Introduction

Almost nobody disputes that the end of the Cold War had a profound impact on the whole pattern of international security but, more than a decade after the transition, the character of the post-Cold War security order still remains hotly contested. This book explores the idea that, since decolonisation, the regional level of security has become both more autonomous and more prominent in international politics, and that the ending of the Cold War accelerated this process (Katzenstein 2000). This idea follows naturally from the ending of bipolarity. Without superpower rivalry intruding obsessively into all regions, local powers have more room for manoeuvre. For a decade after the ending of the Cold War, both the remaining superpower and the other great powers (China, EU, Japan, Russia) had less incentive, and displayed less will, to intervene in security affairs outside their own regions. The terrorist attack on the United States in 2001 may well trigger some reassertion of great power interventionism, but this is likely to be for quite narrow and specific purposes, and seems unlikely to recreate the general willingness to intervene abroad that was a feature of Cold War superpower rivalry. The relative autonomy of regional security constitutes a pattern of international security relations radically different from the rigid structure of superpower bipolarity that defined the Cold War. In our view, this pattern is not captured adequately by either 'unipolar' or 'multipolar' designations of the international system structure. Nor is it captured by the idea of 'globalisation' or by the dismal conclusion that the best that IR can do in conceptualising the security order of the post-Cold War world is to call it 'the new world disorder' (Carpenter 1991).

The argument in this book is that *regional security complex theory* (RSCT) enables one to understand this new structure and to evaluate the relative balance of power of, and mutual relationship within it between,

regionalising and globalising trends. RSCT distinguishes between the system level interplay of the global powers, whose capabilities enable them to transcend distance, and the subsystem level interplay of lesser powers whose main security environment is their local region. The central idea in RSCT is that, since most threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones, security interdependence is normally patterned into regionally based clusters: security complexes. As Friedberg (1993–4: 5) puts it (echoing the Federalist Papers Nos. IV and VI; Hamilton et al. 1911): 'most states historically have been concerned primarily with the capabilities and intentions of their neighbours'. Processes of securitisation and thus the degree of security interdependence are more intense between the actors inside such complexes than they are between actors inside the complex and those outside it. Security complexes may well be extensively penetrated by the global powers, but their regional dynamics nonetheless have a substantial degree of autonomy from the patterns set by the global powers. To paint a proper portrait of global security, one needs to understand both of these levels independently, as well as the interaction between them.

RSCT uses a blend of materialist and constructivist approaches. On the materialist side it uses ideas of bounded territoriality and distribution of power that are close to those in neorealism. Its emphasis on the regional level is compatible with, and we think complementary to, neorealism's structural scheme, but it contradicts the tendency of most neorealist analysis to concentrate heavily on the global level structure. On the constructivist side, RSCT builds on the securitisation theory set out in our previous works (Buzan et al. 1998; Wæver 1995c), which focus on the political processes by which security issues get constituted. It thus breaks from neorealism by treating the distribution of power and the patterns of amity and enmity as essentially independent variables. Polarity may affect, but it does not determine, the character of security relations. The processes of securitisation are essentially open, and subject to influence by a host of factors. RSCT offers a conceptual framework that classifies security regions into a set of types, and so provides a basis for comparative studies in regional security. It also offers a theory with some powers of prediction, in the sense of being able to narrow the range of possible outcomes for given types of region. More on this in chapter 3.

In what follows, chapter 1 establishes the plausibility of a regional approach by looking at both the main perspectives on the structure of international security, and the history of regional security. Chapter 2

tackles the question of levels by investigating how we are to understand the structure of security at the global level, seeing this as a precondition for defining the regional one. Chapter 3 lays out a revised and updated version of RSCT, and relates it to system level polarity. This theory sets the frame for the rest of the book.

2 Levels: distinguishing the regional from the global

The how and why of distinguishing the regional from the global level

Any coherent regionalist approach to security must start by drawing clear distinctions between what constitutes the regional level and what constitutes the levels on either side of it. Lake and Morgan (1997c) draw the distinction between regional and global, but then use definitions of region that effectively conflate these two levels. The fact that the regionalist approach features a *distinct* level of analysis located *between* the global and the local is what gives RSCT its analytical power. Distinguishing the regional from the unit level is not usually controversial. Units (of whatever kind) must have a fairly high degree of independent actor quality. Regions, almost however defined, must be composed of geographically clustered sets of such units, and these clusters must be embedded in a larger system, which has a structure of its own. Regions have analytical, and even ontological, standing, but they do not have actor quality. Only exceptionally does this distinction become problematic, as for example in the case of the European Union (see ch. 11). Mostly, the differentiation of units and regions is fairly straightforward.

Distinguishing the regional from the global is less straightforward. The easy part is that a region must obviously be less than the whole, and usually much less. The tricky bit is actually specifying what falls on which side of the boundary. There would not be much opposition to the proposition that the United States is a global level actor, while the security dynamics amongst the South American states are at the regional level. But the difficulty begins when one tries to position particular actors: should Russia be considered a global power or a regional one? And China? Traditional realism does not help because it tends

to think in a global track, positioning states as great, middle, or small powers. This approach bypasses our concern with powers that are structurally significant at the regional level. Public debates show ambivalence, sometimes talking of Russia and China as regional powers (or regional superpowers), sometimes global ones. The problem is that the global level is an abstraction that can be defined in many different ways. It is *not* simply the whole system (Ruggie 1979–80). In security analysis, as also more widely in IR theory, the global level is about macrosystem structures that constrain and shape the behaviour of the units in the system. How these structures are defined thus shapes the nature, and even the possibility, of the regional level. For this reason it is easiest to approach the global–regional boundary by starting from the top down.

Both the neorealist and globalist perspectives centre on a conception of global structure. Neorealism is built around two levels, system and unit, and is principally concerned to define and operationalise the system level. Neorealists either downplay or ignore all levels except the system one, or like Walt (1987) discuss the regional level empirically without considering its theoretical standing or implications. Happily, it is relatively straightforward to slot in a regional level (even as a fourth tier of system structure; see Wæver 1993a, 1994, 1997c, in preparation) without, at least initially, causing too much disturbance to the theoretical architecture (a fourth tier in the sense that, when dynamics from the deeper tiers are actualised, they are mediated by specific regional structures). Neorealism is in some respects strong on territoriality, and the potential harmony and synergy between it and the regionalist perspective are high, especially when states are the main actors. That said, there is room for conflict between neorealism and regionalism when the security agenda moves to issue areas other than military-political, to actors other than the state, and to theories of security other than materialist. Also, the most abstract and theoretically ambitious versions of neorealism (such as Waltz's) tend to conceive 'system' in such abstract terms that territoriality disappears, partly because the theory overemphasises the distance-transgressing superpower level as an effect of the Cold War, partly because maximally abstract concepts of 'system' and 'units' were favoured by the reward structures of American social science. This disregarded many insights of older realisms with closer affinities to geopolitics. In today's IR, neoclassical realism might therefore be a more likely meeting point for the neorealist and regionalist elements (Rose 1998; Schweller 1999; Wivel 2000; Zakaria 1998).

Another potential conflict between neorealism and regionalism is in the latter's contention that the global level has dropped in salience relative to the regional one since the ending of the Cold War. But that is mostly an empirical issue. It does not question the conceptual compatibility between the two except that it requires an open mind about which level is dominant at any given time and place. Hardline neorealists might have trouble accepting the proposition that the system level is not always dominant. But in principle the regionalist perspective should be able to incorporate neorealism's understanding of the global level into its own multilevel scheme (unit, region, inter-regional, global). There is already some linkage in the literature. Lake (1997: 61–2), for example, argues that bipolarity maximises the system level of security dynamics by encouraging worldwide superpower competition penetrating all regions and making the global level exceptionally intense; and Schweller (1999: 41–2) notes the use of polarity analysis at the regional level. Multipolarity and unipolarity are more difficult to assess, with lower competition at the global level, but also fewer constraints on great power behaviour (Miller 2000). These structures could allow either more, or less, scope for the regional level than bipolarity. Wivel (2000) goes further, setting out a whole theory of how variations in global polarity affect the regional level, and B. Hansen (2000: 68, 81) predicts 'high regional activity' under unipolarity.

The fit between regionalist and globalist perspectives is much less obvious, not least because there is no clear and uncontested conception of system structure at the heart of the globalist position (is it capitalism, or the global market, or world society?). As argued in chapter 1 (pp. 7–10), we have no problem with the globalist enthusiasm for interaction capacity as a driving force, though we see it as impacting on the regional level just as powerfully as on the global. Neither do we disagree with arguments that globalisation diversifies and complicates the security agenda, though we prefer to handle this through the device of sectors (Buzan et al. 1998). Aside from the lack of specification concerning system structure, the problem lies in the globalist commitment to deterritorialisation as the key to understanding both world politics and security. As we show in chapter 3, our scheme had state-centric origins, though in its updated versions these become historically contingent. The essential idea in our theory is that security dynamics have a strong territoriality, and on this basis it can accommodate non-state actors without too much difficulty. But it is incompatible with the extreme globalist idea that all levels are dissolving into one. Even if a trend

is discernible in this direction, we think it still has a very long way to go before levels cease to be a salient feature in the dynamics of international security. Although some of the new security agenda is deterritorialised, most notably in the economic and environmental sectors, we think that territoriality remains a primary defining feature of many (in)security dynamics. In addition, although we find a core–periphery idea of system structure attractive in some ways, we think it too homogenised for most security analysis. As we hope to show, a regional approach gives both a much clearer empirical picture and a theoretically more coherent understanding of international security dynamics.

From our regionalist perspective, a key weakness of both the neorealist and globalist approaches to security is that they overplay the role of the global level, and underestimate the role of the regional one. Their reasons for doing so are different. Neorealism does not (in principle) have problems with territoriality, but simply chooses not to look much at the levels below the systemic. To the extent that globalism is looking away from territoriality in particular and levels in general, it is not a good approach for picking up things still defined in territorial terms. But the more moderate versions of globalism that allow space for the points of resistance to globalisation do give room for a regionalist perspective. Neorealism provides the better template for differentiating the global and regional levels of our security constellations, yet there remains a problem within the neorealist concept of polarity as the key to the system-level security structure. This problem needs to be clarified before we can proceed.

The task of this chapter is to identify the global level in the post-Cold War international security structure using the neorealist criterion of polarity. The second section picks up the problem of polarity after the Cold War. We know that the system structure is no longer bipolar, but what comes after bipolarity is hotly contested. Our argument is that the global level of security at the outset of the twenty-first century can best be understood as one superpower plus four great powers. It is necessary to differentiate superpowers and great powers even though both are at the global level, and then to differentiate that level from the one defined by regional powers and RSCs.

The problem of polarity post-Cold War

The traditional (neo)realist way of defining the global level for the military-political sector was by identifying the great powers and taking

their interactions as the global level. During the Cold War (when most of the theoretical apparatus of International Relations was constructed), the existence of bipolarity made this seem easy to do. There was a big gap between the superpowers and the rest, and their rivalry was openly global in scale. It was during this period that the idea of using *polarity* (defined as the number of great powers in the system) became established as the way of thinking about military-political structure at the system level (Kaplan 1957; Waltz 1979). Superpower bipolarity seemed clear both in theory and in practice, and it was easy to move outward from there to talk about unipolar, multipolar, and diffuse systems. Because Cold War bipolarity was defined by superpowers, and historical multipolarity by great powers, not much thought was given to whether the difference in terminology implied a difference in classification that might matter for polarity theory. Rather, it was treated simply as a shift of language fashion, like that from 'black' to 'African-American'. Leading polarity theorists such as Waltz treated the two terms as virtual synonyms, with 'superpower' simply corresponding to low-number polarities.

The implosion of the USSR unequivocally brought the period of bipolarity to an end. But what was left behind in terms of polarity was less than crystal clear. Enthusiasts for globalisation took this as being not just the end of bipolarity, but the end of polarity *per se,* and the replacement of a Westphalian political order by a more deterritorialised, economy-driven, system structure. Within the realist tradition, debate began about how to define post-Cold War polarity. The problem was a confusingly large range of significant powers, many of which did not easily slot into the categories of the theory. At one end of the spectrum of significant powers the United States was clearly still a superpower by any definition. At the other end were substantial numbers of regional powers such as Israel, Iran, Brazil, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, and Turkey. In between sat a set of second-rank powers that did not come close to measuring up to the USA, but which were significant global players in one way or another, and which clearly transcended regional or middle power status. These included China, Japan, and Russia, and more awkwardly the EU, either as a *sui generis* entity with some state-like qualities, or as united Germany plus France and Britain (or in some renditions a kind of German-led dominion). Initially, the main direction was to see a unipolar 'moment' to be followed inevitably by multipolarity as others caught up with the United States and/or began to balance against it, or as the United States declined, or as it withdrew from global engagement

(Krauthammer 1990–1; Layne 1993; Waltz 1993a, 1993b, 2000b; Kegley and Raymond 1994; Kupchan 1998; Calleo 1999). Some attempted mixtures, such as Huntington's (1999: 35–6) idea of 'uni-multipolarity'. Some were simply confused, as for example in Ross's (1999: 83) conflation of the global and regional levels in a discussion of polarity in East Asia. Some sought to exit from polarity back towards classical realism, on the grounds that polarity missed out too much and had failed to achieve any definitional consensus (Schweller 1999: 36–42). For most, the main question arising was how long the 'unipolar moment' might be. Initially, the weight of opinion favoured a fairly short moment but, as the end of the Cold War receded, the unipolar moment began to feel more like an era in its own right. A consensus emerged that a US-centred unipolarity might in fact be stable (notwithstanding the serious difficulties this posed for Waltz's neorealist theory, in which balancing reactions should prevent unipolarity from being a stable option) (Kapstein 1999; Lake 1999; Mastanduno and Kapstein 1999; Walt 2000; Wilkinson 1999; Wohlforth 1999; see also Waltz 2000b).

A full discussion of the problem of polarity is beyond the scope of this book and has been presented elsewhere (Buzan et al. 1993: 51–65; Schweller 1999: 36–42; Buzan forthcoming). Suffice it to say that for the idea of polarity to work as a definition of the system level it requires a single, identifiable concept of great power. Classification of any actor as a great power is not a simple act of measurement. It requires a combination of material capability (Waltz 1979: 131), formal recognition of that status by others (Bull 1977: 200–2), and, from our point of view most importantly, observation of the practical mode of operation of states, particularly which actors are responded to by others on the basis of system level calculations. A power acting at the global level reflects on the balance of power not only in terms of the existing superpower(s) – it has to include in its calculations also the great powers because of the consequences of their coalition behaviour.

If this last behavioural criterion is accepted as the key, then one useful side effect is the elimination of the difficulty that neorealists have created for themselves by accepting Waltz's injunction that a great power, or a system level 'pole', can only be a state. Waltz's argument was (rightly) directed against those who confused system polarity (the number of great powers in the system) with system polarisation (the configuration of alliances in the system). Thus, in 1914, the system was multipolar in terms of powers, but bipolarised in terms of coalitions. However, the idea that a pole must be a state has run into endless difficulties in dealing

with the EU, which becomes almost invisible through neorealist lenses despite its steady accumulation of actor quality. But if one accepts the behavioural approach to determining status, this problem disappears. The EU can be judged by how others respond to it. If others treat it as a great power, then it qualifies as such regardless of its ambiguous, *sui generis* political status. The English School understanding that international systems could be seen as 'a group of independent political communities' (Bull and Watson 1984: 1) makes entities such as the EU easier to incorporate.

The problem of what counts as a great power is revealed by the standard list of great powers usually given for 1914 (Austria-Hungary, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Ottoman Empire, Russia, USA): there is an enormous difference in role and capability between the top powers on this list (USA, Britain, Germany) and the bottom ones (Italy, Ottoman Empire, Japan). A similar observation could be made about contemporary lists, for example that of Papayoanou (1997: 125). Defining great powers as 'those states which have the capabilities to play a major role in international politics with respect to security related issues', he counts them as the USA, Russia, Germany, Britain, France, China, and Japan.

The idea that great powers constitute a single classification has deep roots. It arises out of the transfer of the great power concept from its classical usage in the essentially regional system of Westphalian Europe, to its current application to a global-scale international system. In the pre-1945 world, still dominated by Europe, a single classification of great power was workable, if misleading. The move from a European-scale to a truly global international system occurred during the twentieth century, and made a single classification of great power so misleading as to be unworkable except in unusual conditions such as those of the Cold War. Size matters: a global-scale international system requires at least a differentiation between those great powers that operate across the whole system (superpowers), or at least a large part of it, and those whose power is mostly confined to their home continent. In the pre-1945 world, Britain and the USA were obvious examples of superpowers; Japan, Italy, and Austria-Hungary (before 1918) obvious examples of 'ordinary' great powers lacking much global reach. The problem is nicely exposed by Lake's (1997: 64) seemingly quite simple and orthodox definition: 'Great powers possess global military reach. They have the ability to project force around the globe, and as a result, they can intervene in any regional security complex whenever it suits their interests.' If one thinks

about this definition in relation to the two lists of great powers given in the previous paragraph for 1914 and now, it is perfectly obvious that very few of the states listed meet the criteria. This definition describes superpowers. Kegley and Raymond's (1994: 54, 88, 232) definition of great powers curiously stresses approximate equality of capabilities, which is hard to square with any situation during the last century, or any likely in the near future.

The shift to a planetary scale, and the near quadrupling of the total number of states in the system, generated by decolonisation, requires a more elaborate differentiation among the major powers. Traditional distinctions between 'great' and 'middle' powers will not work in an international system where only a few operate over the whole system, and many are significant, but only in their immediate neighbourhood. The idea of 'middle powers', in any case, reflects a systemic perspective that ignores the significance of RSCs. In a world of nearly 200 states, superpowers (if they exist) occupy one end of the major power spectrum, and regional powers (states such as Brazil, Egypt, Iran, Nigeria, and South Africa, whose power defines the polarity of their local RSC, but does not extend much beyond) occupy the other end. In between are what can only be called great powers, which are clearly more than just regional powers, but do not meet all of the qualifications for superpower. Superpowers and great powers define the global level of polarity, and the line between them and regional powers is the one that defines the difference between global and regional security dynamics. This distinction needs to be asserted. Wilkinson (1999: 141–5), for example, while accepting unipolarity, misses the distinction between great and regional powers by identifying France, Britain, Russia, and China as 'great powers at a regional level'. He makes no attempt to define criteria for inclusion into or exclusion from this category.

Taking these definitional and historical criteria into consideration, we propose the following *definitional criteria for a three-tiered scheme*: superpowers and great powers at the system level, and regional powers at the regional level.

Superpowers – The criteria for superpower status are demanding in that they require broad-spectrum capabilities exercised across the whole of the international system. Superpowers must possess first-class military-political capabilities (as measured by the standards of the day), and the economies to support such capabilities. They must be capable of, and also exercise, global military and political reach. They need to see themselves, *and* be accepted by others in rhetoric and behaviour, as

having this rank. Superpowers must be active players in processes of securitisation and desecuritisation in all, or nearly all, of the regions in the system, whether as threats, guarantors, allies, or interveners. Except in extremely conflictual international systems, superpowers will also be fountainheads of 'universal' values of the type necessary to underpin international society. Their legitimacy as superpowers will depend substantially on their success in establishing the legitimacy of such values. Taking all of these factors into account, during the nineteenth century Britain, France, and more arguably Russia had this rank. After the First World War, it was held by Britain, the USA, and the Soviet Union. After the Second World War, it was held by the USA and the Soviet Union. And after the Cold War it was held only by the USA.

Great powers – Achieving great power status is less demanding in terms of both capability and behaviour. Great powers need not necessarily have big capabilities in all sectors, and they need not be actively present in the securitisation processes of all areas of the international system. Great power status rests mainly on a single key: what distinguishes great powers from merely regional ones is that they are responded to by others on the basis of system level calculations about the present and near-future distribution of power. Usually, this implies that a great power is treated in the calculations of other major powers as if it has the clear economic, military, and political potential to bid for superpower status in the short or medium term. This single key is observable in the foreign policy processes and discourses of other powers. It means that actual possession of material and legal attributes is less crucial for great powers than for superpowers. Great powers will usually have appropriate levels of capability, though China has demonstrated an impressive ability over nearly a century to trade on future capabilities that it has yet to fully deliver (Segal 1999). They will generally think of themselves as more than regional powers, and possibly as prospective superpowers, and they will usually be capable of operating in more than one region. But, while these characteristics will be typical of great powers, they are not strictly speaking necessary so long as other powers treat them as potential superpowers. Japan illustrates the case of a country thought of by others as a potential superpower, but which possesses unbalanced capabilities, and is not clearly inclined to think of itself as a superpower candidate. Mostly, great powers will be rising in the hierarchy of international power, but a second route into the category is countries declining from acknowledged superpower status. Declining

superpowers will normally have influence in more than one region, and be capable of limited global military operation.

During the later nineteenth century, Germany, the USA, and Japan had great power rank (and Russia if not accepted as a superpower). After the First World War, it was still held by Germany and Japan, and France dropped into it as a declining superpower. During the Cold War it was held by China, Germany, and Japan, with Britain and France coming increasingly into doubt. Here there was the difficult question of how to treat the EU, which as time wore on acquired more and more actor quality in the international system, and which was by the 1970s being treated as an emergent great power, albeit of an unusual kind and with some serious limitations still in place. After the Cold War it was held by Britain/France/Germany-EU, Japan, China, and Russia. India was knocking loudly on the door, but had neither the capability, the formal recognition, nor the place in the calculations of others to qualify.

The justifications for designating these four as great powers in the post-Cold War international system are as follows. Russia qualifies by its recent exit from superpower status, and China, the EU, and Japan all qualify on the basis of being regularly talked about and treated either as potential challengers to the USA, and/or as potential superpowers (Calleo 1999; Kapstein 1999; Mastanduno and Kapstein 1999; Wilkinson 1999; Waltz 2000b). China is currently the most fashionable potential superpower (Roy 1994; Ross 1999: 83–4, 92–4, 97; Wilkinson 1999: 160–3), and the one whose degree of alienation from the dominant international society makes it the most obvious political challenger (Zhang 1998). But its challenge is constrained both by formidable internal problems of development and by the fact that a rise in its power could easily trigger a counter coalition in Asia. Assessment of the EU's status often hangs on its degree of stateness (Galtung 1973; Buchan 1993; Walton 1997; Hodge 1998–9; Wohlforth 1999: 31; Waltz 1993a: 54; 2000b: 30–2; Wilkinson 1999: 157–60; Walker 2000) without it being clear how much state-like quality it has to achieve in order to count as a superpower. The EU clearly has the material capabilities, and could easily claim recognition. But given its political weakness, and its erratic and difficult course of internal political development, particularly as regards a common foreign and defence policy, the EU seems likely to remain a potential superpower for at least some decades. During the early and middle 1990s, there was a strong fashion, especially in the USA, for seeing Japan as the likely challenger for superpower status (Huntington 1991: 8; 1993; Layne 1993: 42–3, 51; Waltz 1993a: 55–70; Spruyt 1998). With Japan's economic

stagnation, this fashion has faded, but Japan could bounce back, and its standing as a great power looks relatively firm. Like the EU, Japan is mainly constrained by its political inability to play a superpower role. India, despite its nuclear test, is not talked about or treated as a potential superpower, and so does not qualify.

Regional powers – Regional powers define the polarity of any given RSC: unipolar as in Southern Africa, bipolar as in South Asia, multipolar as in the Middle East, South America, and Southeast Asia. Their capabilities loom large in their regions, but do not register much in a broad-spectrum way at the global level. Higher-level powers respond to them as if their influence and capability were mainly relevant to the securitisation processes of a particular region. They are thus excluded from the higher-level calculations of system polarity whether or not they think of themselves as deserving a higher ranking (as India most obviously does). Regional powers may of course get caught up in global power rivalries, as happened during the Cold War to Vietnam, Egypt, Iraq, and others. In that context, they may get treated as if they mattered to the global balance of power as, for example, during the Cold War when there were fears that escalations from Middle Eastern conflicts would trigger superpower confrontations. But the kind of attention received by an actor that is seen as the spoils in a wider competition is quite different from that received by an actor seen as a global level power in its own right.

These definitions apply across the last few centuries, but they are also historically contingent: before there was a global international system, there were no superpowers and much less scope for regional powers. The three-tier scheme complicates polarity theory by putting two tiers at the system level, but clarifies it by providing a firm demarcation between global and regional powers.

Conclusions

This rethinking of polarity, and its accompanying definitions of superpower, great power, and regional power, enables us to formulate a relatively clear view of the global level structure of international security since the end of the Cold War. What succeeds bipolarity (or in our new terms, the $2 + 3$ structure of the Cold War) is a $1 + 4$ system structure that has no modern historical precedent, and whose main potential for transformation is into the theoretically uncharted realm of a $0 + x$ structure. Such a system certainly cannot be adequately captured by

simple designation as either unipolar or multipolar. Huntington's (1999: 35–6) idea of uni-multipolarity goes in the right direction, and does capture some of the relevant relational dynamics in the present structure. But it fails to specify criteria for classification, makes no differentiation for the regional level, and locks itself into a single formulation, which limits its scope as a general approach to structural theory. Interestingly, the general idea of a $1 + 4$ world differentiating the 'great power' category into two levels was much more clearly articulated in US policy circles (Joffe 2001: 142–4) and among Chinese academics (Pillsbury 2000) than it could be amongst neorealists still chained to Waltz's dictum of great powers as a single type.

If one follows our suggestion of differentiating the power classifications at the system level into superpowers and great powers, then there does not seem to be much theoretical mileage in hanging on to general hypotheses based on simple numbers. For one thing, the possible combinations are too many. For another, polarity theory depends on the assumption that all great powers operate over the whole international system. With our definition of great power, this assumption has to be abandoned. Given the size of the global system, mere great powers mostly do not operate globally, and only superpowers meet the requirements of polarity theory. One might easily imagine worlds with up to five or six superpowers, at least similar numbers of great powers, and potentially quite large numbers of regional powers. If one confines regional powers to the regional level of analysis, the system level still contains a lot of possible combinations of superpowers and great powers: one superpower and anything between zero and ten great powers; two superpowers and anything between zero and ten great powers; and so on. In practice, the definitions used here mean that the number of superpowers and the number of great powers have a strong effect on each other. The more superpowers there are, the fewer great powers there are likely to be, and vice versa. Thus, a system of six superpowers and ten great powers is rather improbable, as is one with one superpower and no great powers (true unipolarity). In practice this interplay reduces the number of likely combinations, though still leaving it too large to base theory on a handful of categories, as polarity theory has done.

The hypotheses from existing polarity theory would still apply to pure superpower systems (i.e., those composed of x superpowers and zero great powers), but such configurations will be rare. They probably cannot be applied to pure great power systems, because great powers are strongly driven by less than global interests, as well as by

their concerns about superpowers (existing or potential). In a 0 + x system many of the great powers might be somewhat insulated from each other by distance, and thus interact with each other on a quite different logic from system-spanning superpowers. Thus, defying mathematics, in our extended polarity theory $\mathbf{0} + \mathbf{x} \neq \mathbf{x} + \mathbf{0}$. In a x + 0 system, all the superpowers form a coherent system at the global level and interact accordingly allowing the expected balance-of-power logic to unfold. In a 0 + x system the great powers only partly connect, and geography and their regional nesting constrain systemic logic at the global level. Friedberg (1993–4: 5) comes close to this idea with his scenario of great power regions, and a world of 'regional subsystems in which clusters of contiguous states interact mainly with each other'. In the relatively short history of a fully global international system, no pure great power system (i.e., one with no superpowers) has ever existed, and it is not surprising that they have not been the subject of theoretical attention. But a 0 superpower + x great power system is one of the main potentialities in the present 1 + 4 structure, and some theoretical attention to it is therefore a matter of urgency. That exercise is beyond the remit of the present book, though we will return to the question in part VI. For all the cases in which there is a mixture of great powers and superpowers, the starting point has to be analysis of how superpowers and great powers relate to each other, how each category relates to the regional level, and also how the nexus between the two categories, constituting the global level as a whole, relates to the regional one. In other words, one needs to take into account the whole security constellation (i.e., all the levels of analysis and their interplay). With these ideas about the global level structure as the backdrop, we can now set out regional security complex theory.