decline. At the same time, international influence is crucial for securing the national interests of a hegemon and enables it to exercise its leadership in international relations.**

After developing the analytical framework and defining the assessment criteria of the optimal strategy, the **third chapter** of the dissertation has examined the implementation mechanisms of such strategy, thus, **addressed the remaining fifth research question**. Development of the mechanisms has aimed at revealing the possibilities for addressing the determinants of hegemonic decline established in the second chapter of the dissertation. In particular, as a result of the theoretical conceptualization of hegemonic decline, the dissertation has described its three major determinants: overextension stipulated by the permissive structure of international system, overextension conditioned by the costs of order maintenance and natural power-balancing tendencies that are further fueled by a moderating factor, diminishment of hegemon's legitimacy. In order to address these determinants and the moderating factor, the two major mechanisms of strategy implementation have been developed: threat categorization and multilateralistic foreign policy.

While designing both mechanisms of the optimal strategy, their impact has been considered not only on foreign policy costs but on the hegemon's involvement as well. Simultaneous consideration of the two variables while working out the implementation mechanisms of the strategy was a difficult task as cost reduction often causes damage to the involvement, especially if the cost reduction takes place by either rejecting or under-performing the objectives and functions that condition the hegemonic influence over international relations. Thus, the mechanisms of strategy implementation designed in the dissertation are directed to cost reduction considering the prevention of major damage to the hegemon's involvement. Specifically, threat

categorization implies refusing addressing costly non-significant international challenges towards the hegemon's interests. This very mechanism allows addressing overextension conditioned by the permissive structure of the system and does not damage the hegemon's involvement as it only abandons unnecessary costs for securing its leadership and national interests.

The other mechanism of the strategy, multilateralist foreign policy, provides constraint of decline through such cost saving means as sharing the burden of order protection and preserving legitimacy, which, if reduced, aggravates balancing tendencies and rises foreign policy costs. Though the multilateralist foreign policy provides cost reduction, its final impact on involvement is only partially positive. Specifically, the results of multilateralist foreign policy on involvement are positive, since it allows the hegemon to address contemporary global issues more effectively, which enhances its order and leadership in international relations. On the other hand, provision of the strategy objectives imply accommodating rising powers and increasing their rights within the hegemonic system, which diminishes the hegemon's involvement – or its influence over international relations.

In this regard, multilateralism is a strategy directed towards constraining the hegemonic decline and not completely ceasing it. This is conditioned not just by the mechanisms of the strategy, having a negative impact on the state of a hegemon, but the systemic consequences implied by the particular case of decline discussed in the dissertation. In case of emerging multipolar system concurrent to the hegemonic decline, the dissertation has revealed that all other alternatives of the actions described in the multilateralist strategy would further aggravate the hegemon's state and its leadership. There are three reasons conditioning this considering the systemic consequences. First, when during the hegemonic decline rise of not one, but multiple states takes place, the hegemon is capable of directing its policy against declining through saving resources and improving its own rising pace but is less capable to affect the rise of the new power centers. The theoretical conceptualization of the hegemon conducted in the dissertation has revealed that the hegemon's resources allow it to exercise mostly consensual and not coercive leadership in international relations. Thus, if in the face of one challenger, the hegemon would have been capable of damaging it and hampering its rise, it will not be able to do the same in case of nuclear armed multiple challenges due to the destructiveness of such action for the hegemon itself. As a result, the pace of the hegemon's absolute power rise, due to effective use of resources and economic growth, might exceed the rise of a single challenger but not the collective rise of the latter. Respectively, the process of hegemonic decline will continue. Second, if the hegemon fails

to accommodate the new power centers as implied by the multilateralist foreign policy, even more aggravated diminishment of its involvement is expected. In this case, the hegemon spurs rising powers to become challengers to both its leadership and order that will complicate the realization of the hegemon's foreign policy agenda and pose an existential threat to its order and status of a hegemon.

Subsequently, multilateralism is a temporary, transitional foreign policy strategy for the declining hegemon. However, the dissertation has established that it still remains the optimal strategy for the latter. First of all, it is the best strategy for constraining the decline in the circumstances when ceasing it is non-feasible and allows preservation of the hegemonic status for a longer period of time. Second, the multilateralist strategy provides the chance for the hegemon to shape the post-hegemonic order into its own interests, and keep its power through saving its power resources. Thus, multilateralism is the optimal foreign policy strategy for the declining hegemon. Its relatively short run goal is to preserve the hegemony, while its long run objectives imply keeping the former hegemon as a strong pole in the post-hegemonic multipolarity, shaped in its interests.

After developing the optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon and its implementation mechanisms, the fourth chapter of the dissertation has proceeded with the case study of the Obama Administration foreign policy strategy in order to unveil its compliance with the theoretical strategy of multilateralism. The case study has revealed a significant analogy of the two strategies in terms of their foundations, objectives and implementation mechanisms. Consequently, the case study has illustrated practical realization possibilities of the theoretically constructed mechanisms of multilateralism. Moreover, through revealing similarity of the two strategies, the case study has validated the theoretical strategy developed in the dissertation by disclosing that analogous strategy has been developed and chosen to be implemented by the executive branch of the current hegemon, the USA.

Thus, this dissertation has developed an optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon based on the comprehensive theoretical study of hegemony and hegemonic decline, including the theoretical conceptualization of hegemony and hegemonic decline, and an extensive analysis of the systemic consequences of hegemony and hegemonic decline. As a result, the dissertation has studied and established the attributes of a hegemon and the determinants of its capability to secure its national interests, as well as the determinants and moderating factors of hegemonic decline. This has created the bases for the development of the optimal foreign policy strategy of a declining hegemon, implying the complex addressing of all causes as well as the aggravators of hegemonic

decline through imposing no or the least possible damage to the capabilities of a hegemon to secure its national interest and exercise international leadership. Consequently, **the dissertation has developed a novel analytical framework for the classification and assessment of the declining hegemon's optional strategies, revealed the optimal strategy and elaborated its implementation mechanisms.** Moreover, the dissertation has revealed the less studied issues of the IR literature through focusing on the systemic consequences of specific power distribution patterns on the decline of the hegemon and its strategies, setting an agenda for further research.

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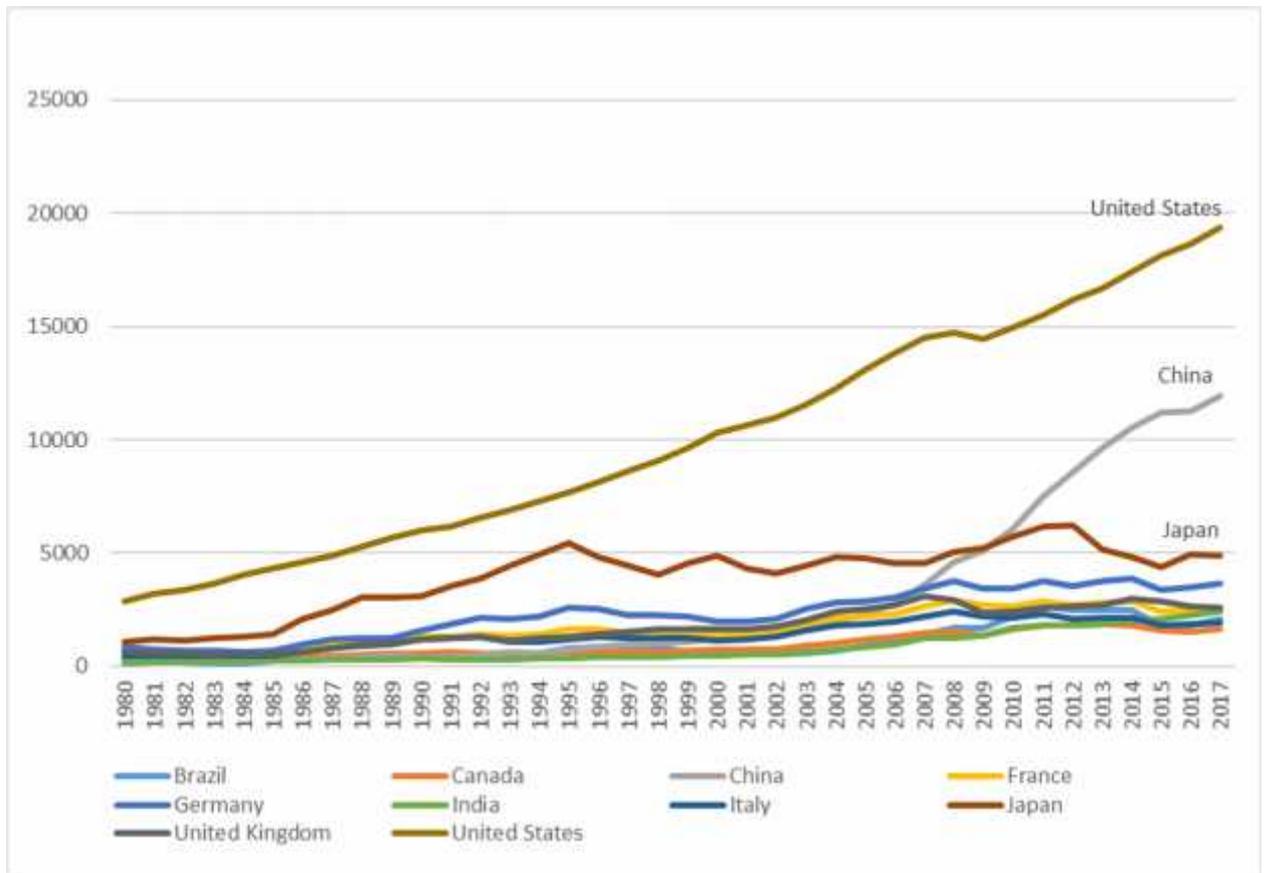
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Appendix 1.

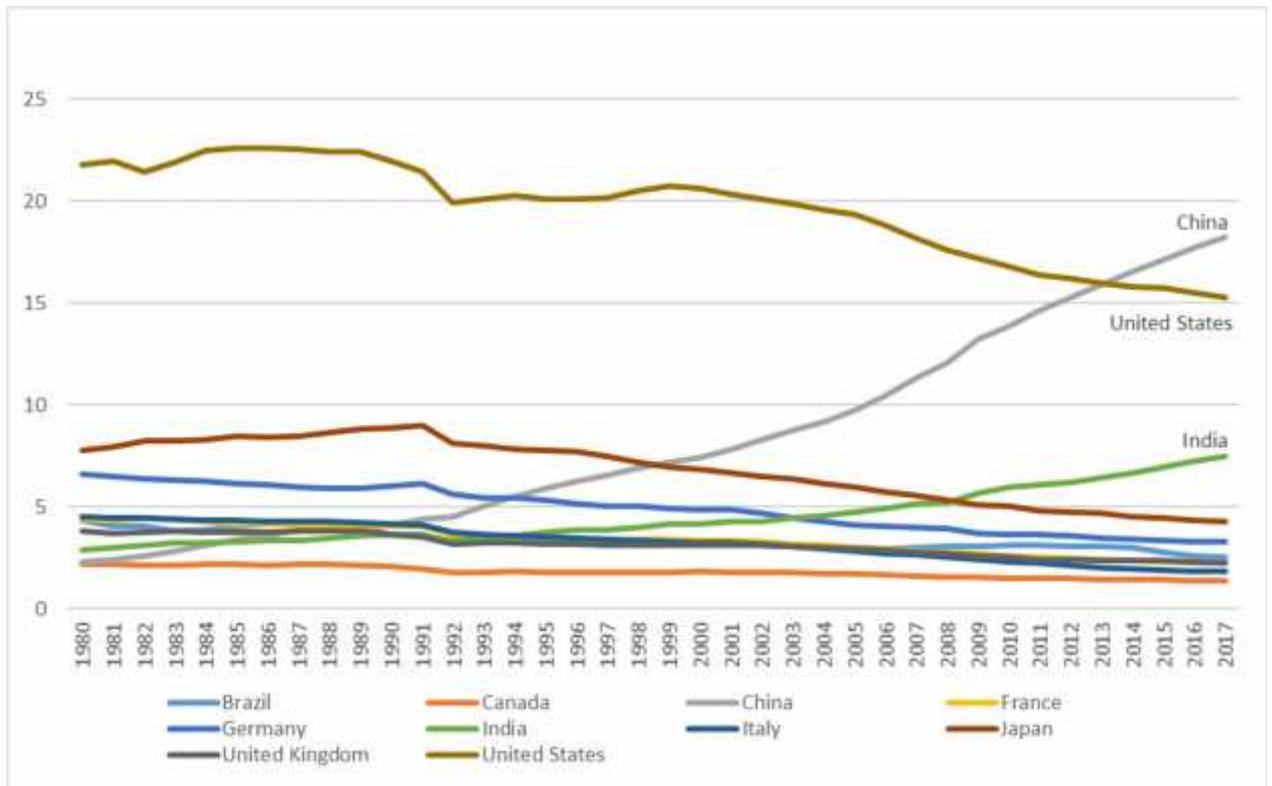
Figure 3-1 GDP (real) of G10 Countries.



Adopted from “IMF Data Mapper” by International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook*. Retrieved 20 February 2018, from <http://www.imf.org/external/datamapper>. Copyright 2017 by IMF.

Appendix 2.

Figure 3-2 GDP (PPP) of G10 Countries (Share of World).



Adopted from “IMF Data Mapper” by International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook*. Retrieved 20 February 2018, from <http://www.imf.org/external/datamapper>. Copyright 2017 by IMF.

Appendix 3.

Figure 3-3 GDP Growth Rate

The figure shows real GDP growth rate of Top 5 countries (annual percent change).

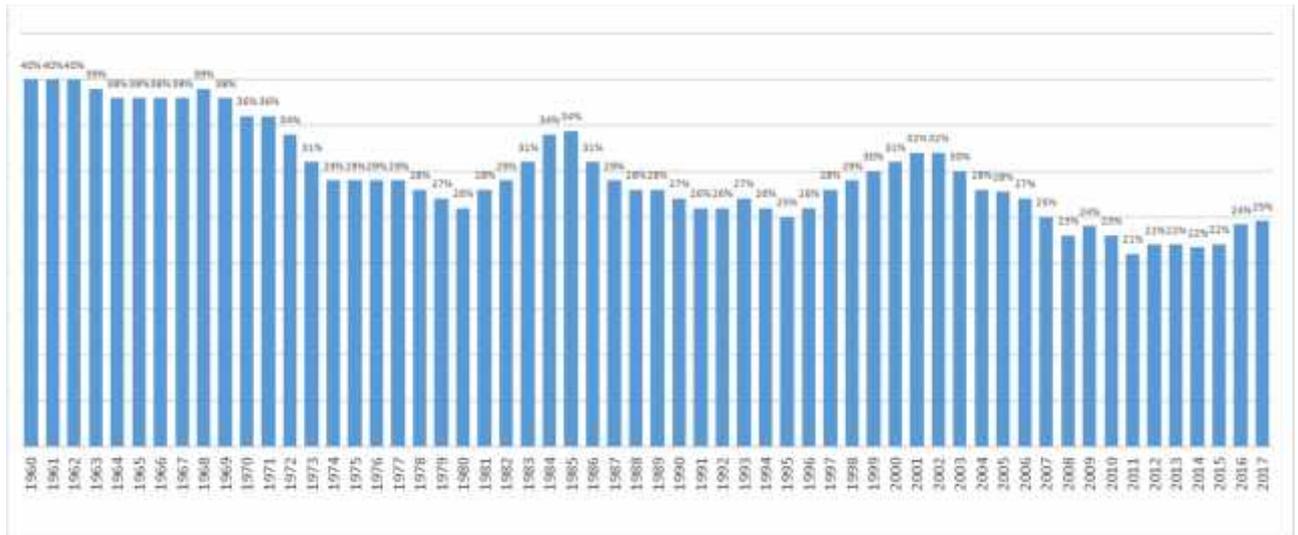


Adopted from “IMF Data Mapper” by International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook*. Retrieved 20 February 2018, from <http://www.imf.org/external/datamapper>. Copyright 2017 by IMF.

Appendix 4.

Figure 3-4 US GDP as % of Global GDP

The figure shows historical change of the USA GDP in terms of its percentage of global GDP from 1960 to 2017



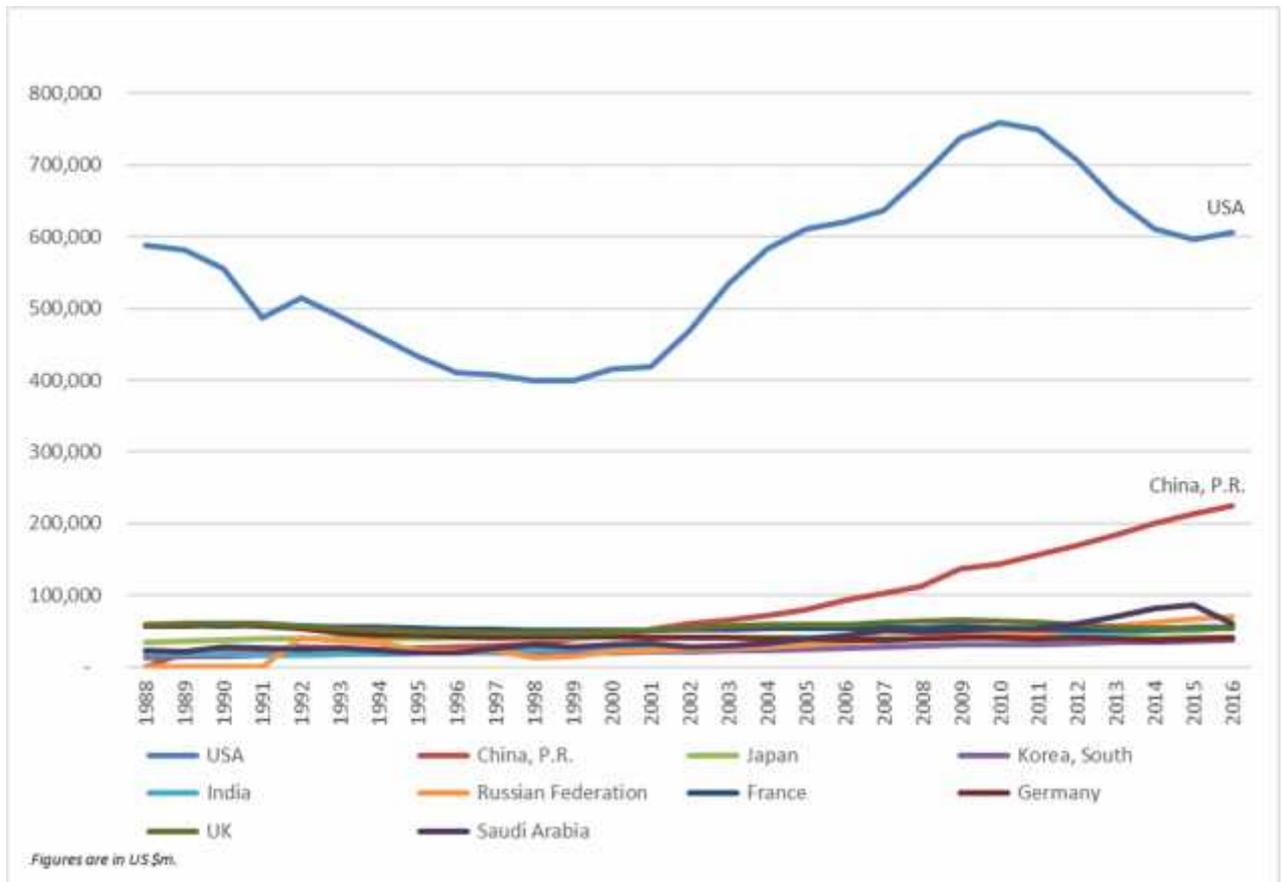
Adopted from “Databank | World Development Indicators” by World Bank, *World Development Indicators*. Retrieved 20 February 2018, from

<http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators>.

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Appendix 5.

Figure 3-5 Top 10 Countries by Military Expenditures

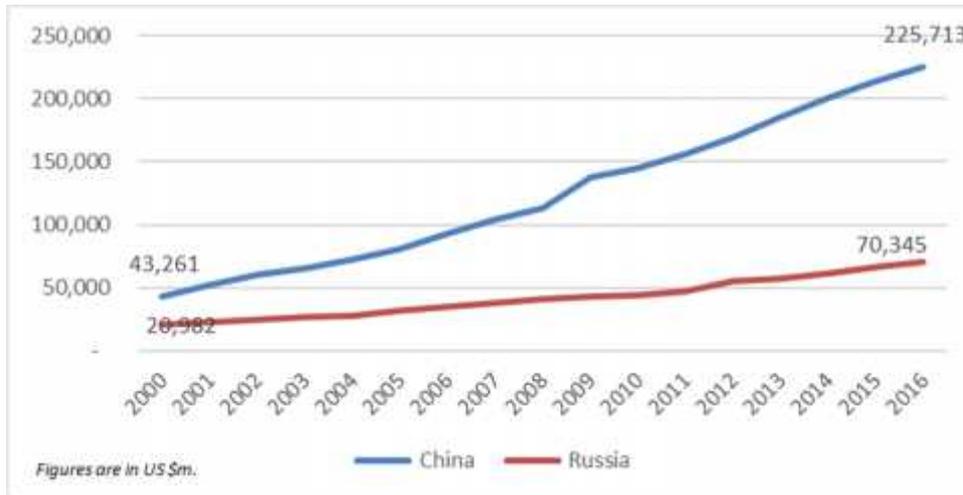


Adopted from “SIPRI Military Expenditure Database” by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *Sipri*. Retrieved 20 February 2018, from <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>. Copyright 2016 by SIPRI.

Appendix 6.

Figure 3-6 Military Expenditures of China and Russia

The figure shows comparison of Russia's and China's historical military expenditures from 2000 to 2016.

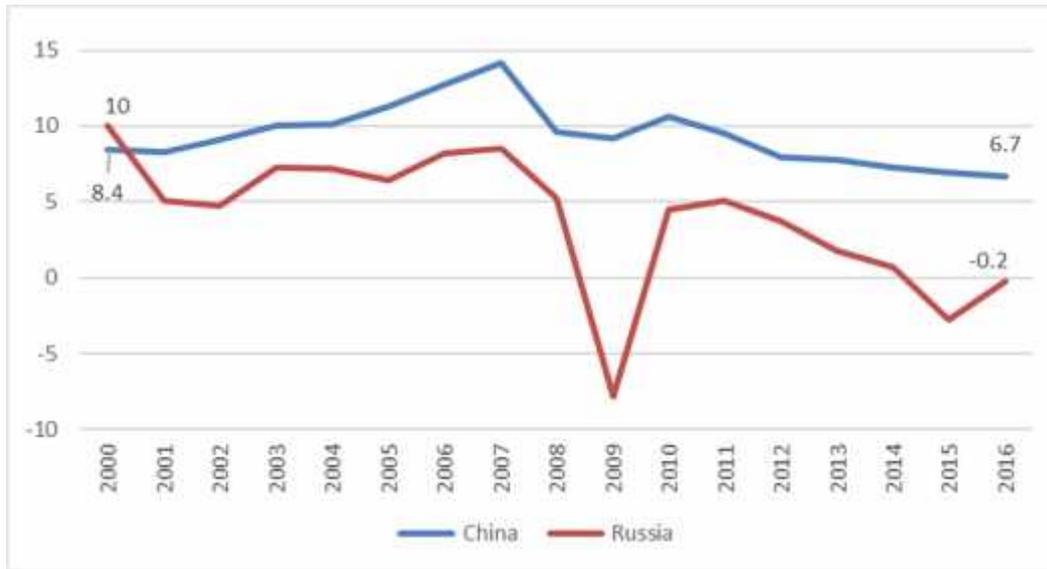


Adopted from “SIPRI Military Expenditure Database” by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *Sipri*. Retrieved 20 February 2018, from <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>. Copyright 2016 by SIPRI.

Appendix 7.

Figure 3-7 GDP Growth Rate of China and Russia

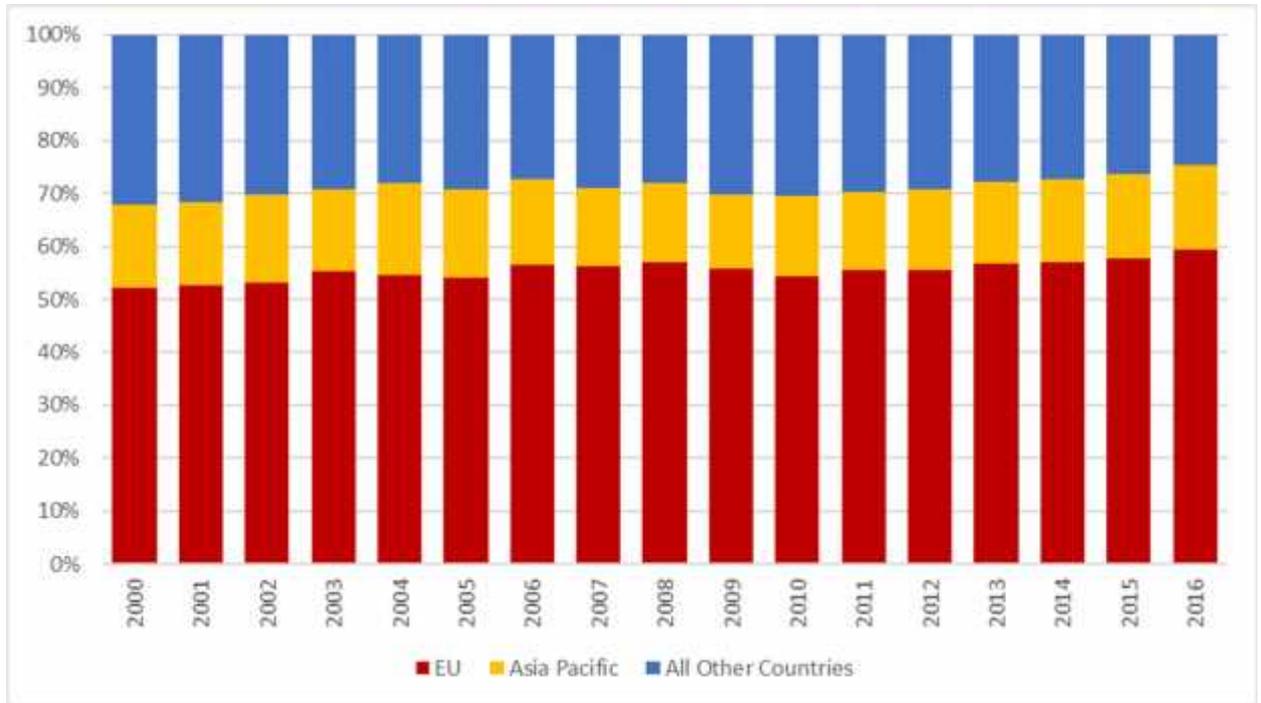
The figure shows comparison of Russia's and China's historical GDP growth rate from 2000 to 2016



Adopted from “IMF Data Mapper” by International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook*. Retrieved 20 February 2018, from <http://www.imf.org/external/datamapper>. Copyright 2017 by IMF.

Appendix 8.

Figure 3-8 USA Foreign Direct Investments

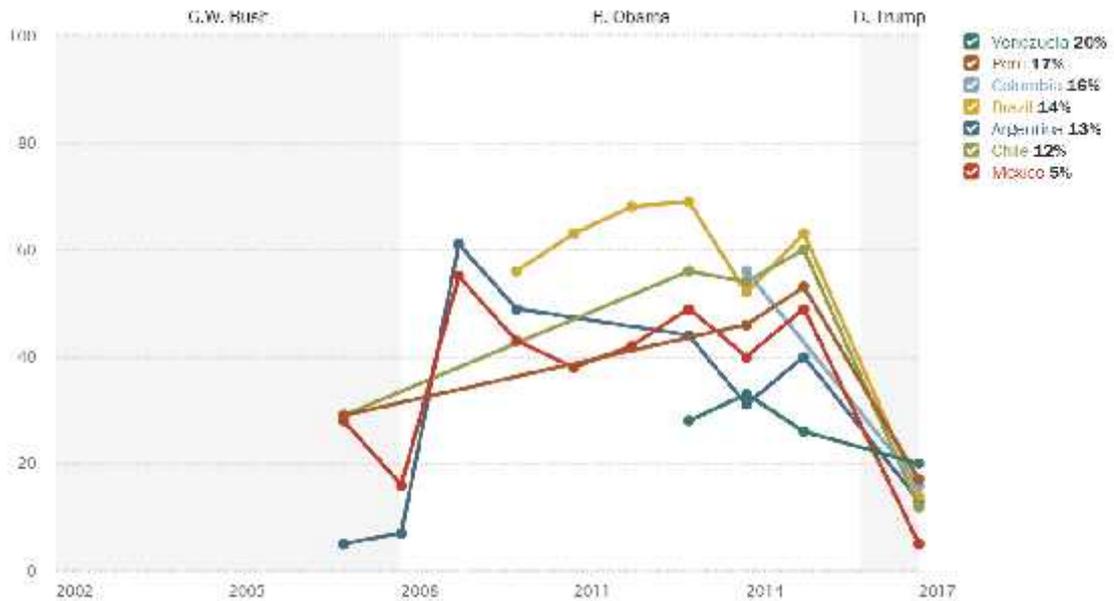


Adopted from “The Statistics Portal” by Statista, *Statista – The Statistics Portal for Market Data, Market Research and Market Studies*. Retrieved 20 February 2018, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/188579/united-states-direct-investments-in-europe-since-2000/>. Copyright 2018 by Statista.

Appendix 9.

Figure 3-9 Confidence in USA Presidents in Latin America

The figure shows percentage of population of Latin American countries saying that they have a very or some confidence in the U.S. President.



Adopted from “How Global Views of US and its President Change Over Time” by Pew Research Center, *Pew Research Center | Nonpartisan, Non-advocacy Public Opinion Polling and Demographic Research*. Retrieved 20 February 2018, from <http://www.pewglobal.org/interactives/us-image/>. Copyright 2018 by Pew Research Center.

Appendix 10.

Figure 3-10 Confidence in USA Presidents.

The figure shows how confidence in US Presidents (in terms of doing the right things in world affairs) have changed in 39 countries from 2007 to 2017

