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GREAT POWERS AND THE SEA: NAVAL POWER IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORIES

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to discuss the role of sea and naval power in "Rise and Fall Realism"; "Defensive Structural Realism"; and "Offensive Structural Realism", which are respectively represented by the works of Gilpin (2002) and Modelsky and Thompson (1988); Posen (2003) and Mearsheimer (2001). We argue that these scholars mistakenly employ sea and naval power as if they were synonyms. In fact, these scholars are mainly concerned with the military component of sea power, that is, naval power. In addition, we claim that the relative importance of naval power in relation to other sources of power varies in a spectrum that goes from: 1) the consideration of naval power as a necessary and almost sufficient condition to global power raking, 2) moving to the acknowledgment of naval power as historically important to the last two hegemonic powers but not necessarily important in future manifestations of hegemonic power, and 3) reaching the consideration of naval power as only having a supportive role for land power, being this power the necessary and almost sufficient condition to a high placing in the global ranking of powers. Finally, we reflect on the argument established by those variants of Realism on the connection between naval power and wealth.

Palavras-chave: Rise and Fall Realism; Defensive Structural Realism; Offensive Structural Realism; Sea Power; Naval Power.

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INTRODUCTION

This article aims to discuss the role of naval power in some of the most prominent realist theories of International Relations. Additionally, we seek to examine the connection established by these theories between sea power and naval power, highlighting the economic foundations of military power. It is important to clarify that Realism is at the birth of the International Relations field[3], but since its inception, different realist approaches have been proposed, so that contemporary Realism cannot be considered a monolithic theory, but a research program gathering theories particularly concerned with power relations among states.[4] Given that the determinants and the composition of state power have been among the main concerns of various realist theories, in this article, we discuss the place of sea power and naval power in three strands of International Relations Realism: Rise and Fall Realism[5], Defensive Structural Realism[6] and Offensive Structural Realism[7]. The choice of these theories was determined by their direct mention of the terms sea power andor naval power. In addition, these theories are widely accepted as being central to the discussion of state power and the rise and fall of great powers in International Relations. On the other hand, most of these theories are

[3] The debate between Edward Carr – one of the first self-identified International Relations realists – and Norman Angell is traditionally known as the foundational debate of the International Relations field of study (KAHLER, 1997). In the "Twenty Years' Crisis: 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations", Carr established his realist theory of IR in opposition to Angell's alleged utopianism. Therefore, by Realism, this article refers to theories produced after Carr´s foundational work which share common theoretical premises: mainly, the centrality of the state and power in the international arena and the consideration of anarchy as the main characteristic of the modern international system.

[4] Colin Elman (2008) classifies contemporary realists' theories as Classical Realism, Neorealism, Defensive Structural Realism, Offensive Structural Realism, Rise and Fall Realism, and Neoclassical Realism. For more information on each of these realist theories, see ELMAN, Colin. Realism. In: WILLIAMS, Paul (Ed.). **Security Studies**: An Introduction. New York: Routledge, 2007. p. 15-28.

[5] "Rise and Fall Realism" explains how states first rise to and then fall from, this leading position, and the consequences of that trajectory for state foreign policies. In particular, the approach is concerned with the onset of great power wars which often mark the transition from one leader to the next" (ELMAN, 2008, p. 24).

[6] "Defensive Structural Realism relies on rational choice, offence-defense balance, security dilemma and considers that states should support the status quo" (ELMAN, 2008, p.22).

[7] Offensive Realism, founded by Mearsheimer (2001), argues that, whenever possible, states do not cease to accumulate power. In other words, great powers do not aim at having as much power as their potential rivals, that is, their primary objective is not to achieve the structural condition of balance or equilibrium. Instead, they aim to conquer the prominence of power, which is considered the best way to guarantee state security.

in close dialogue with seminal works in strategic studies and history: respectively, Alfred T. Mahan and Paul Kennedy. Thus, albeit not exactly Realist theories, these scholars' conceptions of sea power will be discussed herein for their close connection to realism.

Concerning the "Rise and Fall Realism", this article will consider the contributions of Gilpin (2002) and Modelsky and Thompson (1988). Gilpin (2002) is especially relevant to the study of the domestic determinants of great powers´ rise, among which military strength, economic factors, and technology are included. In turn, Modelsky and Thompson (1988) argue that global powers are necessarily naval powers. Defensive Structural Realism is herein represented by Barry Posen´s work (2003),[8] who includes naval power among the foundations of US hegemony. In contrast, John Mearsheimer's (2001) Offensive Structural Realism downplays the importance of what he designates as "sea power" when analyzing the power portfolio of regional hegemon candidates.

In this context, this article aims to answer the following questions: what is the role of sea power and naval power in International Relations realist theories and, consequently, in world politics? And how do they define the connection between economic power and naval power? First, we argue that these theories mistakenly employ sea and naval power as if they were synonyms. Then, we claim that the relative relevance of naval power in great powers' portfolio of capabilities is not consensual among the theories herein analyzed, varying in a spectrum that goes from: 1) the consideration of naval power as a necessary and almost sufficient condition to global power raking, 2) moving to the acknowledgment of naval power as historically important to the last two hegemonic powers, but not as important in future manifestations of hegemonic power, and 3) reaching the consideration of naval power as a supportive role, together with the regard of land power as a necessary and almost sufficient condition to a high placing in the global ranking of powers.[9] Finally, we stress the close relationship between economic and naval power on the rise and fall of great powers, highlighting the dilemma between short-term security

[8] We here rely on Rose (1998) to classify Barry Posen as a Defensive Structural Realist.

[9] A "necessary condition" is herein regarded as an independent variable X (naval power) whose presence is essential to the realization of a dependent variable Y (world power placing in the global ranking of powers). That is, the occurrence of Y is impossible without the presence of X. A "sufficient condition" is herein considered as an independent variable X (naval power) whose sole presence is enough for the realization of Y (world power position in the global ranking of powers) (MARCONI; LAKATOS, 2011, p. 195-196).

goals and long-term economic goals.

We begin by briefly reviewing the works of Mahan (1987) and Kennedy (1982; 1998), which are in close dialogue with the realist theories herein discussed. We then briefly summarize the theories proposed by Gilpin (2002), Modelsky and Thompson (1988), Posen (2003), and Mearsheimer (2001), focusing on the role of naval power. Next, we contrast the relative relevance given by these theories to naval power and stress the connection between wealth and naval power. We conclude by claiming that the relative importance of naval power in each of those theories could be represented in a spectrum in which this power is seen as necessary and almost sufficient condition for a State to be considered a world power by Modelsky and Thompson, important but far from being sufficient by Gilpin and Posen and, finally, only supportive of the land power by Mearsheimer.

SEA POWER, NAVAL POWER, AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

This section begins by briefly discussing the contributions of Alfred Thayer Mahan and Paul Kennedy, whose ideas about sea and naval power have influenced IR realist theories. It then moves to the specific discussion of sea and naval power in Gilpinian Realism, Modelski and Thompson's Long Leadership Cycles theory, Posen's Defensive Structural Realism, and Mearsheimer's Offensive Structural Realism.

THE CONCEPTS OF SEA POWER AND NAVAL MASTERY IN PERSPECTIVE

The recognition of the importance of the sea and the role of navies in the achievement of political objectives has a historical tradition that goes back millennia, naval power being related to "…the rise and fall of nations and the evolution of civilization" (STEVENS; WESTCOTT, 1958, p. vi). Nevertheless, Alfred Thayer Mahan's book "The Influence of Sea Power upon History: 1660-1783", first published in 1890, is responsible for systematically discussing the concept of sea power and its relation to the security and prosperity of nations.

Mahan considered the sea as "a great highway… or a wide common" and defended the "profound influence of sea commerce upon the wealth and strength of countries, and the importance of the capacity

of a state to control the sea in war as in peace" (MAHAN, 1987, p. iii-26). Mahan does not precisely define the concept of sea power. Sometimes it is used as the capacity of the naval power to control the sea; at other times, sea power is related to the set of maritime commercial activities, access to markets, and the possession of colonies that would contribute to the wealth and power of a nation (CROWL, 1986). Although not having clearly defined the concept of sea power (CROWL, 1986; KENNEDY, 1998), Mahan established the main elements that had affected the sea power of the nations from 1660 to 1783. Four of these elements were related to the material conditions: geographical position, physical conformation, the extent of territory, and the size of the population; and two elements were related to ideational conditions: national character and the character of the government (MAHAN, 1987).

Based on British history, Mahan considered that sea power could be acquired by the production of agriculture and manufactures, routes of communications, shipping, and regulations to exchange this production, treaties with other states related to trade and tariffs, and colonies and bases. According to him, this trading system should be defended by a navy that controls the "great common". So, production, shipping, colonies and bases, and a predominant navy were important parts of sea power contributing to the rise of great powers, as the case of Great Britain had demonstrated (MAHAN, 1987. p. 28-29; 138). Nevertheless, Mahan pointed out the danger of over-emphasizing sea history, highlighting that sea power is only one factor in explaining how wealth is accumulated and how the nations rise and fall. Other factors closely related to sea history must be taken into account to avoid exaggerating or underestimating its importance (MAHAN, 1987, p. 90). Mahan's ideas about the role of sea power in the rise and fall of Britain as a great power were taken up many decades later by Paul Kennedy in his book "The Rise and Fall of the British Naval Mastery", first published in 1976. As the title suggests, he wanted to understand the history of Britain's naval supremacy and its close relation to the economy, and the rise and fall of Britain as a great power. The book dealt with economic change and military conflict (GIDDENS; MANN; WALLERSTEIN, 1989).

According to Kennedy, "Mahan is, and will always remain, the point of reference and departure for any work about sea power" (KENNEDY, 1998, p. 9). Therefore, the scholar starts his book by revisiting Mahan's ideas about the nature and the elements of sea power, concluding

that the concept had changed in time, becoming more complex, making it difficult to synthesize into a simple definition. Kennedy considers that the concept of sea power has been historically developed, reflecting political, economic, and technological changes. At first, it had a tactical aim, meaning the capacity to transport troops through the oceans. Around the seventeenth century, the concept gained a grand-strategical aim, related to the development of national strength in the economic, technological, and military domains (KENNEDY, 1998).

Kennedy claims that Mahan's ideas about sea power had two components: military and economic. The first one deals with the concept of the "command of the sea", which does not imply the complete control of the oceans, but the naval capacity to avoid invasions from the sea and to allow freedom of navigation, to accomplish specific tasks, including projection of military power over enemy's shore (KENNEDY, 1982, p. 2). The second was related to the control of the sea trade, protecting the state's sea lines of communications, and denying the enemy's sea trade. Although strong naval power was considered an important symbol of the maritime strength of a state, the elements of sea power established by Mahan show that he considered the concept to be much wider than a powerful battle fleet (KENNEDY, 1989, p. 4-7).

Kennedy argues that Mahan implicitly considered that the sea had more influence in world affairs than land. According to him, this was because the period analyzed by Mahan was characterized by historical and geographical specificity in which "colonies, commerce, shipping and conflict at sea occupied a disproportionately large role in world affairs" (KENNEDY, 1989, p. 7). Nevertheless, Kennedy considers that land power has historically been more influential in world affairs, and this can be seen by the historical examples of land empires whose strength did not depend on sea power. Even Britain became a leading world power by using a balanced mix of sea power and land power.

Kennedy concludes that it is difficult, in practice, to quantify the amount of sea power of any state, so he prefers to use the concept of naval mastery:

> (…) a situation in which a country has so developed its maritime strength that it is superior to any rival power and that its predominance is or could be exerted far outside its home waters, with the result

> that it is extremely difficult for others, lesser states to undertake maritime operations or trade without at least its tactical consent. It does not necessarily imply superiority over all other navies combined, nor does it mean that this country could not temporarily lose command of the sea; but it does assume the possession of an overall maritime power such that small-scale defeats overseas would soon be reversed by the dispatch of naval forces sufficient to eradicate the enemy's challenge (KENNEDY, 1998, p. 9).

Naval mastery is connected to the national wealth, fleet bases, naval merchant marine, etc. that give the state maritime supremacy, allowing the "influence at a global rather than at a purely regional level" (KENNEDY, 1998, p.9). Thus, according to Kennedy, there is a close relationship between a state´s economic vitality and its sea power, so the main lesson that can be extracted from the rise and fall of maritime states is that: "dominant sea power resides …with the state that buttresses the sea-faring prosperity with balanced economic growth" (J.J. CLARK apud KENNEDY, 1989. p.8).

After analyzing the history of Britain's Naval Mastery, Kennedy finishes his book revisiting the Mahan's elements of sea power to conclude that maritime strength always depends, primarily, upon economic and commercial development, advanced technology, and financial strength, although geography and maritime mentality are important too (KENNEDY, 1998. p. 337-349). Thus, he considers that the fall of British naval mastery was associated with Great Britain's economic decay and strategic overextension, due to "the possession of numerous defense obligations, without the corresponding capacity to sustain them." (KENNEDY, 1998, p. 348).

Kennedy takes up this relation between "economics and strategy" in another book, "The Rise and Fall of Great Powers", in which he defends that wealth and power and economic and military strength are always relative among states in an anarchical and competitive international system (KENNEDY, 1998. p xxii; p. 536). Thus, he claims that the rise and fall of great powers are associated with different economic growth, scientific development, innovation, and organization of the productivity among states. In this dynamic, wealth and military power are closely connected: "wealth is usually needed to underpin military power, and military power

is usually needed to acquire and protect wealth" (KENNEDY, 1998, p. xvi). At the end of his book, Kennedy agrees with Gilpin's argument, expressed in his book "War and Change in World Politics", that the rise and fall of great powers are associated with unequal economic and military relative growth among states and that in this dynamic the international position of the state may be weakened if a large proportion of its total income is invested in "protection instead of on productive investment" (KENNEDY, 1998, p. 539). Accordingly, we explore Gilpin´s main understandings of the rise and fall of great powers in the next section.

GILPINIAN REALISM: HEGEMONIC WAR AND SEA POWER

Gilpin (2002) uses integrated economic and sociological approaches to explain international political change, war, and the rise and decline of great powers. According to the scholar, uneven growth of power among states in the political, economic, technological, and military realms causes a revisionist state "to attempt to change the international system if the expected benefits exceed the expected costs" (GILPIN, 2002, p. 10). Change can be incremental or revolutionary: the first is more common and has the objective to make minor adjustments in the international system, using bargain among states, coercive diplomacy, and armed conflict over limited interests; the second has the objective to change the governance of the system. It occurs when a crisis provoked by the disequilibrium in the international system (that is, the rise of new powers and the fall of status quo hegemonic states) is not peacefully resolved. According to Gilpin, hegemonic war has historically been the main mechanism of revolutionary change (GILPIN, 2002, p.15).

Gilpin (2002) argues that the international system and the behavior of states are under the control or governance of great powers. This control depends on the distribution of power among political coalitions; the hierarchy of prestige among states; and a set of rights or rules (GILPIN, 2002, p. 26-36). Economic and military power are the main elements when considering the distribution of power and the hierarchy of prestige in international relations. Prestige is connected to the reputation of military power. It is specially attributed to the states that were successful in the last hegemonic war, and it is used to defend the political order created after this war. Nonetheless, prestige also relates to the capacity of providing public goods to the members of the international system (GILPIN,2002, p.30-34).

Gilpin (2002) considers that the hegemon tries to establish an economic order and that "most states benefit from it, but the more efficient and technologically advanced economies tend to benefit relatively more than other states" (GILPIN, 2002, p. 138). In modern eras, hegemony, efficiency, and political-military strength created an interdependent world market economy, and states could gain more through efficient trade and specialization than from territory conquest. According to Gilpin (2002), economic efficiency and military power walk together, and British naval supremacy was used during the Pax Britannica to create a world market economy. This supremacy allowed Great Britain to control the seas and preserve the global hegemony, controlling the world outside Europe and exploiting the global trade all over the world. The British naval supremacy was only challenged in Europe by the re-emergence of France and, mainly, German navies. Outside Europe, this challenge came with the growth of the United States and Japanese navies. In the twentieth century, the United States replaced Great Britain in the governance of the international system and as the lead nation of the world market economy, using military power to defend this market in the period of the Pax Americana, assuring an "international system of relative peace and security", that served its interests (GILPIN, 2002, p. 131-139).

The other assumption of Gilpin's theory, mentioned above, is that there is a tendency that the economic costs of maintaining the status quo to rise faster than the capacity to support it (GILPIN, 2002, p. 156). The state's cost to maintain the predominant position exceeds the benefits. Some internal and external factors affect the decline of the dominant state. Internally, the economic decline is the most important. Some other factors contribute to this decline, such as the limited rate of innovation and productivity, the increasing costs of military protection, and the implementation of welfare policies. Externally, two factors are important: the loss of economic and technological leadership, the increasing costs to maintain the protection of the system, and the superior military and political position concerning the strength of rival states (GILPIN, 2002.p.156-185).

Gilpin (2002) argues that the redistribution of power due to the differential economic growth and development among states provokes a disequilibrium in the international system, making revisionism possible. The status quo hegemonic power, to maintain its dominant position, may try to restore the equilibrium in the system by increasing the resources,

reducing its existing commitments, or accommodating the demands of the challenging state(s). If the equilibrium is not solved peacefully, a hegemonic war will change the international system, and the cycle starts again (GILPIN, 2002, p.187-188).

According to Gilpin (2002), the ideas of cycles of war and peace have been studied by several authors. He considers that George Modelsky's theory is one of the most interesting because it defends that global politics may be represented by "long cycles of hundred-year-long inaugurated and concluded by global wars. The beginning of each cycle starts the era of a new dominant power that provides order in the international system" (GILPIN, 2002 p. 204-205). The role of sea power in the long cycles is going to be described in the next item.

LONG LEADERSHIP CYCLE THEORY

Long-leadership cycle theory analyses the rise and fall of world state leaders, seeking to identify the causes and consequences of this repetitive and cyclic process. Each hegemonic cycle is both marked by regularities and evolving complexities, global war being one of these regularities (MODELSKI; THOMPSON, 1988, p. 15).

In the modern world, LLCT claims that world powers (that is, states that perform world leadership) have been "sea powers", capable of commanding the seas. In especial, LLCT argues that changes in world leadership are associated with shifts in the distribution of naval power. Global powers (states that have significant involvement in global politics and the capacity to do so) have also been sea powers (MODELSKI; THOMPSON, 1988).

To qualify as a world power, the authors claim that a state "must equal 50% of the total naval expenditures or 50% of the total warships of the global powers" (MODELSKI; THOMPSON, 1988, p. 44). To qualify as a global or great power, a state must equal "5% of the total naval expenditures of the global powers or 10% of the total warships of the global powers. Furthermore, its navy must demonstrate ocean-going activity as opposed to more circumscribed regional sea-or coastal-defense activity" (MODELSKI; THOMPSON, 1988, p. 44).

The viability of the naval-strength indicator ultimately rests upon the maritime character of the decisive battles in past global wars. For these scholars, sea power is "regarded as a medium of a higher order than

land forces" (MODELSKI; THOMPSON, 1988, p. 13). The LLCT considers that one of the main elements of world leadership is the concentration of capabilities of global reach. In this context, sea power is the primary capability due to the technological history of the modern area and the geographical characteristic of the world, in which the oceans connect continental mass of land. According to Modelsky and Thompson (1988), LLCT more broadly highlights the same questions Mahan sought to answer related to sea power and the conditions of world leadership. In this context, the scholars consider that it is necessary to quantify Mahan's concept of command of the sea, to understand the long-term changes in world politics (MODELSKY; THOMPSON, 1988, p. 14-15; 24; 97).

The centrality of sea power to world order is justified by what navies can do. During global wars, "navies have proved decisive" acting to: 1) neutralize and destroy opponents' navies (sea control); 2) preserve home bases from attack, as well as carry out attacks and invasions (power projection); 3) safeguard friendly communication and trade lines and intercept opponent ones; 4) guard and secure essential links with allies. During peacetime, the navy of the world power "has a critical function of protecting the status quo established by the earlier global war", acting to: 1) deny a challenger the opportunity of a surprise attack and quick victory using its missile and attack submarines (deterrence); 2) retaliate an attack (for that purpose, carrier forces and missile-carrying submarines are essential); 3) protect trade routes, 4) limit the intercontinental mobility of a challenger's missile forces and create conditions for the movement of allied forces (MODELSKI; THOMPSON, 1988, p. 11-13).

As compared to other capabilities, LLCT considers sea power superior to land forces in world politics since:

> 1) it confers greater mobility, hence access to a wider variety of resources and experiences; 2) it employs higher-order technology, is more expensive, and generates greater innovation; 3) it carries larger information content, higher visibility, and symbolic load; 4) it operates world-wide and at the global level; (…) it also earns greater legitimation by contributing to the stability of the system of world order (MODELSKI; THOMPSON, 1988, p. 14).

Finally, LLCT claims that, throughout the modern period, sea power has been closely linked to innovation. According to Thompson (2009), structural leadership is related to changes in the sources of technological innovation since it is the main impetus for long-term growth. Innovation is also one important foundation of success in warfare.

In synthesis, Modelski and Thompson (1998) consider that "world powers share certain common characteristics such as insular or semi-insular position, commercial and/or industrial enterprise, capacity for coalitioning, and also, most importantly, organisation for global reach manifested most effectively through sea power" (MODELSKY; THOMPSON, 1988, p.16). Nevertheless, the scholars warn that the process in which a global war inaugurates and concludes the cycles of changes in the international system is not deterministic. Political innovations could contribute to avoiding another global war and/or the relative weight of sea power could decline. Moreover, space could become the high ground of world politics (MODELSKY; THOMPSON, 1988, p.16-17; 113; 146). Sea and space powers are two elements of the concept of "command of the commons", defended by Barry Posen, as will be explained in the next section.

BARRY POSEN: HEGEMONY AND THE COMMAND OF THE COMMONS

Barry Posen (2003) argued that the United States hegemony after the end of the Cold War was grounded on the "command of the commons" which he defined as "areas that belong to no one state and that provide access to much of the globe" (POSEN, 2003, p. 7). More specifically, the scholar referred to the following global commons: the sea, space, and air. In turn, to command the commons meant that:

> (…) the United States gets vastly more military use out of the sea, space, and air than do others; that it can credibly threaten to deny their use to others; and that other would lose a military contest for the commons if they attempted to deny them to the United States. Having lost such a contest, they could not mount another effort for a very long time, and the United States would preserve, restore, and consolidate its hold after such a flight (POSEN, 2003, p. 8).

Posen acknowledges that the concept of the command of the commons is inspired by the command of the sea concept, which, in turn, is analogous to Paul Kennedy´s naval mastery concept (POSEN, 2003, p.8). In this sense, despite American undisputable military superiority during the 1990s, Posen warns that there were "contested zones" where possible adversaries could face U.S. forces with some hope of success. In other words, the command of the commons was not a guarantee of U.S. victory at all times, nor did it mean a persistent and exclusive U.S. presence. In especial, other states were not prevented from using the commons in peacetime, or from developing military assets to fight for their use. Nonetheless, the command of the commons meant that no other state was able to deny U.S. access to the global commons.

The importance of the command of the commons derived from the fact that it allowed the United States: a) to exploit other sources of power (including economic power); b) to weaken its adversaries and strengthen allies (by extending American protection to the latter), and c) to wage war on short notice.

In regards specifically the command of the sea, according to this scholar, "The United States enjoys the same command of the sea that Britain once did, and it can also move large and heavy forces around the globe" (POSEN, 2003, p. 9). But, to the U.S. advantage: "Political, economic, and technological changes since the 1980s have thus partially reversed the rise of land power relative to sea power that occurred in the late nineteenth century and helped to erode Britain's formal and informal empire" (POSEN, 2013, p. 9-10).

Moreover, Posen (2003) claimed that the command of the sea meant the U.S. was a provider of a collective good for its allies:

> U.S. military power underwrites world trade, travel, global telecommunications, and commercial remote sensing, which all depend on peace and order in the commons. Those nations most involved in these activities, those who profit most from globalization, seem to understand that they benefit from the U.S. military position—which may help explain why the world's consequential powers have grudgingly supported U.S. hegemony (p. 46).

In sum, superior "sea power" or the "command of the sea" constituted an important pillar of U.S. hegemony for Posen.[10] In contrast, the next section discusses a realist theory that places greater emphasis on land power to the detriment of naval power.

OFFENSIVE REALISM AND THE SEA POWER CONTROVERSY

Offensive realism is characterized by its defense of land power superiority and the consideration of both naval and air forces as playing a supporting role. In Mearsheimer's own words:

> (…) a state's power is largely embedded in its army and the air and naval forces that support those ground forces. Simply put, the most powerful states possess the most formidable armies. Therefore, measuring the balance of land power by itself should provide a rough but sound indicator of the relative might of rival great powers (MEARSHEIMER, 2001, p. 83).

According to Mearsheimer (2001): "armies are of paramount importance in warfare because they are the main instrument for conquering and controlling land, which is the supreme political objective in a world of territorial states. Naval and air forces are simply not suited for conquering territory" (MEARSHEIMER, 2001, p. 86). In addition, the scholar claims that armies are the forces capable of producing decisive victories: "blockading navies and strategic bombings (…) cannot produce quick and decisive victories in wars between great powers" (p. 87).

On the limitations of naval power, Mearsheimer argues that large

[10] Brooks and Wohlforth (2016) have recently updated Posen´s research in an attempt to verify if the international system can still be classified as unipolar or hegemonic. Military capabilities remain extremely important to all strands of realist theory in order to define systemic polarity. In this sense, Brooks and Wohlforth (2016) compared China´s current military capabilities to the U.S., verifying if the latter still enjoyed the command of the commons. Like Posen (2003), Brooks and Wohlforth (2016) claim that the capabilities to command the sea, air, and space are equally important. The choice of these capabilities is related to their ability to support the projection of power to different regions of the world. Interestingly enough, land power is practically not cited by these studies. On the one hand, this means that the U.S. still possesses the command of the sea and that it is a persistent characteristic of its great power status. On the other hand, this also means that rising powers are investing in naval capabilities on the path to narrowing the gap with the U.S.

bodies of water limit power projection. The so-called "stopping power of water" means that there are limits on the number of troops and firepower that a navy can carry in an amphibious operation and land-based forces are almost certain to inflict a devastating defeat on the forces attempting to invade by sea.

In this sense, Mearsheimer´s premise on the superiority of land power impact on the requisites for acquiring hegemon status. "A hegemon is a state that is so powerful that it dominates all the other states in the system. No other state has the military wherewithal to put up a serious fight against it" (MEARSHEIMER, 2001, p. 40). To become a hegemon, states have to gather enough power to defeat any adversary or coalition of adversaries in a systemic wide war. Since world system wars are mainly won on land, land power is paramount to hegemony. However, according to Mearsheimer, a state can't achieve global hegemony due to the difficulties of projecting power across oceans, which impedes world domination. Therefore, "The best outcome a great power can hope for is to be a regional hegemon and possibly control another region that is nearby and accessible over land" (p. 41).

The stopping power of waters:

> makes it impossible for any great power to conquer and dominate regions separated from it by oceans. Regional hegemons certainly pack a powerful military punch, but landing amphibious assaults across oceans against territory controlled and defended by another great power would be a suicidal undertaking (p. 141).

Therefore, the bid for hegemony starts with the attempt to dominate the balance of land power; air and naval forces are additionally acquired to support ground forces. Thus, to qualify as a potential regional hegemon: "a state must be considerably wealthier than its local rivals and must possess the mightiest army in the region" (MEARSHEIMER, 2001, p. 143).

In this sense, we claim that there is an implicit idea of stages in Mearsheimer's theory: the initial focus of a candidate for regional hegemony will be on land superiority since it needs to first possess the mightiest army in its region to conquer the position of regional hegemony. Only after it achieves the position of regional hegemony, will a state be safe to exert influence on another region by employing a strategy of offshore

balancing: intervention in other regional balances when regional powers have failed to balance a potential regional hegemon. In this second stage, a powerful navy becomes essential. At this point, a regional hegemon is free to invest major resources in naval power.

AN OVERVIEW OF SEA POWER AND NAVAL POWER IN REALIST INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY AND THE CONNECTION BETWEEN MILITARY POWER AND WEALTH

After discussing the main realist theories that have tried to make sense of the importance of the sea and naval power in world politics, we argue, first and foremost, that these theories mistakenly employ the concepts of sea power and naval power as if they were synonyms.

Reflecting on their terminology choice, Modelski and Thompson (1988) argue that since the modern world system is an oceanic system, they could have used the concept of ocean power, which is related to the use and control of the oceans. Nevertheless, they preferred to use "sea power" because they claim it was already an established term. The scholars explain that "the classical definition of sea power means (the) use and control of the sea (…) or the denial of it to an opponent" (MODELSKI; THOMPSON, 1988, p. 3-4). According to the authors, the concept of sea power refers to the state's naval forces and their participation in world politics. Thus, it is clear that they employ the concepts of sea power and naval power as if they were synonyms, but their theory really refers to naval power.

The same ambiguity is found in Gilpin´s work (2002). On various occasions, he uses the term sea power to talk about naval power: "(…) the greatest empire that ever existed, the British, was based on control of the seas. These advantages of sea power relative to land power prevailed until the innovation of the railroad" (GILPIN, 2002, p. 58). In the same vein, Posen (2003) also uses the term sea power to refer to the command of the sea established by the naval forces. Mearsheimer (2001) makes the same terminology confusion. He states that Mahan was wrong when he "proclaimed the supreme importance of independent sea power" (MEARSHEIMER, 2001, p. 84). As his argument develops, it becomes evident that Mearsheimer (2001) employs the term sea power as synonymous to naval power: "neither independent naval power nor strategic airpower has much utility for winning major wars" and describes the "limits of

independent naval power" (MEARSHEIMER, 2001, p. 86-87).

Nonetheless, it is our understanding that the concept of sea power has several dimensions: political, economic, social, environmental, and military. Contemporarily, scholars specialized in naval strategy have contributed to the refinement of this concept, claiming that sea power is a much broader concept than naval power:

> All too often, the terms naval power and sea power are used interchangeably. But naval power, properly understood, refers to a direct and indirect source of military power at sea. The main components of a naval power are the navy, coast guard, and marines/naval infantry and their shore establishment. The term sea power (coined in 1849) originally referred to a nation having a formidable naval strength. Today, this term's meaning is much broader; it now describes the entirety of the use of the sea by a nation. Specifically, a sea (or maritime) power comprises political, diplomatic, economic, and military aspects of sea use. Naval power played an extremely important and often vital role in the lives of many maritime nations (VEGO, 2008, p. 8)

Accordingly, Silva (2017, p. 238) argues that: "sea power is the capacity of a State to use the sea and influence the range of sea-related activities in the political, economic, social, environmental, and military domains. Naval power is, only, the military component of sea power.".

In this sense, it is important to provide answers to the question of the role of naval power in world politics. Gilpin (2002) defends that naval power is important in exercising effective military power and political influence at great distances. He claims that the control or governance of the international system depends on a set of rights or rules and economic and military power. He considers military power as one important element in the distribution of power and the most important element in the hierarchy of prestige. The state military power and political influence gain more breadth and reach as innovations in transportation and communications enable action in great areas and at long distances. In particular, naval power was an important tool used by recent hegemonic powers to create a

world market economy and protect the free circulation of goods through sea lines of communications.

Modelski and Thompson claim that navies are decisive in global wars because "global wars have been naval wars in the most general sense because global wars are contests for world leadership and world leadership requires seapower" (MODELSKI; THOMPSON, 1988, p. 19). According to them, in the Second World War naval power generated in all theatres the conditions that allowed land power to defeat the opponent's ground force and conquer the territory. Although they consider that land forces were of "utmost significance" in all global wars, they claim that these wars "have been containment wars" in which a coalition of states used naval power to contain a "centrally situated power". Moreover, naval power is fundamental for the capability of global reach and essential for great powers' world leadership in war and peace. For them, naval power is an essential component of the world order and world politics, although other military forces contribute to this goal. The naval power represents a "higher-order medium of interactions in world politics" when compared to land forces because it "is a medium appropriated to a political system of a higher degree of complexity and scope". Thus, changes in the ranking of world great powers are associated with changes in the distribution of naval power (MODELSKI; THOMPSON, 1988, p.11-13, 17).

The importance of naval power to great power politics is also emphasized by Posen (2003). Although he considers that in contested zones the US could face more difficulty in fighting and succeed militarily, he defends that the command of the commons is one pillar of the North-American hegemony. For him, command of the sea allows the US to get access to much of the globe and transport large and heavy-armed troops around the globe, including using the access facilities provided by allied countries. Moreover, command of the seas facilitates the US to keep forces forward deployed to act in crises or war.

Mearsheimer (2001), nevertheless, considers that naval power has a limited role in world politics. For him, land power is the most important form of military power. He claims that in a conflict between global powers, the "stopping power of waters" limits the number of troops and firepower that a navy can carry in an amphibious operation against the coast of a state that has powerful land forces. So, he claims that the main problem a regional hegemon faces to become a global hegemon is the difficulty to project military power across the oceans against a well-defended

territory of a rival great power located in another region. Nevertheless, he concedes that a great power navy has an important role to avoid the surge of a regional hegemon when this great power is acting as an offshore balancing (MEARSHEIMER, 2001, p. 41).

Despite employing different terminologies and different relative importance to different aspects of military power, Gilpin, Modelski and Thompson, Posen, and Mearsheimer all consider that great powers are defined by their ability to exert military influence beyond a state's original region. Surely, this influence is made possible by the possession of superior naval capabilities. This naval supremacy definitely has an important role in the rise and fall of great powers.

Nonetheless, it is our understanding that Mearsheimer's (2001) position on the superiority of land power is a direct result of his conception of hegemony. For him, hegemony seems to imply the capacity to occupy or conquer territory. Occupying territory in a foreign region is indeed a huge challenge. Nonetheless, if the meaning of global hegemony is re-signified to refer to the capacity to exert great military influence over distant regions (without necessarily occupying territory), the superiority of land power is challenged. This move is justified by the diminished role of territorial occupation in the 21st century. In the contemporary system, naval power is extremely useful for both deterrence and coercive strategies and other activities short of territorial occupation.

Nonetheless, we argue that neither land power nor naval power is intrinsically superior. The combination of power resources chosen by a rising, regional or global power will be dependent on its political objectives. As Clausewitz stated, and Mearsheimer recognized, war is an instrument of state policy, so "when nations resort to war, they do so because they have political objectives worth fighting for, not simply because they have the military capability to defeat the opponent" (MEARSHEIMER, 1983, p. 60). In line with Clausewitz, we defend that "war is an act of force to compel the enemy to our will" (CLAUSEWITZ, 1940, p. 75); and the purpose of any war is to achieve some degree of control over the opponent, through the construction and execution of a strategy that combines all elements of the military power (WYLIE, 1987, GRAY, 1999). So, instead of necessarily building up the "most powerful army", as defended by Mearsheimer (2001), every state must pursue a combination of military power that enables itself to conquer its political objectives in war. This means, depending on a state's political objectives and geographical

challenges, in the bid for hegemony, the priority might be given to naval power before the achievement of ground forces superiority.[11]

Finally, it is important to develop the connection between naval power and national wealth. Gilpin (2002) considers that economic growth has a paramount role in underlying international political changes and that there is a close relation between economy and military power. Economic efficiency and military power are thus interdependent. According to Gilpin (2002), some of the most significant forces causing international political change over the long term are economic growth or population shift, although technological and military changes frequently may be the triggering mechanism. Innovations in transportation and communications have a great impact on the use of military power, greatly "increasing the distance and area over which a state can exercise effective military power and political influence" (GILPIN, 2002, p. 57). For instance, the creation of the steamship had a revolutionary effect on trade and military power.

The consequential advantage of naval power over land power was exercised until the innovation of the railroad allowed the birth of continental powers like the United States and Russia. So, when Great Britain became the world hegemon, its naval supremacy was important to establish and support a new economic order: the world market economy. Nowadays, the United States uses its naval supremacy to maintain this order. Gilpin also defends that military power may contribute to the state's economic international competitiveness when military innovation diminishes the costs of protecting the system. Nevertheless, he admits that the increasing costs to maintain the superior military position and the protection of the system contributes to the decline of the hegemon (GILPIN, 2002).

[11] In line with this argument, Lim (2014) argues that offensive realism is imprecise in defining the relations between the global and regional levels. According to this scholar, regional hegemon candidates such as China exercise a two-pronged strategy: gaining supremacy over regional adversaries and isolating their region from the external interference of extra-regional hegemons. To isolate the region from external interference, it is also required that a regional hegemon candidate acquires naval power. Naval power does not necessarily imply sea command. When a navy is not capable of seeking sea command, it might choose to deny others the exercise of command in a sea denial strategy. Therefore, regional hegemons candidates tend to develop navies capable to damage and carrying out hit and run tactics. That generally implies great investments in attack submarines, to the detriment of mirroring extra-regional adversaries' navies that need to prioritize amphibious operations (and invest heavily on carriers, for instance). In sum, in opposition to Mearsheimer's argument that a regional hegemon candidate seeks land superiority, Lim (2014) argues that regional hegemony cannot be achieved without early investment in naval capabilities.

Modelski and Thompson (1988) consider that economic, social, and cultural factors are important elements that work together with naval power in the global system, that only exists because of the capacity of global reach. The great powers that exercised world leadership have also been great commercial and/or industrial powers. Furthermore, naval power has been directly related to innovations, especially during the periods between global conflicts, that have transformed the world into a modern interconnected oceanic system. These innovations contribute to the country's economic success that allows the state to join the club of great powers (MODELSKY; THOMPSON, 1988, p. 16).

Posen (2003) also agrees that there is a close connection between superior economic resources, technology, industrial capacity, and military power. The hegemon needs to maintain superiority in these fields when compared to potential adversaries. This superiority allows the command of the sea. Modern naval assets, like nuclear submarines or aircraft carriers, for example, are very expensive, and few countries can develop them. So, the command of the sea is directly associated with the economical, technological, and industrial advantage of the US related to other countries (POSEN, 2003).

Mearsheimer (2001) claims that security is the most important aim of a great power and when it conflicts with economics, the first will be prioritized. Nevertheless, he also defends the connection between states' economic development and military power. According to him, economic prosperity means wealth, which is the foundation to build and maintain technological modernized military forces (MEARSHEIMER, 2001, p. 46-61). He argues that the concept of wealth is associated with latent power, that is, the state's socio-economic resources, technological development, and also the advanced industries available to the state, in building and supporting its military forces. However, he considers that sometimes wealthy states do not build additional military forces when there are diminishing returns in strategic advantage; when defense spending will hurt the state's economy; or when wealthy allies help a great power in the security competition with a rival (MEARSHEIMER, 2001, p. 76-79).

Finally, the priority given by Mearsheimer (2001) to military power to the detriment of economic power is related to assumptions about the imminence of conflicts. Mearsheimer's theory emphasizes the worst-case scenario – in which great powers have always to be prepared for war – due to three main reasons: political competition is more dangerous than

economic disputes and the existence of a state may be challenged in case of a war defeat; the possibility of conflict always exists if there is material capacity; and a rational state should always prefer military preparedness as a measure to prevent conflict or to win a war. Thus, Mearsheimer's offensive realist theory assumes that short-term military security should be prioritized over long-term economic development when the two conflict. On the other hand, Gilpin's theory assumes a more flexible position, considering that security threats must be pondered by a probability of conflict analyses, to the detriment of always maximizing security. This allows the state "to make trade-offs between short-term military objectives and long-term economic objectives" (BROOKS, 1997, p. 458).

The table below summarizes the main ideas of the realist theories discussed herein on the role of naval power and the connection between naval power and wealth.

Table 1: Naval Power in Realist Theories

Theory	Leading Author	The main determinant of great power ranking	Role of naval power	The connection between economic and military power
Power Transition	Gilpin	Unequal economic, technological, and military growth. Victory in the last hegemonic war.	Important to safeguard the world market economy, maintain world order, exert coercive diplomacy, and conduct limited war.	Economic efficiency and military power are interdependent.
Long Leadership Cycle	Modelski & Thompson	Naval Power /Global Reach. Victory in the last hegemonic war.	Superior medium to win global wars and maintain world order.	Centrality is given to innovations that spread in economical and naval endeavors.
Defensive Structural Realism	Barry Posen	Command of the Commons.	Important together with space and air power	A close relation between superior economic resources, technology, industrial capacity, and military power.
Offensive Structural Realism	Mearsheimer	Military power, with a paramount emphasis on land power.	The mainly supportive role of land power; it is notably important to exercise offshore balancing.	Wealth is seen as latent power which can be translated into a military concrete power

CONCLUSION

This article has developed a comprehensive overview of International Relations realist theories in order to unravel the role of sea

and naval power in world politics. It was argued that prominent scholars from the "Rise and Fall Realism", "Defensive Structural Realism", and "Offensive Structural Realism" mistakenly employ "sea power" and "naval power" as synonyms. In this sense, we have clarified that naval power relates to the military component of sea power, that is, to naval military capabilities. Therefore, the theories herein discussed are mainly responsible for developing the role of naval power in world politics.

The theories tend to agree on the overall importance of naval power to great powers since it helps in power projection. Nonetheless, this article has discussed the controversy around the relative priority given to naval power by different scholars. The analysis shows that the role of naval power in world politics could be represented in a spectrum in which naval power is seen as a superior medium by Modelski and Thompson (1988), important by Gilpin (2002) and Posen (2003), and mainly supportive by Mearsheimer.

Despite recognizing that this situation might change in the future, Modelsky and Thompson (1988) consider that all world powers have, until now, shown superior naval capabilities. This puts naval power as a historically necessary and almost sufficient condition for world power raking. Naval power is necessary in the sense that without it a state cannot be considered a world power. It is almost sufficient since it has a central role in the composition of military power so that other sources of power are considered secondary by Thompson and Modelsky (1988). The inductive character of this theory leads one to bet on the continued relevance of naval power to future hegemons.

In turn, Gilpin (2002) recognizes the importance of naval power to the last two world hegemons (Great Britain and the US) but places greater emphasis on the understanding that the power composition of hegemons is historically determined, so that military, economic, political and technological changes might transform the relative importance of different power manifestations. In a similar vein, Posen (2003) places equal importance on the command of all global commons: the sea, the air, and the space, implying that naval power is necessary, but is also far from sufficient in determining great powers' place in the world power raking.

In contrast, Mearsheimer (2002) acknowledges the role of naval power in making "off-shore balancing" strategies possible for a regional hegemon. Nevertheless, it is land power that is considered necessary and almost sufficient in the pursuit of hegemony due to its alleged role in

winning wars and occupying territory.

Finally, this article has shown that all the variants of Realism herein discussed stress the importance of wealth in making military power possible and highlight the importance to balance defense spending with the economic strength enjoyed by the hegemon. Modelsky and Thompson (1988), Gilpin (2002), and Posen (2003) place great emphasis on the role of naval power in securing sea lines of communication, which support free trade. In particular, according to Gilpin (2002), naval supremacy was used by Great Britain to help in the creation of a world market economy, being replaced by the U.S. in the 20th century. In this sense, not only wealth is necessary to support military naval power, but the latter is also auxiliary to the pursuit of the former.

AS GRANDES POTÊNCIAS E O MAR: O PODER NAVAL NAS TEORIAS DAS RELAÇÕES INTERNACIONAIS

RESUMO

Este artigo tem como objetivo discutir o papel do poder marítimo e naval no "Rise and Fall Realism"; "Realismo Estrutural Defensivo"; e "Realismo Estrutural Ofensivo", representados respectivamente pelos trabalhos de Gilpin (2002) e Modelsky e Thompson (1988); Posen (2003) e Mearsheimer (2001). Argumentamos que esses estudiosos empregam equivocadamente o poder marítimo e naval como se fossem sinônimos. Na verdade, esses estudiosos estão preocupados principalmente com o componente militar do poder naval, ou seja, o poder naval. Além disso, afirmamos que a importância relativa do poder naval em relação a outras fontes de poder varia em um espectro que vai desde: 1) a consideração do poder naval como condição necessária e quase suficiente para a conquista do poder global, 2) passando para o reconhecimento do poder naval como historicamente importante para as duas últimas potências hegemônicas, mas não necessariamente importante nas futuras manifestações do poder hegemônico, e 3) chegar à consideração do poder naval como tendo apenas um papel de suporte para o poder terrestre, sendo esse poder o necessário e condição quase suficiente para uma colocação elevada no ranking mundial de potências. Por fim, refletimos sobre o argumento estabelecido por essas variantes do Realismo sobre a conexão entre poder naval e riqueza.

Palavras-chave: Realismo de Ascensão e Queda; Realismo Estrutural Defensivo; Realismo Estrutural Ofensivo; Poder Marítimo; Poder naval.

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