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Realist Idea(l)s of Contemporary European Security: Offence-Defence Balancing Act Yesterday, Today, and... Tomorrow?

*We can understand that there will be war,
and still strive for peace. We can do that –
for that is the story of human progress;
that is the hope of all the world; and at this moment
of challenge, that must be our work here on Earth.*

Barack Obama,
Nobel Peace Prize Speech, Oslo 2009

Summary. Security has always been the centre of attention in understanding international relations. Since the declared end of the cold war, the manifold discourses and politics of European security became overheated in the whirl of perplexing and threatening developments. NATO's planned withdrawal from Afghanistan, along with its rising tensions with Russia, against the backdrop of tectonic revolutions and reconfiguration of regional power balances worldwide as well as Russia's explicit attempts to revise its power status vis-à-vis major competitors region- and worldwide, reflect only the top of the iceberg of challenges to European security for the decade(s) to come. The "return of history", as one may call such a development, invites to reconsider the realist thinking and theorising of international relations which has been shadowed until recently by euphoric liberal visions, inspired mainly by the success of integration in Europe and beyond. Hence, this review article aims to provide promising thus not much popular accounts that are sought to facilitate understanding of contemporary milestone contextual events in shaping international and European security. By doing so, it will draw on the achievements of one of the oldest schools and essentially present the comparative study of two signature works of modern realist scholarship: one almost a classical plea for the defence of offensive realism, and one recent piece addressing the offence of defensive realism – both stances undervalued within the integration-fevered European political science discourse, and thus

both increasingly wanted in view of geopolitical shifts that have been triggered in multiple nodes of power. In what follows, it will reveal the core assumptions, differences but also similarities of these realist accounts. Additionally it will assess their impact for shaping and shaking current and future European security constellation, pleading for an integrative and additive understanding of both explanatory tools as presented in John J. Mearsheimer's *Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War* (1990) and Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth's *Don't Come Home, America: The Case Against Retrenchment* (2012/2013).

Key words: European security, offensive realism, defensive realism, multipolarity, unipolarity, US hegemony, revisionist strategies, Russian neo-imperialism

Introducing the Beast: In “Survival” We Trust?

Each and every nearly complete decade, since the tectonic geopolitical shifts at the turn of 1989/1990s, is captured in the modern history of international relations and world politics. They are captured by events which significantly change even without that almost turbulent course, with – from a distance visible – milestones labelled “9/11”, “Afghanistan”, “Arab Spring”, “Russian Spring” to name just the most crucial decade-marking turning points. In *Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (2001)¹, John J. Mearsheimer predicts even tougher times ahead. All the merits of explanatory models of realism may be provided by exploring and explaining real-world politics as well as in formulating states' foreign policies notwithstanding, it remains rather not a very popular choice by the liberally institutionalised and indeed uniquely integrated European regional terrain. To put it succinctly – realism is a hard “sell” to European security scholars. It is difficult to sell realist currency because the controversies among the realist camps themselves unequivocally are related, particularly those balancing contemporary offensive/defensive stances of the oldest IR school. Whatever its “selling volumes”, realism is alive, and – after **an alleged ‘death’** during the early 1990s, which was declared by those who proclaimed the world was rapidly becoming peaceful – it “has made a stunning comeback” in the wake of 9/11 when peace-adoring “optimism has faded, if not disappeared altogether”, as it pleads John J. Mearsheimer².

One cannot find a reason for optimism in recent evidence of genuine realism in action. June 6, 2013, is the birthdate of a Russia-born **European anti-ballistic missile system “killer”**, as the Russian federal state authorities themselves called the successfully launched inter-continental ballistic missile of a new generation, which – strangely... or not (shall one cast a realist look) – came after the United

¹ J.J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York – London 2001.

² Idem, *Structural Realism*, in: *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, 3rd edition, ed. T. Dunne, M. Kurki, S. Smith, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013, p. 91.

States announced it would resume its ABM programme in Europe, with plans to station ABMs in Poland and the Czech Republic as well as estimates to cover the whole NATO territory in Europe by 2018, when a second land-based site would be established in northern Europe. Further security-related concerns should be inevitably reserved for such landmarking trends as European Union's "out of area" military engagement, China's questioned peaceful rise, Japan's transformed actor-ness in regional politics, not to forget about smaller-scale regional disturbances as inter-ethnic and international regional conflicts on Eurasian continent – both frozen and ongoing. To complete the picture of inappropriate optimism in regards to peace and peaceful cooperation on the continent³, the fresh stroke of the recent Russian aggression in Ukraine, with annexation in March 2014 of the Crimean peninsula, has to be added.

Troubled waters of European security, with all the possibly conceivable depth of the resulting impact for Eastern Europe in particular, impose upon the scholar community a necessity to present a clear and feasible explanatory model that shall allow to generate smarter policy recommendations for both major and minor actors in a seemingly equalised acting environment, the world-order-in-the-making. Such a model would have to inevitably take into account the newest developments in both discourses and practices of security, such as the discourse of interventionism vs responsibility to protect or hybrid war vs hybrid peace. The practices of security encompassed by those discourses include, for instance, the NATO's intent to withdraw by December 2014 its troops from Afghanistan⁴ and hybrid warfare deployed by Russia in Transdnistria, Georgia⁵ and more recently in Ukraine⁶, against the rising trend in reconceptualisation of security in terms of a reconceptualised notion of war⁷.

³ Although realists do generally not acknowledge possibilities of regional peace beyond the hegemonic context (peace being possible only in *captive* regions that are subject to the exclusive influence of one global power), this is not to postulate that the realist theory is a theory of war. Questioning from a historical perspective whether realism is "a theory of war or a theory of peace", Marc Trachtenberg comes at surprising – and definitely deviating from realists' own designations – conclusion: "Realism is thus at its heart a theory of peace, and it is important that it be recognised as such". He explains that: "Policies that are rational in power-political terms are not the fundamental source of international conflict: in themselves, by and large, they help make for a stable international order". M. Trachtenberg, *The Question of Realism: A Historian's View*, "Security Studies" 2003, 13(1), p. 194. See also: G. Merom, *Realist Hypotheses on Regional Peace*, "The Journal of Strategic Studies" 2003, 26(1).

⁴ G. Ratnam, *NATO to Plan Afghan Withdrawal without Pact, Hague Says*, "Bloomberg", 28 February 2014, www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-02-27/hagel-says-nato-to-plan-afghan-withdrawal-without-security-pact.html [28.02.2014].

⁵ E. Karagiannis, *The 2008 Russian-Georgian War via the Lens of Offensive Realism*, "European Security" 2013, 22(1).

⁶ R. Olearchyk, N. Buckley, *Ukraine's Security Chief Accuses Russia of Waging 'Hybrid War'*, "Financial Times", 28 May 2014, www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/789b7110-e67b-11e3-9a20-00144feabdc0.html?siteedition=intl#axzz37BgahsRB [29.05.2014].

⁷ C.F. Roennfeldt, *Productive War: A Re-Conceptualisation of War*, "Journal of Strategic Studies" 2011, 34(1).

In what follows, this article will present a comparative review of the two signature works of modern realist scholarship: one almost classical plea for the defence of offensive realism, and one recent piece addressing the offence of defensive realism – both stances undervalued within the integration-fevered European political science discourse, and thus both increasingly wanted in view of geopolitical shifts that are already underway. It will reveal the core assumptions, differences but also similarities of these realist accounts⁸ and assess their impact for shaping and shaking current and future European security constellation, pleading for an integrative and complementary understanding of both explanatory tools presented in John J. Mearsheimer's *Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War* (1990)⁹ and Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth's *Don't Come Home, America: The Case Against Retrenchment* (2012/2013)¹⁰.

In a dry, heartless, and muscular prose that John J. Mearsheimer is known for one could hardly not recognise in his *Back to the Future* the timbre of realism in its crudest contemporary form, i.e. the offensive one, which, under the common for realists premises of anarchical systemic structure, gives analytical primacy to the hostile and unforgiving nature of the international system as the cause of conflict. Mearsheimer's whole theoretical construction and conclusions of this widely cited analytical piece, produced shortly before the unexpected (even for the author himself!) transformation of the bipolar world order, rest upon the six easily identifiable in the text neorealist assumptions as derived from Kenneth N. Waltz's (1979)¹¹ "structural realism" theory¹²: **states** are the main actors in an international system which is **anarchical**; **survival and security** are the main goals of states; states can **never be sure about the intentions** of other states; all states possess some **military capability** and act **rationally**. These are basically the last two assumptions that define "offensive" character of Mearsheimer's approach (thereby distinguishing it from Waltz's presumably implicit thinking on the possession

⁸ For more on offensive-defensive realist accounts in theorising international politics, see S. Tang, *Fear in International Politics: Two Positions*, "International Studies Review" 2008, 10; J.W. Taliaferro, *Security Seeking under Anarchy: Defensive Realism Revisited*, "International Security" 2000, 25(3); B. Valeriano, *The Tragedy of Offensive Realism: Testing Aggressive Power Politics Models*, "International Interactions: Empirical and Theoretical Research in International Relations" 2009, 35(2); S.E. Lobell, *War is Politics: Offensive Realism, Domestic Politics, and Security Strategies*, "Security Studies" 2002, 12(2); E.J. Hamilton, B.C. Rathbun, *Scarce Differences: Toward a Material and Systemic Foundation for Offensive and Defensive Realism*, "Security Studies" 2013, 22(3).

⁹ J.J. Mearsheimer, *Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War*, "International Security" 1990, 15(1).

¹⁰ S.G. Brooks, G.J. Ikenberry, W.C. Wohlforth, *Don't Come Home, America: The Case Against Retrenchment*, "International Security" 2012, 37(3).

¹¹ K.N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Random House, New York 1979.

¹² See for instance: J.J. Mearsheimer, *Conversations in International Relations: Interview with John J. Mearsheimer* (Part II), "International Relations" 2006, 20(2), p. 231.

of military capabilities, and explicitly rejected possibility of rational actions of states) and make him argue that states are disposed to think offensively toward other states, even though their ultimate motive is simply to survive, which in short would mean that great powers have aggressive intentions:

If the states in the system simply want to survive – that’s their only goal – there is no reason why they should fear each other, since there is no reason to think that they will attack each other. After all, there is no assumption that says that those states have or might have aggressive intentions. The only assumption about intentions is that states aim to survive¹³.

By contrast, another realist analysis from the perspective of the twenty-first century, produced by Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth in their collective work *Don’t Come Home, America*, departs from an already perceivable post-Cold War reality which thus features a bit of another analytical perspective. Besides, the analytical scope itself differs. Unlike the Mearsheimer’s explicit neorealist focus on polarity and the likelihood of war and peace, Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth implicitly bring their (indeed diverse!) efforts and expertise together in order to explain both international outcomes of the world order in question and the foreign policies of individual states, primarily the United States, which is quite in a neoclassical realist tradition of theorising.

1. Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Tell Me How Many Poles Does Have the World?

Both theoretical approaches that underpin signature works of realist scholarship – Mearsheimer’s *Back to the Future* and Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth’s *Don’t Come Home, America* – are as much concerned about the consequences as about the determinants of power balance in the world where polarity enjoys a key attention. Presenting at the same time a uniting (for realist school) and dividing (for offensive and defensive realist camps) concept, polarity presents a crucial explanatory model in theorising on security dilemmas and is hence addressed in both analytical pieces in order to establish a “right” (wishful) and real balance of powers, as well as the patterns of subsequent counterbalancing that is unavoidable, yet all the “attempts at running the world generate resistance”¹⁴. All the differences in conceptualising the particular polarity of the world order notwithstanding, counterbalancing presents the leitmotiv in the two scholar security analyses – a bit

¹³ Ibidem, p. 231.

¹⁴ R.K. Betts, *American Force: Dangers, Delusions, and Dilemmas in National Security*, Columbia University Press, New York 2011, p. 278.

“softened” in Mearsheimer’s terms through the contemporary mode of “offshore balancing” (to be distinguished from a known “harder” version of an “onshore balancing”), and not that little “softened” via suggested “soft balancing” mechanisms advocated by Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth.

1.1. Back to the Future or Why Europe Should Miss the Cold War?

Offensive as it appears, a kind of an “amoral” realist causal logic has deliberately shaped Mearsheimer’s analytical world¹⁵ and walking in unknown with *Back to the Future* that focused on the following central questions: how will the end of the Cold War and departure of the superpowers affect the likelihood of war in Europe? More broadly, what theories best explain conflict before and during the Cold War and, hence, best predict the post-Cold War world? What policy prescriptions does the best theory suggest?

In explaining his visions on the advanced central questions, Mearsheimer analytically departs in the first part of the article *Back to the Future* from the causal study of peace that lasted in Europe since the end of the World War II up the turning point of the year 1990. In a brief statement, the author argues that these were “bipolarity, an equal military balance, and nuclear weapons [that] have fostered peace in Europe over the past 45 years”¹⁶. Hence, three factors account, according to Mearsheimer, for peaceful coexistence of states within the so called “long peace” period: (1) bipolar structure of international system, (2) balanced power distribution, and (3) appearance and control of nuclear weapons. Interestingly, that the second and third factors, i.e. “the distribution and character of military power”¹⁷, are indeed regarded as the roots of both war and peace, whereby the genuine key to a particular constellation in world politics – conflict or cooperation – lies more in the structure of the international system, which is preeminent-wise seen anarchical¹⁸. Quite unusually for the realist line of arguing, Mearsheimer also deploys in his writing the viability of domestic factors – hyper-nationalism being the first to mention – that might “also affect the likelihood of war, and have helped cause the post-war peace”¹⁹, though he emphasises once again²⁰ and throughout the whole text the causal primacy of the international system structure. The anarchic posture of international system has, after Mearsheimer, two principal conse-

¹⁵ G.H. Snyder, *The Mearsheimer’s World – Offensive Realism and the Struggle for Security: A Review Essay*, “International Security” 2002, 27(1).

¹⁶ J.J. Mearsheimer, *Back to the Future*, op. cit., p. 51.

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 6.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 11.

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 7.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 12.

quences – uncertainty about intentions of other states and survival as a state’s main goal, yet “other states are potential threats, and no international institution is capable of enforcing order or punishing powerful aggressors”²¹. In this context, survival is conceived rather pro-actively, in a sense that it imposes upon security-seeking states the prescription to act, not react, which is why Mearsheimer claims that states “seek to survive under anarchy by maximising their power relative to other states, in order to maintain the means for self-defence”²². As a result, “[r]elative power, not absolute levels of power, matters most to states”²³ and make them “fit” for international competition from which a particular world order is said to develop²⁴.

Given such a competitive nature of the political world that is deprived, in Mearsheimer’s realist view, of a(ny) policing authority (be it a world government or a government of a world’s “police state”) and therefore is lacking hierarchical governance structures, heterarchical anarchy instrumentalises military power of states in shaping the world order. Thereby, Mearsheimer advances quite an axiom (for the states which are regarded by him as rational actors!) that the competitive world is “peaceful when it is obvious that the costs and risks of going to war are high, and the benefits of going to war are low”²⁵. However, this quasi-axiom will inevitably become refutable as soon as the error margin widens, which is certainly the case with the changing nature of international system that might feature more than two power poles and therefore provide complexity for a strategic calculus. With such a possible complexity and miscalculation as analytical and political errors in mind, Mearsheimer deploys in his *Back to the Future* study three structural models to explain the probability of war and peace in the decades to come after 1990, respectively: (1) bipolarity; (2) unbalanced multipolarity; and (3) balanced multipolarity. Consciously bypassing hegemony as a third possible option of the distribution of power (that logically might lead to the unipolar system structure), Mearsheimer contends that there are primarily “two principle arrangements of power possible among states”²⁶ – bipolarity and multipolarity. From these viable configurations of power arise, following John Mearsheimer’s *Back to the Future*, three analytical models, with their core features of relevance for maintaining peace in Europe: **bipolarity** as a most peaceful model; **unbalanced multipolarity** as the model most prone to conflict and war; and **balanced multipolarity** as a moderate mix of the extreme first two models. If compared, the two multipolar systems are perceived as instable in terms of their proneness to conflict and war, whereby the

²¹ Ibidem.

²² Ibidem.

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ Ibidem, p. 53.

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 12.

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 13.

bipolar one – as a stable model structure. His conception of system’s “**stability**” (in author’s terms defined as a peacefulness only!) Mearsheimer explains by the following three factors: conflict dyads, power imbalances, and miscalculation potential²⁷. Such a pole-driven perspective allows Mearsheimer to claim further that “*ceteris paribus*, war is more likely in a multipolar system than a bipolar one”²⁸, as the number of conflict dyads is greater, likelihood of power imbalances, including two states ganging up on one, is greater, and the prospects for deterrence are smaller, yet the potential for miscalculation adversely rises. In addition, the realist author contends that “balancing in a multipolar world must also surmount difficult coordination problems”²⁹.

1.2. Don’t Come Home, America or Why Europe Should Believe the U.S. is Home Alone?

As argued above, Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry and William C. Wohlforth implicitly follow a neoclassical realist tradition of theorising in their analytical efforts put together to explain both international outcomes of the world order as such and the foreign policies of individual states themselves, primarily the United States. As a third generation of realism, that derives from both Hans Morgenthau’s classical realism and Kenneth N. Waltz’s neorealism (structural realism), neoclassical realism maintains classical focus on international system and integrates analysis of intervening internal variables, as e.g. domestic structure factors. As Rose put it succinctly:

[Neoclassical realism] explicitly incorporates both external and internal variables. [...] Its adherents argue that the scope and ambition of a country’s foreign policy is driven first and foremost by its place in the international system and specifically by its relative material capabilities. This is why they are realists. They argue further, however, that the impact of such power capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex, because systemic pressures must be translated through intervening variables at the unit level. This is why they are neoclassical³⁰.

Not surprisingly, therefore, that the tone in *Don’t Come Home, America* sounds “milder”, and the analysis itself plays significant attention to the variables that would hardly appear on the plain surface of John J. Mearsheimer’s realist analytical blade. It shall be noted however, that this difference arises on the level of

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 14.

²⁸ Ibidem.

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 15.

³⁰ G. Rose, *Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy*, “World Politics” 1998, 51(1), p. 146.

auxiliary argumentation (sic!), yet the core system-related assumptions – as it will be shown below – are maintained much in the same vein, so that only auxiliary assumptions about the implications of system structure and the influence of unit-level variables vary. The difference is further reinforced by **seemingly** liberal elements of theorising (e.g. references to the role of international institutions as GATT, WTO, IMF, etc.) that can be implicitly derived from the collective writing piece of Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth. It might be the **result** of co-operation of two defensive realists (Brooks and Wohlforth) with a prominent liberal internationalist (Ikenberry), although the **reason** of involving liberal internationalist perspective is still to be established (to synthesise or emphasise once again the importance of neo/neo synthesis? to provide a comprehensive, contra-argumentative analysis with a wider deployability for policy-making? or simply to show that – regardless of the point of departure and logic of arguing – the analytical outcome and policy recommendations here converge?...).

Brooks et al. base their theoretical construction on the – indeed different from Mearsheimer's – assumption about the world order that arose from anarchy in a post-Cold War period, the stable U.S.-American **unipolarity**. Such a vision justifies, for the authors, the hegemonic grand strategy of U.S.' "deep engagement" world-wide, including Europe³¹. In his earlier work, Wohlforth³² defines the explanatory model, which is implicitly traceable in the most recent collective analysis authored by Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth. According to the Wohlforth's analytical model³³, the international system is unambiguously unipolar, and therefore – prone to peace which, in turn, is durable. Besides, Wohlforth further argues why such an explanatory model would be an appropriate analytical tool:

It [i.e. *unipolarity*] is already a decade old, and if Washington plays its cards right, it may last as long as bipolarity. For many decades, no state is likely to be in a position to take on the United States in any of the underlying elements of power. And, as an offshore power separated by two oceans from all other major states, the United States can retain its advantages without risking a counterbalance. The current candidates for polar status (Japan, China, Germany, and Russia) are not so lucky. Efforts on their part to increase their power or ally with other dissatisfied states are likely to spark local counterbalances well before they can create a global equipoise to U.S. power³⁴.

Such an unworried and confident formulation would inevitably encounter doubts if one casts the look from a post-2001 perspective that – along with (earlier barely anticipated) new threats to U.S.' and international security as terrorism – encom-

³¹ S.G. Brooks, G.J. Ikenberry, W.C. Wohlforth, op. cit., p. 24.

³² W.C. Wohlforth, *The Stability of a Unipolar World*, "International Security" 1999, 24(1).

³³ Ibidem, pp. 7-8.

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 8.

passes i.e. also the reconfiguration of regional power balance, with neo-imperial Russia, allegedly imperial European Union³⁵ and hegemonic-in-the-making China as potential rivals of the United States.

Notably, the picture of stable U.S.-American unipolarity in Brooks et al.'s *Don't Come Home, America* might well be drawn from William C. Wohlforth's sustainable conception of 'stability' that – in contrast to John J. Mearsheimer's atemporal perception of stability as peacefulness only – also encompasses durability as an inherent constitutive mechanism. As argued in Wohlforth's original wording:

I define 'stability' as peacefulness and durability. Kenneth Waltz first conflated these two meanings of stability in 'The Stability of a Bipolar World'. He later eliminated the ambiguity by defining stability exclusively as durability in 'Theory of International Politics' (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979). I avoid ambiguity by treating peacefulness and durability separately. Durability subsumes another common understanding of stability: the idea of a self-reinforcing equilibrium. To say that an international system is durable implies that it can experience significant shifts in power relations without undergoing fundamental change³⁶.

Under this angle of view, the consistency of arguments in defence of U.S.-American unipolar stability as manifested by Wohlforth in cooperation with Brooks and Ikenberry becomes more difficult to challenge:

It is now generally understood that the current grand strategy of deep engagement runs no risk of generating 'hard' counterbalancing. When properly specified, realist balance of power theory does not predict counterhegemonic balancing against the United States: the conditions that sparked internal and external counterbalancing against past leading states – notably the existence of contiguous peer rival great powers – do not apply³⁷.

Hence, this is a unipolar international system, which is believed to have defined post-Cold War stability, "hegemonic stability" – according to Brooks et al.³⁸, yet war with a rising challenger (whatever its particular regional "origin") is unlikely because nobody is able to counter-balance the sheer concentration of U.S. power. Furthermore, any counter-balancing alliance would also be under-

³⁵ See for instance: J. Zielonka, *Europe as Empire: The Nature of the Enlarged European Union*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2006. In his study, Wohlforth pays attention to Germany and France as potential U.S. rivals, thus disregards them as being unable to challenge the U.S.-American hegemony and pursue an onshore balancing; because of his realistic "glasses" – with an imposed visibility of states as only actors in the international system – the author doesn't treat the EU (lead by potential hegemons, Germany and France) as a regional locus of power in Europe which can transform in a hegemonic competitor vis-à-vis the United States. W.C. Wohlforth, op. cit.

³⁶ W.C. Wohlforth, op. cit., p. 8.

³⁷ S.G. Brooks, G.J. Ikenberry, W.C. Wohlforth, op. cit., p. 20.

³⁸ Ibidem, p. 24.

mined by inherent regional balancing dynamics. Following this causal logic, which is manifestly expressed in tradition of “defensive realism”, it would be reasonable to assume further that European and Asian powers have no reason to counter-balance since they do not fear a benign (i.e. survival-striving only!) hegemon. As Ikenberry argued in his recent *Liberal Leviathan* (2011)³⁹, U.S. **hyper puissance** and preponderance can effectively serve to stabilise the international system and shore up international society, more so because the United States has the interest and has previously shown the inclination to be a responsible (i.e. benign) hegemon. In this regard, European security concerns and defensive realist optimism are reconcilable. What is not reconcilable with realist thinking is the perception of a hierarchical (sic!) international system that would logically belie such a pro-unipolar arguing in Ikenberry’s own work and his collaborate study with Brooks and Wohlforth. With firm belief in the anarchical, and therefore – heterarchical, nature of international system, Mearsheimer doesn’t buy the idea of U.S.-American unipolarity neither in *Back to the Future*, nor in his more recent *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*; whereas accepting in the latter one piece of work that the U.S. has the largest portion of economic and military power in the world, the author nevertheless admits that two other states are currently capable of military resisting the United States – China and Russia. Instead, Brooks et al. – in their firm belief that “[w]hen properly specified, realist balance of power theory does not predict counterhegemonic balancing against the United States”⁴⁰ – idiosyncratically do not buy both realist and liberal arguments on counterhegemonic balancing, be it “**hard balancing**” in form of alliance formation (“institutionalised interstate security cooperation against the United States that would not occur if America retrenched”), “**internal balancing**” (“the conversion of latent capacity into military power that would not occur if the United States retrenched”), or “**soft balancing**” (“the use of institutions and other nonmilitary means to hamstring U.S. policy that would not occur if the United States retrenched”)⁴¹. An evolutionary out-of-balance argument can be traced back, with certainty, in Brooks and Wohlforth’s *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy*⁴² that advocates the account of hegemonic stability theory applied by both realist and systemic schools of thought in international relations.

³⁹ G.J. Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order*, Princeton University Press, Princeton – Oxford 2011.

⁴⁰ S.G. Brooks, G.J. Ikenberry, W.C. Wohlforth, op. cit., p. 20.

⁴¹ Ibidem.

⁴² S.G. Brooks, W.C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton – Oxford 2008, pp. 22-59.

2. What Future for European Security? Offensive/Defensive Realist Predictions and Policy Prescriptions Compared

With causal logic of both studies (*Back to the Future* and *Don't Come Home, America*) unveiled the particular operating explanation models. It can be argued that authors' further theory about the dynamic of international system in general and its implications for European security in particular, would depart from distinct analytical points: Mearsheimer's open "sea of (un)balanced multipolar instability" would constitute a predominantly hostile environment for states survival and require constant maximisation of relative power in order to survive; Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth's "bay of unipolar stability" would, by contrast, demand preservation of absolute (only?) power, so that the maintaining of the status quo would be the most appropriate survival strategy.

2.1. The Pitfalls of (Un)Balanced Multipolarity and (Un)Manageability of European Security

Those who do not share illusions of a "unipolar moment", as I myself neither do, would celebrate affinity with Mearsheimer's dry and confident prediction back to the year 1990 when the tectonic shifts in international relations commenced: "It is certain that bipolarity will disappear, and multipolarity will emerge in the new European order"⁴³. Following the author⁴⁴, this is the departure of the superpowers – the U.S. and the USSR – that would transform Europe from a bipolar to a multipolar system, with all the "nasty" consequences, such as emergence of new major powers (regional hegemons), rising power inequities and conflict-proneness, as well as disappearance of pacifying effect of the superpowers' nuclear weapons maintained in Europe.

The widely cited Mearsheimer's piece⁴⁵ included actually four main predictions ("principal scenarios") for the post-Cold War European geopolitical landscape: de-nuclearised Europe, continuation of current patterns of nuclear ownership, and nuclear proliferation – well or ill managed, respectively. The latter scenario – although wishful – is straight-ahead doubted by Mearsheimer in a way he admits that even though "[t]his outcome probably provides the best hope for maintaining peace in Europe", nevertheless "it is not likely that proliferation would be well-managed"⁴⁶. Against the backdrop of progressive nuclearisation of the Eurasian continent in two decades that followed (with NATO-managed nuclear weapons shared by Germany,

⁴³ J.J. Mearsheimer, *Back to the Future*, p. 31.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, pp. 7-8.

⁴⁵ Ibidem.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, p. 8.

Italy, Netherlands, Turkey; NPT-designated nuclear arsenals development by China, France, the UK, in addition to the U.S. and Russia; as well as ill-managed proliferation of nuclear weapons to India, Pakistan, North Korea, and apparently Iran and Israel), it is indeed a daunting task to defeat Mearsheimer's vision. Focusing the tools of his offensive realism on Europe and Northeast Asia, he foresees greater instability, with war not excluded, in these regions over the decades that followed the reference year of 1990. The prediction is based on two central variables that are themselves interlinked: (1) whether the U.S. troops remain deployed in these regions, and (2) possible changes in regional power structures. In this aspect, Mearsheimer shares the widespread belief that peace in these areas is currently being sustained by the "American pacifier", i.e. the physical presence of the U.S.' troops. Much will depend, therefore, on whether the United States remains so engaged, but that will turn, he argues, on possible changes in the structure of power in each region, in particular, on whether a potential hegemon arises. If that does not occur, the United States eventually will withdraw its troops. The withdrawal would increase the potential for conflict, first by removing the "pacifier" effect and second by fostering change in the regional power structures.

Eventually, Mearsheimer comes down on the side of the scenario predicting that U.S. troops will probably come home sometime. Withdrawal of U.S.-American troops from Iraq (2009-2011) or Afghanistan (2011-2014), which then, were not even on the Mearsheimer's radar, might apparently contribute to the change of related security discourse in Europe and cause further retrenchment of United States' military deployments in Europe, for instance, from Germany, Italy, Spain, Turkey, Greece, Portugal, Norway, etc. Furthermore, the father of offensive realism believes that after the United States withdraws its troops, Germany will acquire its own nuclear weapons, thus transforming itself into a great power and a potential hegemon. The United States would not redeploy its forces because the other European powers would be able to keep Germany from dominating Europe without U.S. help. Without the American pacifier, Europe would be subject to intense security competition, and possibly war, because the structure of its regional system would have been transformed to the most dangerous type – unbalanced multipolarity. Particularly dangerous would be security competition between Germany and Russia, "the two most powerful states in post-Cold War Europe" "physically separated by a band of small, independent states in Eastern Europe"⁴⁷, for control of central Europe; whereby "[t]he potential for conflict in this system would be considerable"⁴⁸. Moreover, "[c]onflict between Eastern European states is also likely to produce instability in a multipolar Europe" where, in Cold War times, "[t]here has been no war among the states in that region [...] because the Soviets have tightly controlled them"⁴⁹.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, p. 32.

⁴⁸ Ibidem.

⁴⁹ Ibidem, p. 33.

Mearsheimer's offensive realist logic of theorising turns unequivocally triumphal in the context of then anticipated revival of imperialist traditions that nowadays define Russian international positioning and politics: "The Soviet Union also might eventually threaten the new status quo. Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Europe does not mean that the Soviets will never feel compelled to return to Eastern Europe"⁵⁰.

The demonstrated Mearsheimer's unrelenting focus on power-security competition among great powers means that many aspects of international politics normally considered essential are either given short shrift or omitted entirely – what matters most are aggression-inclined anarchical international system and power-hungry states seeking survival and security. Under these premises, three policy prescriptions were then in order for the author⁵¹: (1) encouraging a process of limited nuclear proliferation in Europe (specifically a secure German nuclear deterrent), (2) a continued U.S. presence in Europe even if the Soviet Union withdraws, and (3) efforts to forestall the re-emergence of hyper-nationalism in Europe. In detail, these were formulated as follows:

First, the United States should encourage the limited and carefully managed proliferation of nuclear weapons in Europe; Second, Britain and the United States, as well as the Continental states, [...] must maintain military forces that can be deployed to the Continent to balance against states that threaten to start a war; Third, a concerted effort should be made to keep hyper-nationalism at bay, especially in Eastern Europe⁵².

After all, to Mearsheimer, there was "little the Americans or the Western Europeans [could] or [were] likely to do to perpetuate the [wishful] Cold War"⁵³, which is why they were said to follow the above mentioned policy prescriptions if their rational goals were to survive in a profoundly changing world order. The recalibration of the regional security complex, which took place in the wake of Russia's reinvigoration of the cold war strategic behaviour, has revealed that this is not only the US, an axiomatically pre-conceived "poster child"⁵⁴ of offensive realism, but also revisionist Russia that is practicing offensive realist politics. A comeback of Russia to Eastern Europe, not only in terms of aggressive politics vis-à-vis Ukraine or Moldova, but also in terms of diverse partisan politics of supporting (ultra)nationalist forces within the European Union (for instance, in Hungary, Austria, Slovak Republic, not to mention its traditional ally France), is only another example of confirmed offensive realist assumptions made at the beginning of the last century.

⁵⁰ Ibidem.

⁵¹ Ibidem, p. 8.

⁵² Ibidem, pp. 54-56.

⁵³ Ibidem, p. 53.

⁵⁴ Whereas demonstrating how America's rise to regional hegemony in the Western Hemisphere conforms to offensive realism's predictions, Mearsheimer calls the United States the "Poster Child" for offensive realism J.J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, op. cit., p. 38. See also in this regard: C. Layne, *The "Poster Child for Offensive Realism": America as a Global Hegemon*, "Security Studies" 2002, 12(2).

2.2. The Promise of a (N)ever Existing Unipolar Moment for European Security

On the other hand, Brooks et al.⁵⁵ appear to contend that there is no reason for Cold War nostalgia, yet the new era of international relations and the new world order, shaped through consistent projection of hegemonic power by the single superpower that survived, the United States, feature stability, a unipolar stability. The confidence for this kind of assertions might have been drawn by the authors of *Don't Come Home, America* from the preceding piece of theory produced by one of the co-authors, Ikenberry – *Liberal Leviathan*. In it, Ikenberry tries to bridge the gaps in viewing unipolar setting from distinct theoretical angles whereby he contends that the current order might well integrate the features typical for both realist, liberal and systemic perspectives, with the United States “at the center of a one-world system defined in terms of open markets, democratic community, cooperative security, and rule-based order”⁵⁶. For such a setting, Ikenberry identifies “three general logics of order: balance, command, and consent”⁵⁷. The author further elucidates, that the “**balance system**” is based on a multipolar or a bipolar distribution of power⁵⁸, which is the logic theorised by the realist tradition: sovereign states balance against each other in an anarchical system; “**command**” is the imperial logic of order, where a leading state creates and enforces order in the shape of a hierarchy, as in the Roman and other empires of the ancient world, and the colonial empires of the modern world; and “**consent**” is the liberal logic of order which has unfolded among liberal democracies that have shaped common rules and institutions in order to promote their cooperation. Curiously enough, Ikenberry allocates all the three elements to the current international order that features a balancing coalition against Russia and perhaps China, a negotiated consent-order with European democracies, and a “hub-and-spoke” – imposed order in other parts of the world: “The American order is hierarchical but – at least in its Western core – it is also organised around open and loosely rule-based relationships”⁵⁹.

If such a world-order comprehension logic is implied for Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth's theorising in *Don't Come Home, America*, then the confusion about blurredness and promiscuity of statements might fade away – yet the authors' aim might well have been to present the irrefutability of the consequences and the policy options for the United States, **regardless** theoretical approaches that would underlie the particular shape of the world order. Hence, Brooks et al. could have implicitly targeted the narrowing of the indeed “large number of options, including isolation-

⁵⁵ S.G. Brooks, G.J. Ikenberry, W.C. Wohlforth, op. cit.

⁵⁶ G.J. Ikenberry, op. cit., p. 32.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, p. 47.

⁵⁸ Ibidem, pp. 35-78.

⁵⁹ Ibidem, p. 61.

ism, offshore balancing, selective engagement, collective security, and primacy”⁶⁰ that the scholarly debate on U.S. grand strategy parsed within the first two post-Cold War decades. Such a strategy doesn’t however, narrow the perspective on the future dynamics of the world order (which is seen differently even within a one theoretical school) and opens a broad speculation door to the question of what kind of future international order that is in the cards. Although this might not have worried Brooks et al. very much, since all the theoretical approaches they brought together in the comparative causal analysis, point to the core message that has given title to their collective research: Don’t come home, America!

On these premises, *Don’t Come Home, America* entails references to Mearsheimer’s “balance of power”⁶¹ and Stephen M. Walt’s “balance of threat”⁶² realist theories, Ikenberry’s “liberal internationalism”⁶³, liberal institutionalist theory⁶⁴, system and domestic structure approaches, what – I believe – should not be misperceived as a manifestation of neo-neo synthesis made by Brooks et al. The authors make their point quite clear that, **along with the tenor of realism (“defensive realism”!)**, “other theoretical traditions do help to explain U.S. grand strategy” whereas contending that “America’s post-Cold War strategic behaviour is not a self-evident anomaly for international relations theory in general or realism in particular”, and that “explaining this behavior does not necessarily demand delving deep into the peculiarities of American domestic politics or ideology”⁶⁵.

Brooks et al. admit⁶⁶, however, that sometimes, domestic factors – as non-security preferences – account for competitive behaviour of states and refer this argument to their earlier empirical study conducted without Ikenberry⁶⁷. This makes the alleged divide between Mearsheimer’s “offensive realism” and Brooks and Wohlforth’s “defensive realism” indeed shrink and shift the “balance” of theoretical argument to the offensive side that advocates states’ constant “hunger for power” and engagement in relative power competition beyond a pure survival logic. Brooks et al. put this “logic of waiver” from imperatives of their “defensive realism” in the following passage:

Defensive realism’s optimism about what would happen if the United States retrenched is very much dependent on its particular – and highly restrictive – assumption about state preferences; once we relax this assumption, then much of its basis for optimism vanishes. Specifically, the prediction of post-American tranquillity throughout Eurasia

⁶⁰ S.G. Brooks, G.J. Ikenberry, W.C. Wohlforth, op. cit., p. 10.

⁶¹ Ibidem, p. 34.

⁶² Ibidem, p. 22.

⁶³ Ibidem.

⁶⁴ Ibidem, p. 50.

⁶⁵ Ibidem, p. 51.

⁶⁶ Ibidem, p. 36.

⁶⁷ S.G. Brooks, W.C. Wohlforth, op. cit., pp. 22-59.

rests on the assumption that security is the only relevant state preference, with security defined narrowly in terms of protection from violent external attacks on the homeland. Under that assumption, the security problem is largely solved as soon as offense and defence are clearly distinguishable, and offense is extremely expensive relative to defence. Burgeoning research across the social and other sciences, however, undermines that core assumption: states have preferences not only for security but also for prestige, status, and other aims, and they engage in trade-offs among the various objectives. In addition, they define security not just in terms of territorial protection but in view of many and varied milieu goals. It follows that even states that are relatively secure may nevertheless engage in highly competitive behaviour. [...]. In sum, a bet on a benign post-retrenchment Eurasia is a bet that leaders of major countries will never allow these non-security preferences to influence their strategic choices⁶⁸.

On these premises, the predictions in Mearsheimer's "offensive realism" tradition might, for the authors, hold true yet they seem to be inclined to rather believe that:

the withdrawal of the American pacifier will yield either a competitive regional multipolarity complete with associated insecurity, arms racing, crisis instability, nuclear proliferation, and the like, or bids for regional hegemony, which may be beyond the capacity of local great powers to contain (and which in any case would generate intensely competitive behaviour, possibly including regional great power war)⁶⁹.

The more so because they admit that the defensive logic of causality in international relations might bear great costs⁷⁰ if put on the Realpolitik's verification path:

Defensive realists maintain that the high expected costs of territorial conquest, defence dominance, and an array of policies and practices that can be used credibly to signal benign intent, mean that Eurasia's major states could manage regional multipolarity peacefully without the American pacifier⁷¹.

Retrenchment would be a bet on this scholarship, particularly in regions where the kinds of stabilisers that non-realist theories point to – such as democratic governance or dense institutional linkages – are either absent or weakly present⁷².

Therefore, Brooks et al. do not buy the retrenchment argument – whatever the theory might have trumpeted this from its own loudspeaker – and refute to believe that: "(1) U.S. security guarantees are not necessary to prevent dangerous rivalries and conflict in Eurasia; or (2) prevention of rivalry and conflict in Eurasia is not a U.S. interest"⁷³. Quite surprisingly, therefore, they recognise that relative pow-

⁶⁸ S.G. Brooks, G.J. Ikenberry, W.C. Wohlforth, op. cit., p. 36.

⁶⁹ Ibidem, p. 37.

⁷⁰ The authors' uncertainty about successful verification of their – primarily "defensive" by nature – underlying assumption is put in the following rhetorics: "The costs of U.S. foreign policy that matter most are lives that might be lost if the country's strategy goes awry". Ibidem, p. 28.

⁷¹ Ibidem, pp. 34-35.

⁷² Ibidem, p. 35.

⁷³ Ibidem, p. 34.

er and competition for relative gains matter, especially offshore – on the Eurasian terrain! Given such a perspective on contemporary international security setting, Brooks et al. refute the liberal retrenchment argument that the “grand strategy” is not in the U.S. interest, any more⁷⁴. The authors identify the “beast” misleading to the retrenchment advocacy: “The problem with these arguments about the costs of deep engagement is that they are either overstated or wrong”⁷⁵; “[e]ven if deep engagement’s costs are far less than retrenchment advocates claim, they are not worth bearing unless they yield greater benefits”⁷⁶... which they (sic!) do, if to follow the implied logic and manifested common belief of Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth in *Don’t Come Home, America*: “A core premise of deep engagement is that it prevents the emergence of a far more dangerous global security environment”⁷⁷.

Hence, the authors’ main prediction for European security – although vague and contra-argumentatively formulated – is **uncertainty**, which sounds quite Mearsheimerian! In addition, given the U.S.-American core interests in security, prosperity and domestic liberty, an insecure Europe and hard power competition-inclined Eurasia would certainly run against the U.S.’ overlapping strategic objectives, as laid down by Brooks et al.⁷⁸. Subsequently, further U.S.-American engagement would reflect, authors plead, “what is arguably the United States’ most consequential strategic choice: to maintain security commitments to partners and allies in Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East”⁷⁹. Generally prescribed this way, policy recommendations – derived by Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth⁸⁰ from extensive comparative case studies – entail the following bottom lines for U.S. policy formulation: the United States’ current grand strategy of “deep engagement” remains optimal; the U.S. can sustain the budgetary cost of deep engagement; retrenchment would reduce both U.S. security and prosperity, and diminish the needed global cooperation.

In their final “alternate root”, Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth seem to eventually and unequivocally go back to the roots, as a matter of fact – realist roots:

In the end, the fundamental choice to retain a grand strategy of deep engagement after the Cold War is just what the preponderance of international relations scholarship would expect a **rational, self-interested, leading power** [emphasis added – AT] in the United States’ position to do⁸¹.

Long live neorealism?!

⁷⁴ Ibidem, p. 9.

⁷⁵ Ibidem, p. 15.

⁷⁶ Ibidem, p. 33.

⁷⁷ Ibidem, pp. 33-34.

⁷⁸ Ibidem, p. 11.

⁷⁹ Ibidem.

⁸⁰ Ibidem, pp. 10-50.

⁸¹ Ibidem, p. 51.

Concluding Comments on Future European Security Constellations: Balancing the Explanatory Strength and Predictive Power of Offensive and Defensive Realisms

Against the backdrop of comparative analysis as provided above and the key features of the approaches followed in both articles as summarised in the table below, the theoretical constructs in Mearsheimer's *Back to the Future* and Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth's *Don't Come Home, America* can be presented as follows:

Comparables	<i>Back to the Future</i> by John J. Mearsheimer	<i>Don't Come Home, America</i> by Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth
theoretical school	REALISM	
theoretical strand / approach	neorealism / offensive realism	neoclassical realism / defensive realism
theory	balance-of-power theory	hegemonic stability theory
structural / explanatory models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bipolarity • unbalanced multipolarity • balanced multipolarity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unipolarity
nature of system structure	anarchy	anarchy... blurredly shifts to hierarchy in arguments?
actual (in)stability perception	instable multipolar international system	stable unipolar international system
key actors	states	states, but also international institutions can count
actors' ultimate goal	↓ survival and security ↓	
	increase (maximisation) of power	maintaining (preserving) of power
logic of actors' actions	security seeking and power maximising states (ie also: prestige seeking)	(purely) security seeking states
instrumentalisation of power	relative power matters	absolute power matters
key variables	structure of international system and distribution of power (domestic factors, as eg hyper-nationalism visible, thus not that feasible) (international institutions do not count at all)	structure of international system and distribution of power, but also domestic factors and international institutions can count
tenor of U.S.-American policy prescription	DON'T COME HOME, AMERICA!	

Source: author's own compilation.

The foregoing comparative analysis of approaches followed by two articles, including the establishment of their structural explanatory models each with an inherent causal logic and implied consequences for U.S.' and European security, shall quite rightfully justify the argument that Mearsheimer's explicitly manifested "offensive realism" has far more currency in explanatory strength and prediction than Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth's implicit "defensive realism" might have.

Given strategic analytical disadvantage of **walking in unknown** yet before the alleged changes in the international system actually took place, Mearsheimer's *Back to the Future* exudes nevertheless more predictive power as can be observed from nowadays perspective. In 1990, Mearsheimer **challenged us to imagine** what the end of the Cold War would mean for the future of European security. He predicted that absent the Soviet threat, European integration would stall and NATO would wither. Following realist logic as meticulously laid out in this extensive writing piece, his solution was managed nuclear proliferation, at least to Germany. Though, persistence of the North Atlantic military alliance, even in transformed form, and increasingly successful progress of European integration allowed many scholars not to hesitate with blaming unnecessary theoretical abstraction and counter-productive dogmatism displayed by Mearsheimer's offensive realist logic. Even if things did not actually turn out as he predicted – NATO survived, the European Union has thrived, and Germany has not gone nuclear out of NATO's nuclear sharing scheme, does this unequivocally mean that Europe has not gone back in its future? I doubt it. From Mearsheimer's view then, along with the United States, the only identifiable counter-superpower, the Soviet Union, wherefore he was prompted to assume the dissolution of NATO's defensive alliance and disintegration in Europe, given the decline of the Soviet superpower, the only one threatening to overrun Europe, in 1990-Mearsheimer. Nevertheless, many sceptics of "offensive realism" advocated in *Back to the Future* probably do feel offended by the underlying amorality (what is perhaps the most offensive about offensive realism!) and the statements laid down by the "hard man" of contemporary realism so that the other system-relevant predictions get casually disregarded. Yet didn't Mearsheimer predict the probability of Russia's resurgent interest in Eastern Europe? Didn't his systemic view and thorough causal inferencing not allege the increasing conflict potential in Eastern Europe and beyond? Didn't eventually a new world order with multiple poles, each with different attraction and alignment strength, emerge? One may be indeed inclined to believe that the milestones of post-1990 international politics – enough to name just Balkan wars throughout the 1990s, Transdnistrian and South Caucasian conflicts that have taken place since then, Russian-Ukrainian gas wars from 2006 on and Russian-Georgian war of 2008, Asian "alignment" around the rising Chinese power pole, increased defence integration in Europe around the Franco-German power core as well as Russian-Ukrainian war of 2014 – provide quite a good verification of Mearsheimer's

theorising and hypothesising in *Back to the Future* and therefore viable explanation of why NATO still persists, U.S. doesn't withdraw and Europe integrates, in turn. In this regard, the article written back to the very 1990s is still a testament to the enormous systemic explanation strength of his work. The world's condemnation to perpetual power competition, according to Mearsheimer's "offensive realism", might have been expressed in this writing piece in a bit crude explanatory terms and can also be further alleged of putting too much accent on military power. However, a rigorous theorising and thorough explanation with addition to the systemic nature of world politics can still account for viability in real-life politics and can be effortlessly transformed into policy guidelines for both major and minor powers in the twenty-first century, even though the focus of policy advisers would probably be widened from exceptional military and nuclear power to another loci of puissance (e.g. economic, information, and increasingly – cultural!) and the understanding of 'polarity' (and therefore – "**multipolarity**") itself would have been transformed as to imply rather the emergence of "nodes" that attract and concentrate power, i.e. "**multinodality**" on the table.

Don't Come Home, America by Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth had instead a significant strategic advantage in the time of writing – a known (or at least – perceivable) reality. Out of this horizon, it is strange how the authors didn't recognise "hot red-flushing spots" of power concentration around at least two-three more places on earth, except the U.S.-American terrain. Or is it only the formal status of "superpower" that counts in the still anarchic world? Does anyone really care how to name the devil, the more so because "the devil doesn't like to be called by name"⁸²? Against whom, then, does the United States pursue admittedly "soft balancing" all the time (as anticipated by Brooks et al. themselves on page 23), and to what end? The authors' vague formulations in favour of their own "defensive realism" stance become even more frustrated when they hesitate to be willing to observe the advocated theory of hegemonic unipolar stability getting verified in *Realpolitik* terms. Firm in their belief "better the devil we know"⁸³, the authors appear reluctant to dare prescribing for the U.S. policy makers to retrench the U.S.-American presence in Eurasia, yet "[a] world with a disengaged United States is the devil we don't know"⁸⁴. Who probably knows, is the opponent of unnecessary relaxation derived from the assumption of (seemingly) stable constellation in the contemporary world order. Mearsheimer does know what would

⁸² The term has been actually – symbolically in this regard – coined by the Ukrainian writer Oleg V. Lyubimtsev who gave the title *The Devil Doesn't Like to Be Called by Name* to his 2007 work that, although in a fiction style, unveils the strategic causes and geopolitical implications of Ukrainian 2004 'Orange Revolution'. O.V. Lyubimtsev, *Diavol ne liubit kogda ego nazivayut po imeni* [*The Devil Does Not Like To Be Called By Name*], 'AC' Private Enterprise, Skadovsk 2007.

⁸³ S.G. Brooks, G.J. Ikenberry, W.C. Wohlforth, op. cit., p. 10.

⁸⁴ Ibidem.

happen to European and Eurasia's security setting if the United States truly disengaged, which is why the tenor of his influential writing from the year 1990 would dictate the U.S. policy makers to further pursue "deep engagement" strategy. Not ready for "a massive experiment" which the U.S. retrenchment would, in the essence, indeed entail for European and Eurasian security, Brooks et al.⁸⁵ seem to adhere to Mearsheimer's solution, even if not really converge with his vision.

What matters thus is indeed the convergence of solution formulas that can be derived from both articles. Whereas "defensive realism" of Brooks et al., much in tradition of focusing on behaviour of particular states under structural conditions as defined by neorealism, might well provide guidelines for U.S. policy-making, Mearsheimer's far more encompassing – even though morally offending – systemic view could fruitfully be used for shaping the policy of both major and minor powers in the twenty-first-century world. In our turbulent times it is for states hardly about maintaining status quo and power, as advocated by "defensive realism", but rather about proactive power accumulation given the obviousness of non-existing status quo, as rigorously contended by "offensive realism". In this vein, Mearsheimer's quite hard account can constructively complement more moderate and soft stances of Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth, chiefly by introducing to the scope of their defensive realist analysis a theoretical rationale for revisionist states that otherwise would fall out of the focus. Perhaps it is the time and place to end the proliferation of labels and theories in the realist camp and add up what they all have in common so that if one knocks out an assumption, they could cripple the theory, to paraphrase Mearsheimer⁸⁶. After all, a smart realist theory devoid of deviations would certainly contribute to developing clever strategies that, in turn, would help states mitigate security-related pitfalls of international anarchy. In this context, it must have been probably a smart change of perception in the direction to a rather "harder" realist thinking that made the Council of the European Union adopt in June 2014 the European Union Maritime Security Strategy⁸⁷ stating explicitly that for European security the sea matters. Sea matters... along with other determinants that have regained their geostrategic potency in the wake of recent decadal shifts in power constellations worldwide. This unequivocally brings the security back in to European politics, as it probably will also do with the need to develop realist strategies capable of counterbalancing offensive and revisionist strategies incrementally pursued by rising regional powers holding stakes in the European security complex.

⁸⁵ Ibidem.

⁸⁶ J.J. Mearsheimer, *Conversations in International Relations*, op. cit., p.234.

⁸⁷ Council of the European Union, *European Union Maritime Security Strategy*, Brussels, 24 June 2014, doc.11205/14, register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2011205%202014%20INI [24.06.2014].

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Realizm a idealizm współczesnego bezpieczeństwa w Europie: Równowaga ofensywno-defensywna wczoraj, dzisiaj, i ... jutro?

Streszczenie. Elementem koniecznym do zrozumienia stosunków międzynarodowych jest kwestia bezpieczeństwa. Od czasów zakończenia zimnej wojny problem ten nie był przedmiotem tak gorących dyskusji jak w dzisiejszej Europie. Planowane wycofanie wojsk NATO z Afganistanu, wzrastający niepokój w Rosji spowodowany zmianą układu sił na świecie oraz jej wyraźne dążenie do odzyskania pozycji mocarstwa tworzą zaledwie czubek góry lodowej problemów, z którymi Europa będzie musiała się zmierzyć w najbliższych latach. „Powrót historii”, jak wielu nazywa taki stan rzeczy, każe ponownie zastanowić się nad bardziej realistycznym podejściem do stosunków międzynarodowych, których obraz w ostatnich latach był przysłonięty euforyczną wizją liberalną. Wizja ta stała się popularna za sprawą sukcesu integracji w Europie i w innych częściach świata. Artykuł przedstawia przypadki działań zmierzających do poprawy bezpieczeństwa w Europie i na szczeblu międzynarodowym. W artykule przedstawiono osiągnięcia jednej z najstarszych szkół w tej dziedzinie i omówiono badania porównawcze przedstawione w dwóch kluczowych artykułach w tym zakresie. Jedna z nich nawołuje do obrony ofensywnego realizmu, druga do odrzucenia defensywnego realizmu. Obie postawy nie są popularne i zostały zepchnięte na dalszy plan w dyskursie naukowym w Europie. Jednak coraz bardziej widać, że szczególnie teraz te dwa podejścia są potrzebne. Autor przedstawia nie tylko założenia tych dwóch postaw, ale również wskazuje na ich różnice i podobieństwa. Próbuje też ocenić, w jaki sposób postawy te będą oddziaływać na proces kształtowania i zmian układu bezpieczeństwa w Europie. Postuluje, by potraktować obie postawy jako narzędzia do opisu polityki bezpieczeństwa (John J. Mearsheimer's *Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War* oraz Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth's *Don't Come Home, America: The Case Against Retrenchment*).

Słowa kluczowe: bezpieczeństwo w Europie, realizm ofensywny, realizm defensywny, wielobiegunowość, jednobiegunowość, hegemonia amerykańska, rosyjski neoimperializm