

# The Balance of Power between Idealism and Pragmatism: The Dynamics of Spheres of Influence in the International System

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**Rezumat:** Acest articol investighează relevanța durabilă a teoriei echilibrului de putere în relațiile internaționale, examinând în mod specific dinamica dintre aspirațiile idealiste și considerațiile pragmatice în structurarea sferelor de influență. Explorează modul în care conceptul de echilibrare a puterii a susținut istoric negocierile marilor puteri, folosind Tratatul de la Versailles (1919) și conferințele de pace de după Al Doilea Război Mondial ca studii de caz principale. Aceste evenimente exemplifică modul în care statele au utilizat strategiile de echilibru de putere pentru a limita ambițiile hegemonice și a promova stabilitatea sistemică. Prin integrarea cadrului echilibrului de putere cu teoria Complexului de Securitate Regională (CSR), acest studiu evidențiază impacturile reciproce dintre structurile globale și practicile de securitate regionale, subliniind rolul crucial al sprijinului marilor puteri în susținerea alianțelor regionale, așa cum s-a văzut în Europa Centrală și de Est interbelică. Analiza demonstrează că, deși eforturile de echilibrare a puterii au ca scop promovarea unui sistem internațional stabil, legitimitatea și sprijinul complex din partea marilor puteri rămân esențiale. În cele din urmă, acest studiu susține că stabilitatea efectivă necesită nu doar o distribuție a puterii, ci și măsuri de securitate cooperativă, considerând că ordinea durabilă se bazează pe strategii incluzive care recunosc și respectă interesele de securitate atât ale marilor, cât și ale micilor puteri.

**Cuvinte cheie:** echilibrul puterii; Complexul Regional de Securitate; sfere de influență; conferințe, ordine mondială

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**Abstract:** This article investigates the enduring relevance of balance of power theory within international relations, specifically examining the dynamic between idealistic aspirations and pragmatic considerations in the structuring of spheres of influence. It explores how the concept of power balancing has historically underpinned major power negotiations, using the Treaty of Versailles (1919) and post-World War II peace conferences as focal case studies. These events exemplify how states have utilized balance of power strategies to curb hegemonic ambitions and promote systemic stability. By integrating the balance of power framework with the Regional Security Complex (RSC) theory, this study highlights the reciprocal impacts between global structures and regional security practices, emphasizing the crucial role of major power endorsements in sustaining regional alliances, as seen in interwar Central and Eastern Europe. The analysis demonstrates that while power balancing efforts aim to foster a stable international system, legitimacy and comprehensive support from larger powers remain essential. Ultimately, this study posits that effective stability requires not merely a distribution of power but also cooperative security measures, assuming that a durable order relies on inclusive strategies that acknowledge and respect the security interests of both great and smaller powers.

**Keywords:** balance of power; Regional Security Complex; spheres of influence; conferences, world order

## **1. Introduction**

Within the international system, the concept of the balance of power constitutes a fundamental element for understanding the dynamics of interstate relations, especially in a context marked by the absence of a dominant supranational authority. The balance of power functions as a regulatory mechanism, enabling states to prevent the hegemony of a single actor and to maintain international stability. This assumption frequently underpins state security policies, as states either seek to strengthen their own position or to moderate the power of other actors to prevent destabilization of the international order.

The role of international conferences in maintaining the balance of power and promoting stability within the international system has been, and remains, essential. In recent centuries, these conferences have allowed actors to negotiate security frameworks and legitimize new principles of interaction within the context of post-conflict transitions. This article aims to analyse how international negotiations have influenced systemic stability and the redefinition of the balance of power in critical periods of the 20th century through case studies, including the Versailles Conference (1919) and post-war conferences that established the post-1945 international order.

To this end, this article is structured to present the theoretical relationship between the balance of power and regional security theory, followed by an exploration of relevant historical moments. The case study of the Versailles Conference highlights the impact of legitimacy and organization on peace negotiations. At the same time, subsequent analyses show how decisions made during and after the Second World War laid the foundations for a divided international system. This cross-sectional approach allows for an integrated understanding of how the balance of power concept is applied in international negotiations, revealing both continuities and disruptions in the global order.

## **2. Theoretical Framework: Between Balance of Power and Regional Security Complex**

The balance of power theory explains how states manage their security and influence on the international stage by adjusting power relations. In an anarchic systemic structure, states seek to prevent the formation and establishment of a hegemonic power that could threaten the sovereignty of other nations and compromise system stability.<sup>1</sup> To counteract the expansion of any actor, states may build temporary alliances and initiate balancing strategies that rely on augmenting their military, economic, and diplomatic capabilities.<sup>2</sup>

At the Versailles Conference (1919), the Great Powers endeavoured to apply this principle by imposing strict limitations on Germany to prevent a renewed German hegemony in Europe. However, these drastic measures, which lacked widespread support and agreement, left deep resentments, contributing to an unstable global order that eventually led to the Second World War.<sup>3</sup>

During the interwar period, several states in Central and Eastern Europe formed defensive alliances, such as the Little Entente and the Balkan Pact, to protect themselves against threats from Germany and the Soviet Union. These alliances sought to maintain a regional balance, yet without firm support from Britain and France, they remained quite vulnerable, thereby demonstrating the limits of the balance of power theory in the absence of genuine international backing.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Holsti, K. J. *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*. Prentice Hall, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Morgenthau, H. J., *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1948.

<sup>3</sup> Carr, E. H. *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*. Palgrave, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Wandycz, P. S., The Little Entente: Sixty Years Later. *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 59(4), 1981, pp. 548-564.

Another example of this balance in action was Winston Churchill's strategy during the Second World War. The British Prime Minister refused to negotiate separately with Germany, aiming to keep the Allies united against Nazism. Churchill's decision prevented German forces from concentrating solely on the Soviet Union and laid the groundwork for a post-war world order, illustrating how the balance of power can operate effectively when major actors act in concert.<sup>5</sup>

After the war, the peace conferences at Yalta and Potsdam (1945) established a new balance structure by dividing Europe between opposing blocs. Thus, NATO and the Warsaw Pact formalized this division, aiming to maintain stability based on a clear demarcation of spheres of influence. However, this bipolar balance generated a "cold peace," in which tensions remained, and the security of smaller states was often sacrificed in favour of the interests of major powers.<sup>6</sup>

However, I believe it is necessary to introduce the Regional Security Complex (RSC) theory proposed by Buzan and Wæver into this analysis, as it helps us understand how security is organized at the regional level.<sup>7</sup> According to this theory, international security is not evenly distributed; states in certain regions develop close security ties to address local challenges. During the interwar period, alliances in Central and Eastern Europe—such as the Little Entente and the Balkan Pact—served as examples of regional security complexes.<sup>8</sup> These alliances aimed to limit the influence of Germany and the Soviet Union, but without real support from major powers, these security arrangements proved fragile and vulnerable to external pressures.<sup>9</sup>

We can consider the case of Romania, which, during the Second World War, sought to negotiate an exit from the conflict, attempting to avoid the extension of German and Soviet influence. This situation illustrates how smaller states within a security complex attempt to adjust their position when the context becomes too risky. However, the lack of concrete support

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<sup>5</sup> Lukács, J., *Five Days in London: May 1940*. Yale University Press. 1999.

<sup>6</sup> Roberts, G., *The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Second World War: Russo-German Relations and the Road to War, 1933-1941*. Palgrave Macmillan. 1999.

<sup>7</sup> Buzan, B., & Wæver, O., *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*. Cambridge University Press. 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Alexandrescu, M., Central Europe as a regional security (sub)complex in the interwar period. *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Historia*, 67(1),2022, pp. 101-114.

<sup>9</sup> Wandycz, P. S., *op. cit.*

from the great powers limited Romania's ability to negotiate a favourable status, highlighting the vulnerabilities faced by states within unsupported regional complexes.<sup>10</sup>

The Yalta and Potsdam conferences consolidated the Eastern European security complex, subordinating this region to the Soviet Union. Under Moscow's influence, Eastern Europe became a unified security bloc subordinate to Soviet interests. This case reflects how a great power can control a regional complex, imposing rules and limiting the autonomy of states within the region.<sup>11</sup>

What connected post-war Eastern European states was the status quo created through the peace conferences of 1946–1947. These conferences laid the groundwork for an arrangement that provided the premises for a bipolar world order. Thus, Eastern Europe becomes a real laboratory, demonstrating that regional security can be entirely controlled by a great power, considerably limiting the options of small states, even if they are formally integrated within a regional security complex.<sup>12</sup> The security agenda was dictated by the Soviet Union, turning Eastern Europe into a regional security complex or Type II.<sup>13</sup>

The analysis of the balance of power and the Regional Security Complex reveals that international stability depends not only on the great powers but also on regional security, where smaller states strive to protect their interests. The Versailles Conference and interwar alliances underscore that the balance of power must be legitimized and broadly supported to be effective, and regional complexes require the backing of great powers to function.

Following the experience of post-war peace conferences and the Cold War, it becomes evident that a security complex controlled by a great power can offer stability but at the cost of member states' autonomy. From this analysis emerges an important lesson: the international order should be based on a combination of power balancing and cooperation rather than the imposition of a single great power's interests.

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<sup>10</sup> Alexandrescu, M., Refusal to negotiate: Britain's position and impact on the World War in 1940. *Transylvanian Review*, 33(1), Spring, 2024.

<sup>11</sup> Erickson, J., *The Road to Stalingrad: Stalin's War with Germany*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1983.

<sup>12</sup> Buzan, B., & Wæver, O., *op. cit.*

<sup>13</sup> For further explanation, see also Alexandrescu, M., *Central Europe as a regional security...*

### **3. The Versailles Conference – Between Legitimacy and Pragmatism**

The Versailles Conference of 1919 represented a major attempt to redefine the balance of power following the devastating First World War, with the goal of establishing a new European stability through a collective security structure. This event marked the beginning of a new era in international relations, dominated by the hope for lasting peace but also by tensions and power rivalries among states. The conference was influenced by the personalities of the attending leaders, particularly by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, who played a central role in seeking to impose a set of moral and idealistic principles far removed from a strictly pragmatic approach.<sup>14</sup>

Wilson arrived in Europe with the ideal of acting as an impartial arbitrator, not as a head of state, hoping to redefine international principles through the establishment of the League of Nations and the imposition of the principle of self-determination. However, his position was weakened by a lack of internal political support, especially from the U.S. Senate. Colonel House, his personal envoy, criticized him for failing to create a favourable negotiation climate, refusing to include members of the Republican Party in the U.S. delegation. This decision reduced the chances of the treaty's ratification in the Senate, and disagreements between Wilson and his advisors undermined the coherence of the American position at the conference.<sup>15</sup>

From the perspective of negotiation theory, we might speak of "Wilson's fallacy," which demonstrates the importance of internal political coherence and diplomatic support in the negotiation process. Colonel House and other advisors suggested that Wilson could have avoided this error by including representatives from both political parties, thus ensuring the treaty's support in the Senate. Without this foundation, Wilson failed to transform the principles of self-determination and cooperation into viable policies, resulting in a significant failure for American foreign policy.<sup>16</sup>

In his memoirs, Lloyd George recalls that Wilson arrived in Europe with a series of ideals but without a clear implementation plan, which contributed to the inconsistency of the negotiations. This lack of strategy undermined not only the United States' position but also the prospects for long-term stability in Europe.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Alexandrescu, M., Organizarea cadrului de negociere la Conferința de la Paris (1919). In M. Mureșan & M. Trufan (Coord.), *Multiculturalism in Transilvania după Conferința de Pace de la Paris*. Editura Casa Cărții de Știință, 2019, pp. 44-75.

<sup>15</sup> Seymour, C., *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928.

<sup>16</sup> Alexandrescu, M., *op. cit.*

<sup>17</sup> Lloyd George, D., *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*. Victor Gollancz, 1938.

The Versailles Conference laid the groundwork for legitimacy and stability in the international system. The treaty imposed severe conditions on Germany, including territorial losses, military restrictions, and reparations obligations, without offering a framework for its reintegration into the European system. These measures, theoretically aimed at maintaining a balance of power, were perceived by Germany as an illegitimate imposition, generating resentments that fuelled the rise of political extremism during the interwar period.<sup>18</sup>

The lack of a coherent plan and the exclusion of Germany from negotiations turned the treaty into a "dictate" rather than an authentic negotiation. Although the League of Nations was created as a mechanism for cooperation and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, it proved insufficient to guarantee European security, particularly amid the economic and political weakening of Central and Eastern Europe. Thus, the conference established a weak foundation for the new global order: a fragile balance of power and an imbalanced international system incapable of preventing another world conflict.

The decisions at Versailles also impacted regional stability, leaving Central and Eastern Europe in a generalized state of insecurity. In such a context, states bordering Germany felt the need to protect themselves, forming defensive alliances such as the Little Entente and the Balkan Pact to counter revisionist threats.

However, without firm support from the Great Powers, these alliances remained vulnerable and insufficient to stabilize the region. The lack of solid commitment from Britain and France left Central and Eastern European states to manage their security independently. This situation favoured German revisionism and amplified political instability, ultimately contributing to the outbreak of the Second World War.

#### **4. The Interwar European Security System: The Regional Security Complex in Central Europe**

After the First World War, European leaders realized that to prevent another large-scale conflict, a security system was needed to maintain peace. In this context, countries in Central and Eastern Europe caught between the great powers, sought to secure their own safety by forming regional alliances such as the Little Entente and the Balkan Pact. These arrangements aimed to

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

protect the order established by the Treaty of Versailles and to maintain a balance of power within the region.<sup>19</sup>

The Regional Security Complex (RSC) theory, formulated by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, helps us understand why these regional alliances were so important for the countries in Central Europe.<sup>20</sup> The theory's central idea is that security does not function uniformly everywhere; instead, it concentrates on regions where countries share common interests and face similar risks. In the interwar period, the states of Central Europe collaborated to defend themselves against potential threats from Germany and the Soviet Union, thereby attempting to maintain a balance of power that would protect them.<sup>21</sup>

In this context, France was an essential supporter of these regional alliances, seeking to create a barrier against German expansion. However, Great Britain took a different stance, focusing more on economic security and avoiding military involvement in Central Europe. Without a firm commitment from a great power, these alliances proved vulnerable, being too weak to withstand external pressures on their own.

One of the major problems with this regional security system was the lack of a genuinely supportive great power. Although France was actively involved in supporting the Little Entente, it lacked the resources necessary to provide long-term protection. Great Britain, on the other hand, avoided direct involvement, preferring a policy of mediation and risk minimization, yet failing to offer any security guarantee to states in the region.<sup>22</sup>

In the 1930s, as Germany regained strength and became increasingly aggressive, these regional alliances began to feel the limits of their own security capabilities. Without solid external support, the Little Entente and other similar alliances failed to halt German expansion or counter the growing influence of the Soviet Union. This lack of stability demonstrated the difficulty small states face in maintaining security without the backing of a great power.

The year 1938 marked a turning point for these regional alliances. As Germany began to disregard international treaties and expand its influence, Central European states saw their efforts to maintain peace shattered. Their attempts to preserve a balance of power were overwhelmed by Adolf Hitler's

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<sup>19</sup> Wandycz, *op. cit.*

<sup>20</sup> Buzan, B. and Wæver, O., *op. cit.*

<sup>21</sup> Alexandrescu, M., *Central Europe...*

<sup>22</sup> Bakić, D., 'Must Will Peace': The British Brokering of 'Central European' and 'Balkan Locarno'. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 48(1), 2013, p. 24-56.

ambitions, and the region's security complex collapsed entirely. By 1940, with the Second World War fully underway, the European security system was effectively destroyed.

### **5. Analysis of World War II Negotiations: Great Britain's Refusal and Romania's Dilemmas**

During the Second World War, the negotiations and strategic decisions of the great powers reflected an intense competition to maintain a balance of power in Europe. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill chose to reject any offer of a separate peace with Germany, considering that such a decision would weaken the alliance against Nazism and impact Europe's post-war stability. Churchill's strategic pragmatism guided this approach, as he understood that a firm alliance with the United States and the Soviet Union would be the best option for a sustainable balance in Europe.

Faced with an offer from Berlin, which included the return of colonies and recognition of German dominance over Central Europe, Churchill chose to reject the proposal. Instead of a negotiated peace, he favoured a strategy of depleting Germany's resources through a prolonged war, convinced that Hitler would never respect the terms of any agreement. Churchill knew that a separate peace would weaken the alliance and allow Germany to concentrate its forces against the Soviet Union, thus destabilizing the European balance of power.<sup>23</sup>

This choice was based on the idea that a united front and a common resolve to resist to the end were essential to defeating a hegemonic power. Churchill's refusal helped to strengthen Allied relations, contributing to a coordinated strategy that gradually weakened Germany and laid the groundwork for a new power structure in post-war Europe.

For Romania, the situation was much more complicated. After the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939, Eastern Europe was divided into German and Soviet spheres of influence, and Romania found itself in a vulnerable position without real support from the West. In 1940, with France defeated and Britain focused on its own problems, Romania was forced to accept German influence and join the Axis.

Under the leadership of Ion Antonescu, Romania hoped that by aligning with Germany, it could preserve its territorial integrity and independence. However, as the war took an unfavourable turn for the Axis, Romania sought

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<sup>23</sup> Lukács, J., *op. cit.*

to negotiate its exit from the conflict, trying to avoid Soviet occupation. Between 1943 and 1944, Romanian leaders initiated what could be called Romania's "diplomatic offensive," appealing to neutral countries like Turkey and Switzerland to facilitate indirect negotiations with the Allies.<sup>24</sup>

Ion Antonescu, though reluctant to accept an unconditional surrender, was pressured by the rapid deterioration of the Axis's military position and internal opposition. This complex situation reflected Romania's dilemma, as it sought a way out that would allow it to avoid the consequences of Soviet occupation and territorial losses.

The decisions of Britain and Romania during the war reveal two distinct perspectives on addressing the challenges of maintaining a balance of power in a global conflict context. Churchill adopted a strategy of alliances and collective resistance, recognizing that only through collaboration could the desired balance in Europe be maintained. On the other hand, Romania sought to maximize its options through diplomacy but was constrained by the limitations imposed by its alliance with Germany.

For Romania, negotiations with the Allies were complicated by the unconditional surrender clause decided at the Casablanca Conference in 1943. This condition dramatically complicated and limited the Romanian leadership's negotiating scope, which sought to avoid falling under Soviet domination as a core pillar of a RSC in the new post-war security context. Romania's efforts to negotiate an armistice succeeded only after the arrest of Antonescu on August 23, 1944, when a new government began official peace talks.<sup>25</sup>

## **6. The Post-war International Order: The Peace Conferences of 1946–1947 and the Splitting of the International System**

After the conclusion of the Second World War, the great powers committed themselves to establishing an international order that would ensure peace while also securing each side's influence within its strategic sphere. The peace conferences of the late 1940s represented both attempts to institute a balance of power between the emerging blocs and to delineate spheres of influence, thereby creating a new structure within the international system. This process of division can be interpreted through the emergence

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<sup>24</sup> Alexandrescu, M., *Refusal to negotiate...*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem.*

of regional security complexes in Europe, where each power bloc developed its own system of defence and alliances.<sup>26</sup>

The Yalta and Potsdam Conferences were key moments in defining the post-war balance, as they revealed the divergent interests of the great powers regarding Europe and global geopolitical control.<sup>27</sup> Specifically, the conferences established the principle of dividing Europe into two distinct spheres of influence, thereby outlining a precarious balance of power between East and West. This bipolar configuration was considered essential for global stability, with the idea that a precise balance between superpowers would prevent another confrontation.<sup>28</sup>

The United States and the Soviet Union deliberately structured this balance of power by consolidating alliance blocs—NATO and the Warsaw Pact—each bloc adopting its own strategy of collective defence and deterrence. This alliance system was, in fact, a means of formalizing each superpower's influence within its own extensive territory, ensuring that no rival power could penetrate a controlled space.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the peace conferences transformed the balance of power from an abstract concept into a formalized network of alliances and treaties designed to regulate interactions between the two blocs and prevent an escalation of tensions.

The division of the international system had an immediate impact on regional security, generating two security complexes in Europe: a Western one and an Eastern one. According to regional security complex theory, each region develops its own set of security mechanisms based on the proximity and interdependence of member states.<sup>30</sup> In post-war Europe, these complexes reflected the strategic and ideological alignments imposed by the superpowers, allowing each bloc to establish norms and defence measures within its sphere of influence.

The Western security complex, centred around NATO, was grounded in mutual commitments to collective defence and the strategic integration of Western Europe under the nuclear protection of the United States. NATO was not merely a military alliance but a mechanism for

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<sup>26</sup> Buzan, B. And Wæver, O., *op. cit.*; Kissinger, H. (1994). *Diplomacy*. Simon & Schuster.

<sup>27</sup> Trachtenberg, M. (1999). *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963*. Princeton University Press.

<sup>28</sup> Gaddis, J. L., *The Cold War: A New History*. Penguin Press, 2005; Westad, O. A., *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.

<sup>29</sup> Kissinger, *op. cit.*; Roberts, *op. cit.*

<sup>30</sup> Buzan and Wæver, *op. cit.*

ensuring order and security against the communist threat, offering member states the assurance that any external aggression would be treated as an attack on the entire bloc.<sup>31</sup>

In contrast, the Eastern security complex relied on alliances imposed by the Soviet Union through the Warsaw Pact, which consolidated control over Eastern Europe. The Warsaw Pact functioned as a network of collective defence subordinated to Soviet strategy, aimed at ensuring stability within the socialist bloc and preventing any approach toward the West. This military alliance created a regional security system with a strict hierarchy, in which Eastern European states were integrated into unified defence mechanisms but under centralized coordination in Moscow.<sup>32</sup>

The division of the international system into two opposing blocs, each with its own security complex, created a relatively stable but fragile peace based on the balance of power between the superpowers. While both sides engaged in an arms race and constant displays of force, regional security structures enabled the superpowers to maintain control over Europe.<sup>33</sup> This bipolar structure provided stability through mutual deterrence, as each bloc possessed sufficient resources and capabilities to defend its sphere of influence and discourage any aggressive expansion by the rival.

Regional security complexes, especially those in Europe, served as a method of integrating balance of power policy into the long-term strategy of both superpowers. NATO and the Warsaw Pact were not only defensive alliances but also platforms for strengthening each bloc's identity and coordinating foreign policy, thereby contributing to the stabilization of the bipolar order. By maintaining robust regional security complexes, each bloc could control its member states and respond swiftly to any destabilizing threats, whether from within or outside its sphere of influence.<sup>34</sup>

## **7. Conclusions**

The presented analysis reveals that the balance of power and regional security complexes played a crucial role in the great powers' efforts to stabilize the international system in a century marked by two world conflicts and deep ideological divisions. While the balance of power theory provides

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<sup>31</sup> Gaddis, *op. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> Erickson, *op. cit.*; Wandycz, *op. cit.*

<sup>33</sup> Roberts, *op. cit.*; Trachtenberg, *op. cit.*

<sup>34</sup> Westad, *op. cit.*

a solid understanding of the dynamics among powerful states, the discussed case studies highlight that maintaining such a balance requires not only measures to limit unilateral expansion but also consistent support from a broad consensus among states.

The Versailles Conference exposed the difficulties of an imposed peace based more on constraints than on inclusive negotiations, contributing to a state of latent instability in interwar Europe. On the other hand, during and after the Second World War, the Yalta and Potsdam conferences reflected a pragmatic compromise between the great powers, but they also divided Europe into spheres of influence, perpetuating a bipolar system that became the foundation of the Cold War.

This analysis emphasizes the importance of regional security complexes in maintaining the balance of power. The defensive alliances in Central and Eastern Europe, though designed to ensure security against German and Soviet expansion, illustrated the limits of self-sufficiency when small states lacked the support of great powers. In turn, NATO and the Warsaw Pact formalized alliances that contributed to stability but also deepened divisions, highlighting the fragility of a peace based on deterrence and rigid boundaries.

In essence, the discussed case studies confirm that a stable international order cannot be achieved solely through force and counterbalancing. Cooperation, legitimacy, and respect for the interests of all actors, including small and medium-sized ones, are fundamental elements for durable stability. The experiences of the 20th century show that the balance of power and regional security must be combined with policies of dialogue and collaboration, providing a valuable lesson for future international configurations.

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