

Subordinate monopolization and the origins of major power conflict**Abstract**

An overlooked pathway through which rising powers may be drawn into conflict with major powers is competition over small states and territories. When a rising power seeks to monopolize a subordinate, preventing other major powers from pursuing their interests in its territory, this challenges the material interests of other major powers and violates norms of open subordinate governance. To address this violation, threats and force may be employed. Moreover, the monopolizer is perceived as having revisionist preferences for international order, meaning future interactions are more discordant, making conflict more likely. This argument is evaluated through quantitative examination of rising power disputes between 1816 and 2010 and comparative case study analysis of Russo-Japanese and Spanish-American Wars. Contestation of the norms of subordinate governance play an important role in shaping the probability of major power conflict, and provide insight into the behavior of the major powers in the contemporary international order.

Keywords

Rising powers; major power conflict; subordinate monopolization; norm violation; international hierarchy

In 1901 intense diplomatic activity between Russia and Japan attempted to stave off war.

Marquis Itō Hirobumi, the former Japanese Prime Minister, had embarked on a world tour following his resignation to recuperate from the stresses of leading a divided government, and was tasked by his successor, Marquis Katsura Tarō, to negotiate unofficially with the Russian Foreign Minister, Count Vladimir Lamsdorf, in St Petersburg to divine their intentions in East Asia. Itō's telegrams to Katsura are revealing. Following his 2 December meeting, Itō wrote that he made the argument to Lamsdorf that 'The Korean question is in practice a matter of life and death for Japan as an independent state... The Russian government ought as soon as possible to acknowledge that Japanese interests in Korea are from now on paramount.'¹ Lamsdorf replied that 'Russia has never had any ulterior motives in Korea. But she would decidedly reject any use of Korean territory by another power for military purposes' and went on to say that 'if Japan were to construct bases on the Korean littoral, this would threaten communications between Vladivostok and Port Arthur; and Russia could not disregard it on grounds of self-defence.'²

This laid out grounds for war: Japanese militarization of Korea. Yet the peninsula was understood by Japan's leaders to be crucial to its defense, to stave off the interference of any hostile foreign power controlling the East Asian landmass opposite Japan, and was analogized as a 'a dagger pointed at the heart of Japan' by Major Jacob Meckel, a German military advisor to the Japanese military.³ Itō's mission, to try to negotiate Japanese control of Korea, in exchange for recognition of Russian domination of Manchuria, failed. No agreement was possible. Itō then visited London, laying the foundations for the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, a mutual defense treaty, signed on 30 January 1902. Just over two years

¹ Ian Nish, ed., "'Marquis Ito's Attempt at Reconciliation with Russia, 1901'" - Telegrams Translated from Nihon Gaiko Bunsho, Meiji Series, Volume 35. Tokyo: Foreign Ministry, 1957, Doc. 26', in *The Russo-Japanese War, 1904-5: A Collection of Eight Volumes* (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2003), 54.

² Nish, 54-55.

³ Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895-1910* (University of California Press, 1998), 49.

later, Russia and Japan were at war, with the latter taking by force far more than had been offered in peace.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Japan was a rising power. It was a state experiencing high rates of economic growth and spending increasingly large sums upon its military. These trends suggested that Japan would soon become a major power, that is, a state with superior material capabilities, able to pursue interests beyond its borders, and recognized as having rights and duties within the international system not accorded to others. The causal chain between these material changes and major power conflict is often treated as close to deterministic in realist accounts. Yet the prelude to the Russo-Japanese War sits uneasily with this expectation. Japan could not plausibly threaten the Russian core, located thousands of kilometers away in Europe, and the territorial issues at stake were geographically limited. Even so, the crisis escalated rapidly and drew in other major powers.

What requires explanation, therefore, is not simply why conflict occurred, but why competition over relatively limited stakes produced such a broad and intense response. This points to two additional features of major power politics. Firstly, direct territorial threats are rare. Secondly, policymakers do not focus solely on rival major powers, but invest significant political capital and material resources in their relations with weaker, subordinate actors.⁴ For Japan and Russia, Korea and Manchuria were territories understood to be crucial to their prosperity and security. Major power relations, therefore, are significantly shaped by who controls subordinates, how they are governed, and how this might change in the future. Although competition over strategically valuable subordinates is a familiar feature of international politics, similar efforts at control often generate strikingly different responses.

⁴ Albert O. Hirschman, *National Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade*, Publications of the Bureau of Business and Economic Research, University of California (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1945); Dale C. Copeland, *Economic Interdependence and War*, Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015).

This article argues that such variation reflects not only material considerations, but whether actions are understood as attempts to monopolize access in ways that violate expectations of openness, thereby shaping the likelihood of escalation.

A particularly dangerous pathway via which major power conflict can result is that of subordinate monopolization. Put simply, conflicts between a rising power and another major power are more likely when the relationship between a rising power and a subordinate excludes the interests of other major powers. Japanese influence over Korea meant that Russian economic and security interests could not be pursued in the territory without reference to Japan. This was unacceptable to Russia, and Japanese overtures to settle the division between Korea and Manchuria into respective spheres of influence were rejected.

This article is motivated by two questions. Firstly, why are some rising powers associated with major power conflict, while others are not? Existing answers to this question focus on power and threats, and status dissatisfaction. However, although these explanations each make contributions to our understanding of rising powers and conflict they are theoretically inconsistent and empirically ambiguous. Instead, major power conflict is cast as a function of competition for access to, and influence over, subordinates. This leads to the second question: how does subordinate monopolization alter the probability of conflict between rising and major powers?

Existing explanations

Existing theories offer only partial explanations for the link between rising powers and major power conflict. Much of the literature focuses disproportionately on interwar Germany, Italy, and Japan and the onset of World War Two. This narrow lens obscures the broader empirical variation: not all rising powers generate high levels of interstate violence. While rising

powers may exhibit higher rates of dispute onset and severity, the differences between them and enduring or declining powers are often overstated. Explaining why some rising powers cause major power conflict, while others do not, remains a central challenge.

Realism

Two realist approaches – balance of power theory and power transition theory – seek to explain major power behavior through shifts in relative capabilities. They differ in emphasis: balance of power theory examines all major powers, whereas power transition theory focuses on a dominant–challenger dyad. Both offer insights but have limitations. Balance of power theory posits that major powers respond to threats by balancing against growing capabilities or hostile intentions, implying a self-correcting systemic logic.⁵ Power transition theory, in contrast, holds that dominant powers may be replaced unless they act preemptively.⁶ Though often cast as more prone to war, power transition theory also allows for peaceful change. Both share core flaws. They pay little attention to the causes of peaceful rises or the substantive issues over which states fight.⁷ Moreover, these different realist approaches make different predictions about the causes of war, particularly with regards the roles of smaller

⁵ Nuno P. Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5th ed. rev. (New York: Knopf, 1978); Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, with Michael Cox (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001); Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, 4th ed., with Stanley Hoffmann and Andrew Hurrell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, with Hedley Bull, Carsten Holbraad, and Jack Spence, Bloomsbury Collections (New York: Continuum, 1978); Richard Little, *The Balance of Power in International Relations: Metaphors, Myths, and Models*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Inis L. Claude, *Power and International Relations* (New York: Random House, 1962); Jack S. Levy and William R. Thompson, 'Hegemonic Threats and Great-Power Balancing in Europe, 1495-1999', *Security Studies* 14, no. 1 (2005): 1–33; Steven E. Lobell, 'Bringing Balancing Back In: Britain's Targeted Balancing, 1936-1939', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 35, no. 6 (2012): 747–73.

⁶ A. F. K. Organski, *World Politics* (New York: Knopf, 1958); George Modelski, *Long Cycles in World Politics* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987); Karen A. Rasler and William R. Thompson, *The Great Powers and Global Struggle, 1490-1990* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1994); Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: University Press, 1981).

⁷ Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin, *Rising Titans, Falling Giants: How Great Powers Exploit Power Shifts*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018); Kori N. Schake, *Safe Passage: The Transition from British to American Hegemony* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017); Alexander Cooley and Daniel Nexon, *Exit from Hegemony: The Unraveling of the American Global Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

states. They may reduce tensions by acting as buffer zones, but competition for control can feed tensions.

A more refined realist account focuses on competition over strategically valuable subordinate nodes. In this account, major powers seek to secure exclusive control over territories and geographic chokepoints. Escalation then varies with the material characteristics of these nodes, including their strategic value, excludability, rival dependence, and the capacity of third parties to coordinate in response. This perspective captures important dimensions of major power competition. However, it has greater difficulty explaining variation in how such actions are interpreted and contested, and risks treating politically contingent outcomes as structurally determined. In particular, it does not specify why similar attempts at control sometimes provoke broad-based balancing and legitimization efforts, while at other times they are accommodated, or do not occur at all. The argument developed here is that norms of open subordinate governance structure expectations about acceptable forms of influence, shaping both restraint and responses. Subordinate monopolization violates these expectations, lowering the political and coordination costs of third-party involvement and increasing the likelihood of escalation, even where material stakes alone might not predict it. The argument therefore complements materialist accounts by explaining when and why competition over subordinates becomes systemically consequential through processes of social interpretation, rather than remaining a localized contest over control.

Status dissatisfaction

An alternative tradition argues that interstate conflict stems from contested status hierarchies rather than shifts in material power. Here, war is a tool for states to assert or preserve their

desired position in the international order.⁸ This literature links leader perceptions of national identity to foreign policy choices, particularly under conditions of ‘status dissatisfaction’, where a state perceives a gap between its actual and deserved rank.⁹ Empirical work supports a connection between status dissatisfaction and conflict onset.¹⁰ Moreover, Barnhart shows how military defeat can undermine status and trigger risk-acceptant behavior.¹¹ However, several theoretical and empirical gaps remain. Firstly, mechanisms linking leader-level status concerns to state-level policy are underspecified. In non-authoritarian regimes, where decision-making is diffuse, it is unclear how such perceptions are aggregated and translated into action. Secondly, the literature struggles to explain variation in the salience of status concerns across cases. Mukherjee is a notable exception, but broader patterns remain elusive.¹² As such, while status dissatisfaction explains some rising power conflicts, it cannot account for why only some states act on such concerns, or why similar status grievances lead to different outcomes.¹³

Too much attention is paid to systemic factors and deterministic pathways which fail to address the crucial question of how rising powers vary in terms of the threat they pose to the existing international order. This article makes its major theoretical and empirical

⁸ Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, ‘Managing Rising Powers: The Role of Status Concerns’, in *Status in World Politics*, ed. T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William Curti Wohlforth (Cambridge: University Press, 2014), 33–57; Steven Ward, *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers* (Cambridge: University Press, 2017); Jonathan Renshon, *Fighting for Status: Hierarchy and Conflict in World Politics* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017); Rohan Mukherjee, *Ascending Order: Rising Powers and the Politics of Status in International Institutions* (Cambridge University Press, 2022).

⁹ Johan Galtung, ‘A Structural Theory of Aggression’, *Journal of Peace Research* 1, no. 2 (1964): 95–119; Tudor Onea, ‘Between Dominance and Decline: Status Anxiety and Great Power Rivalry’, *Review of International Studies* 40, no. 1 (2014): 125–152.

¹⁰ Thomas Volgy and Stacey Mayhall, ‘Status Inconsistency and International War: Exploring the Effects of Systemic Change’, *International Studies Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (1995): 67–84; Richard Ned Lebow, *Why Nations Fight: Past and Future Motives for War* (New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Zeev Maoz, *Networks of Nations: The Evolution, Structure, and Impact of International Networks, 1816–2001*, Structural Analysis in the Social Sciences 32 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Renshon, *Fighting for Status*.

¹¹ Joslyn Barnhart, *The Consequences of Humiliation: Anger and Status in World Politics*, Cornell Scholarship Online (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020); Joslyn Barnhart, ‘The Consequences of Defeat: The Quest for Status and Morale in the Aftermath of War’, *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 65, no. 1 (2021): 195–222.

¹² Mukherjee, *Ascending Order*.

¹³ Ward, *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers*, 39.

contribution in this space, arguing that it is the treatment of subordinates by rising powers which explains a significant proportion of this variation. In doing so, the article offers a novel way to distinguish between status quo and revisionist rising powers, not based on ideology or vague intentions, but on the observable structure of their relations with subordinates.

Subordinate monopolization and war

This theory focuses on rising powers because they are especially likely to generate conflict through monopolization of subordinates. While any major power may attempt to establish monopolistic control, rising powers face particularly strong incentives to do so. Unlike established powers, they often seek to revise international hierarchies and project new claims to influence, empowered by their rapid acquisition of material capabilities. In doing so, they are more likely to violate prevailing norms of openness and provoke balancing behavior from other major powers. Their actions are interpreted not as routine governance but as norm-breaking challenges to the existing order. Monopolization by rising powers is therefore more likely to be seen as threatening and to trigger escalatory responses. Declining powers may also pursue monopolization in an effort to arrest relative decline, but such strategies are likely to be more constrained and less systematically associated with broader shifts in the distribution of power.

A key pathway through which rising powers generate conflict is competition for subordinates. These smaller states or imperial possessions offer material advantages and strategic value. As the balance of power shifts, rising powers seek increased access and influence over subordinates to sustain their ascent and lock in gains. The twin demands for

prosperity and security produce two ideal types of subordinate governance: monopolization and common-pool.

Monopolization refers to exclusive access to and influence over a subordinate, denying rival major powers the same. Other powers may find themselves unable to pursue their interests there. In economic terms, this can mean trade preferences, market exclusion, privileged treatment for firms, or currency controls. In security terms, monopolization may involve exclusive defense guarantees, basing rights, military integration, or arms sales. Common-pool governance, by contrast, emphasizes openness to other powers' interests. This can involve shared trade regimes, non-exclusive military ties, or multilateral arrangements. The specific forms vary across time, particularly with the decline of formal empire.

Monopolization as revisionism

Monopolization challenges norms of open subordinate governance by making external access contingent on the monopolizer's consent. Access, and influence, can be reduced, or even ended, as the monopolizer sees fit. This means that even in the absence of concrete steps to prevent the pursuit of interests, a latent threat remains. Often, monopolization involves overt abuse of others' interests and is accompanied by military coercion. Even peaceful takeovers, perhaps engineered through court intrigue or regime change, are likely to face resistance from the major powers. Beyond material exclusion, such moves signal norm violation and are interpreted as revisionist, raising the risk of conflict.

The theory applies under specific conditions. Firstly, the monopolizer is typically a rising power, defined as a state with sustained increases in material capabilities. While other major powers may also pursue monopolization, the argument focuses on rising powers, where these dynamics are expected to be most pronounced. Secondly, the target must be a subordinate – a materially weaker actor with limited strategic autonomy. Thirdly,

monopolization must occur in a competitive environment where other major powers have interests. These conditions together create the threat perception, hierarchy contestation, and norm violation that drive escalation. The theory does not claim to explain all conflicts, but isolates a specific pathway rooted in changing power dynamics. In this respect, is consistent with realist work viewing zero-sum grand bargains between major powers as unstable. Whether other states view a rising power's behavior as monopolization is therefore crucial, but ultimately a matter of perception. Such judgments are inherently subjective, shaped by the prior record of the rising power alongside the arguments it advances to justify its conduct. Domestic political contexts and individual leaders' interpretive frames further condition how both past activity and present rhetoric are understood. Major powers thus rely on both precedent and rhetoric to decide whether monopolization is sought, and whether it amounts to a violation of norms.

When a rising power monopolizes a subordinate, other major powers cannot freely pursue their interests, increasing the risk of conflict. Norms of open governance rest on three assumptions: that subordinates are rarely exclusively governed, that major powers may interfere in their domestic affairs, and that major powers collectively uphold international order. These norms create space for coercive responses to monopolization.

The English School has long argued that major powers are responsible for upholding order.¹⁴ Today, this is institutionalized in the UN Security Council, where five states hold veto power. Jackson and Krasner both note that, despite sovereign equality, states differ functionally in practice.¹⁵ Major powers continue to interfere in the domestic politics of subordinates, despite formal disavowal of such behavior. The norm of open subordinate governance is historically grounded in the coexistence of dissimilar political units. Functional

¹⁴ Bull, *The Anarchical Society*; Wight, *Power Politics*.

¹⁵ Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Third World*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations 12 (Cambridge: University Press, 1990); Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton, N.J. ; Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1999).

variation led to overlapping jurisdictions, creating both heterarchical and hierarchical orders.

This openness has endured despite empire and state-building because it enables pursuit of major power interests while reducing systemic conflict.

A related question is whether clear spheres of influence reduce tension. The ‘territorial peace’ literature suggests clear boundaries lower conflict risks.¹⁶ However, this research focuses on home territory, not the governance of subordinates. In contrast, Dillon Savage argues that the late 19th-century ‘Scramble for Africa’ and the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885 intensified European rivalries.¹⁷ Similarly, the Treaties of Tilsit, 1807, which were intended to reduce tensions between France and Russia by recognizing French client states in Central Europe, and by ceding further territory to these clients and to Russia, instead cemented perceptions of each other as expansionist and possessive. The demarcation of exclusive control generated new grievances and reinforced existing ones.

This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis: The monopolization of a subordinate increases the probability of the onset of major power conflict.

Methodology

¹⁶ Douglas M. Gibler, *The Territorial Peace: Borders, State Development, and International Conflict* (Cambridge: University Press, 2012); Paul K. Huth, Sarah Croco, and Benjamin J. Appel, ‘Bringing Law to the Table: Legal Claims, Focal Points, and the Settlement of Territorial Disputes Since 1945’, *American Journal Of Political Science* 57, no. 1 (2013): 90–103; Paul R. Hensel, ‘Charting A Course To Conflict: Territorial Issues and Interstate Conflict, 1816-1992’, *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 15, no. 1 (1996): 43–73.

¹⁷ Jesse Dillon Savage, ‘Common-Pool Hierarchy: Explaining the Emergence of Cooperative Hierarchies’, *International Studies Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (2021): 712–23.

To evaluate this hypothesis, this article employs a mixed-method approach. Firstly, quantitative analysis of all rising power disputes 1816–2010. This helps to establish the general association between rising power monopolization of subordinates and conflict with major powers. Secondly, comparative case study analysis of the Spanish-American and Russo-Japanese Wars. This seeks to more specifically capture the issues driving these conflicts, and detail causal mechanisms. The cases were selected according to a method of difference approach. This means the cases differ in terms of the dependent and independent variables, but that other variables – alternative explanations – are held constant. This allows focus on the pathway between the independent variable and the observed outcome.

Quantitative analysis: rising power disputes 1816–2010

The primary data source utilized is the Correlates of War (COW) Militarized Interstate Disputes (MIDs) dataset.¹⁸ This dataset details interstate disputes from 1816 through to 2010. To extract disputes from the dataset involving rising powers necessitates identifying rising powers over this time period. Rising powers are defined according to two criteria. Firstly, their material attributes must match, in absolute terms, the attributes of the weakest major power. Secondly, the growth rates in these material attributes must exceed the average of the major powers. Crucially, and in contrast to much of the literature, this means that some rising powers are already major powers, but are rising relative to the other major powers. A similar idea is that of a ‘potential hegemon’, that is, a major power rising to potentially surpass all others by a significant margin. However, that is a more restrictive version of what a rising power is, since it restricts it to only the very most powerful states. Table 1 shows the outcome of this operationalization. Extracting the disputes from the MIDs dataset yields 368 disputes.

¹⁸ Glenn Palmer et al., ‘The MID5 Dataset, 2011-2014: Procedures, Coding Rules, and Description’ (2020), <https://correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/MIDs/mid-5-data-and-supporting-materials.zip/view>; Glenn Palmer et al., ‘Updating the Militarized Interstate Dispute Data: A Response to Gibler, Miller, and Little’, *International Studies Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (2020): 469–75.

Table 1: Rising powers, 1816-2010

Rising power	Time period
Britain	1816-1856
Russia	1860-1890
United States 1	1865-1900
Germany 1	1880-1914
Japan 1	1890-1937
Italy	1900-1940
United States 2	1920-1960
Germany 2	1933-1939
Soviet Union	1950-1970
West Germany	1950-1990
Japan 2	1960-1990
China	1975-2010
India	2000-2010

Independent variable

The coding of rising power-subordinate relations relied upon two main sources, firstly, *International Conflicts, 1816-2010: Militarized Interstate Dispute Narratives*.¹⁹ This was extensively supplemented with the relevant *Cambridge Histories* where information in the former source was absent. These sources were used since the former provides a consistent approach to disputes, that is, the narrative seeks to capture the same data for each dispute. Of course, this is not always possible, particularly for more minor and/or older disputes where records are generally poorer. The *Cambridge Histories* have a similar approach, albeit not limited to these disputes. They are, however, written with the idea of providing consistent and sober overviews and interpretations of events. When these sources provided no information, the independent variable in question was assumed to be absent. This means the data are coded

¹⁹ Douglas M. Gibler, *International Conflicts, 1816-2010. Militarized Interstate Dispute Narratives*, 2 vols (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018).

according to positive references to the variables, not according to whether something is explicitly mentioned as not being present. The logic behind this is clear: things that did not occur are only referenced when alternatives were considered, and often no choice was made, leaving a relationship absent of the relevant variable.

Monopolization is an ordinal variable coded as 0, 1, or 2 on the basis of the political and economic relationships between a rising power and relevant subordinate prior to the onset of the dispute. A '0' indicates that no monopolization had occurred, that is, the rising power had not sought to establish exclusive political or economic relationships. A '1' indicates either that a low-level of monopolization occurred prior to the dispute, typically meaning greater influence than other major powers enjoyed, but likely not outright preventing other major powers from pursuing their interests. A '2' indicates a high-level of monopolization, meaning that the interests of other major powers were greatly curtailed, in some cases being the result of occupation, annexation, or compellent threats by the rising power. Descriptive statistics of all the independent variable, as well as those for the dependent and control variables, can be found in Table 2. To explain the coding process more fully, the coding rationale for an example dispute is included as Appendix A.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of variables

VARIABLES	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Major power violent dispute	368	0.17	0.38	0	0	1
Monopolization ordinal	368	1.07	0.85	1	0	2
Status dissatisfaction	368	4.39	6.63	3	-6	44
Joint democracy	368	0.15	0.36	0	0	1
Rising power polity	368	9.42	7.14	9	0	20
Hegemon/challenger polity	368	15.69	6.37	19	0	20
Military balance, log	368	3.53	0.25	3.56	0	3.80
Rising power nuclear weapons dummy	368	0.40	0.49	0	0	1
Major power nuclear weapons dummy	368	0.45	0.50	0	0	1
Unbalanced multipolarity	368	0.14	0.35	0	0	1
Number of major powers	368	6.07	1.09	6	4	8
Dispute participants	368	3.23	3.04	2	2	27
Region dummy	368	0.54	0.50	1	0	1
Dispute duration, log	368	3.48	2.41	4.06	0	8.31
Post-1945 dummy	368	0.46	0.50	0	0	1

Dependent variable

The primary dependent variable used is ‘major power violent dispute’, which captures a broader range of phenomena than war, and thereby better captures major power conflict. Two criteria are used, firstly, whether the rising power was opposed by a major power, and secondly, whether the dispute involved armed force or not. To construct this variable, the COW MID hostility level variable was first collapsed from its original five-point scale, into a two-point scale with a ‘1’ being assigned if the dispute incorporated the use of force or was coded as a war, and a ‘0’ otherwise. Then, the adversaries of the rising power in the dispute were assessed: when a major power opposed the rising power in the dispute a ‘1’ was assigned, and a ‘0’ otherwise.

There is good reason to use major power violent dispute as the primary dependent variable rather than war. Firstly, the concept of ‘major power conflict’ used in this article is more closely captured by major power violent disputes rather than major power wars. This is

because coding of wars incorporates the arbitrary threshold for determining war: 1,000 battle deaths. Given that the level of battle deaths in conflict varies greatly, and is very positively skewed, this threshold means that cases of similar magnitude are incorrectly assigned to different categories. Moreover, though there are substantive differences between higher and lower levels of violence in armed conflict, relating to the cost in human lives, economic damage, and degree of societal mobilization, endogeneity is a significant driver of escalation, that is, the move from a lower level of armed conflict to a higher level is inherently bound up with ongoing conflict dynamics. While there are systematic reasons for escalation and de-escalation, the crucial context for all of this is whether a rising power and a major power are *already* using armed force, and hence, major power violent dispute is a variable which more closely captures the underlying phenomena of interest.

Control variables

This analysis controls for several alternative explanations of rising power conflict, including status dissatisfaction, regime type, military balance, nuclear capabilities, system polarity, the post-1945 creation of the liberal international order, and dispute characteristics like region and duration. Status dissatisfaction is measured following the existing literature by comparing a state's National Material Capabilities (CINC) ranking with its Diplomatic Exchange ranking.²⁰ A higher CINC ranking than diplomatic standing indicates dissatisfaction, suggesting that the state may act aggressively to gain recognition for its material power.²¹ For ease of interpretation, the difference between the rankings is multiplied by -1 so that higher positive values represent more dissatisfaction, and negative values indicate higher satisfaction.

²⁰ Reşat Bayer, *Diplomatic Exchange Data Set, V2006.1*. (2006), <http://correlatesofwar.org>; J. David Singer and Melvin Small, 'The Composition and Status Ordering of the International System: 1815–1940', *World Politics* (Cambridge, UK) 18, no. 2 (1966): 236–82; Maoz, *Networks of Nations*.

²¹ Midlarsky, *On War*; Maoz, *Networks of Nations*; Renshon, *Fighting for Status*.

Regime type is controlled by considering the regime of the rising power and the system leader, rather than just major power rivals, to account for disputes where major powers may not be involved. A key control variable is whether joint democracy exists between the rising power and the system leader, with the idea that democratic pairs are less likely to engage in violent disputes. Additionally, the polity scores of the rising power and system leader are included, drawing on democratic peace theory, which argues that democracies are less likely to go to war due to institutional constraints and political norms. However, recent studies by Weeks and co-authors and Bueno de Mesquita and co-authors suggest that autocratic leaders may also face internal constraints, complicating the traditional view of democratic peace.²²

The military balance is measured by comparing the number of military personnel between the rising power and the system leader, using data from the Correlates of War NMC dataset. Military personnel is used instead of military spending because the latter is inconsistent across the period studied. The log of this difference is calculated, with adjustments to avoid negative values. Greater military capabilities are expected to increase the likelihood of conflict, as the rising power is both more capable of, and likely to see, military action as appropriate. Though McNabb Cochran and Long make the compelling argument that capabilities capture military effectiveness rather poorly, data for loss exchange

²² Jessica Weeks, 'Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict', *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 2 (2012): 326–47; Jessica Weeks, *Dictators at War and Peace*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca ; London: Cornell University Press, 2014); Jeff D. Colgan and Jessica Weeks, 'Revolution, Personalist Dictatorships, and International Conflict', *International Organization* 69, no. 1 (2015): 163–94; Michael Tomz, Jessica Weeks, and Keren Yarhi-Milo, 'Public Opinion and Decisions About Military Force in Democracies', *International Organization* 74, no. 1 (2020): 119–43; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, 'Game Theory, Political Economy, and the Evolving Study of War and Peace', *The American Political Science Review* 100, no. 4 (2006): 637–42; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al., *The Logic of Political Survival* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT, 2003); Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al., 'Testing Novel Implications from the Selectorate Theory of War', *World Politics* 56, no. 3 (2004): 363–88; James D. Morrow et al., 'Retesting Selectorate Theory: Separating the Effects of W from Other Elements of Democracy', *The American Political Science Review* 102, no. 3 (2008): 393–400.

ratios unfortunately do not exist for all of the disputes included in this project precluding the use of this alternative.²³

System polarity is controlled with two variables. Firstly, a dummy variable captures unbalanced multipolarity, based on Mearsheimer's argument that these periods, where a potential hegemon exists, are particularly dangerous.²⁴ Secondly, the number of major powers is counted to account for overall system polarity. The post-1945 creation of the liberal international order is controlled for with a dummy variable indicating whether the dispute took place after 1945 or not. Nuclear capabilities are controlled by dummy variables indicating whether the rising power or any major powers possess nuclear weapons. The impact of nuclear weapons on conflict remains debated, but their importance in shaping the strategic environment is undeniable.

Finally, the characteristics of the disputes are controlled through three variables: the number of participants, duration, and region. The region of the dispute is coded based on its proximity to the rising power, as disputes closer to a rising power are more likely to involve higher levels of force due to ease of power projection and perceived security threats. More participants and longer dispute durations are also expected to increase the probability of violent escalation, as more complex bargaining environments make conflict resolution harder.

Data structure

The dataset comprises 368 cases of rising power cases involving subordinates. A country-year, or dyad-year, dataset structure would be more appropriate, since this would allow the use of selection models, meaning that the conditions under which disputes arise would be accounted for, as well as those leading to major power violent disputes. However, this was

²³ Kathryn McNabb Cochran and Stephen B. Long, 'Measuring Military Effectiveness: Calculating Casualty Loss-Exchange Ratios for Multilateral Wars, 1816-1990', *International Interactions* 43, no. 6 (2017): 1019–1040.

²⁴ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York ; London: Norton, 2001), 348.

not feasible due to the excessively large number of cases requiring hand coding. This project identified 13 rising powers, totaling 420 years. If the number of potential subordinates in any year is 20, this gives 8,200 dyad-years, if 50, this number jumps to 21,000. Even if significant restrictions were placed on such a dataset by tightly defining what a ‘potential subordinate’ is, this number is likely to remain very high. Instead, each of the cases in the dataset are disputes involving a rising power and at least one subordinate. When the same dispute involved more than one rising power, then additional cases were created, and coded according to each of the rising powers’ relationships with the subordinate. This means the dataset was created by selecting on the existence of a dispute.

An alternative approach would be to use either a random sample of rising power-subordinate dyads, capturing both those in which disputes occurred and those in which they did not, or to employ matching techniques that pair dyads involving monopolization with otherwise similar dyads without it. Random sampling was not employed because of the relative rarity of rising power disputes (368), making the inclusion of many non-dispute dyads statistically inefficient and theoretically diffuse. Given the theory-building aim of this project and the value of maximizing empirical leverage on the relevant population, a full-population design was appropriate. Matching is a more plausible extension, and would be a logical next step. However, given the context-specific and infrequent nature of rising power monopolization, matching would require excluding many substantively important cases, limiting generalizability and weakening empirical grounding. Instead, the analysis controls for observable covariates directly in the statistical models and interprets findings cautiously, with attention to the potential limitations of causal inference. Finally, while selection concerns are acknowledged, the analysis treats variation in the escalatory dynamics of these disputes (e.g., major power involvement, hostility level) rather than their onset, which allows for meaningful within-case variation.

In addition, the reliance on the MID dataset means that only interstate disputes are included. This would mean that disputes between a rising power and another major power over non-state subordinates would be omitted. To remedy this, each apparently bilateral dispute with a major power was examined, and where non-state subordinates were clearly central to the dispute, then included in the dataset. This allows the theory to be applied to both subordinates categorized as states, and those labelled as something other.

Results

Three models are estimated in Table 3. Model 1 uses OLS, Model 2 uses logit, and Model 3 uses logit but with the monopolization variable disaggregated by its levels. In all three models the monopolization variable attains at least a $p < 0.1$ level of statistical significance. In Models 2 and 3, which are more appropriate given the dichotomous dependent variable, monopolization attains at least a $p < 0.05$ level of statistical significance, rising to $p < 0.01$ in Model 2. In all three models, the coefficient is positive, as hypothesized. This means that as monopolization increases from low levels, through partial monopolization, and up to high levels, that the probability of major power violent dispute onset also increases. This provides evidence consistent with the claim that the relationship is unlikely to be due to chance alone.

Four of the control variables in Model 2 are statistically significant. As status dissatisfaction increases ($p < 0.05$), the probability of major power violent dispute onset also increases, as theoretically expected. The military balance between the rising power and system rival has a negative coefficient ($p < 0.01$), indicating that as the number of military personnel that a rising power has relative to the system rival increases, that the probability of a major power violent dispute decreases. This means that at higher levels – when the rising power exceeds the number of personnel that the system rival has – major power violent disputes are less likely. By contrast, the probability of such disputes is higher when the two

are relatively balanced, but highest when the rising power has clearly lower numbers of soldiers than the system rival. Higher numbers of dispute participants ($p < 0.01$), and longer disputes ($p < 0.01$) both increase the probability of a dispute being a major power violent dispute.

Controls for joint democracy, rising power polity, hegemon/challenger polity, rising power nuclear weapons, major power nuclear weapons, system polarity, the post-1945 liberal international order, number of major powers, and region are not statistically significant. The lack of any effect for both rising power polity and hegemon/challenger polity means no monadic impact of regime type is found. The effect of nuclear weapons, and whether they restrain or embolden, remains an open question in the literature. Here, no effect is found, suggesting, at the least, that their effect on this type of dispute is negligible, though it should be noted that the data includes many pre-1945 disputes where nuclear weapons did not exist. While one might expect the region where a dispute is located relative to a rising power to impact the likelihood of violence and major power competition, no effect is found. I suggest that this is because both rising and major powers have power projection capabilities allowing plausible military intervention beyond their home region, thereby reducing the effect of distance. The most surprising findings are the statistical insignificant coefficient for system polarity and the number of major power participants. Both findings cast some doubt on the relevance of the balance of power.

To examine substantive significance, Table 4 shows predicted probabilities of major power violent dispute onset using the Table 3, Model 2 specification. When monopolization is not present, the predicted probability of a rising power dispute being a major power violent dispute is 4.7%. This increases to 9.1% at partial monopolization, and 17.0% at high levels. There is, therefore, a substantial increase – almost threefold – in the expected incidence of major power violent dispute when monopolization increases.

Table 3: Monopolization regression results

VARIABLES	(1) Major power violent dispute	(2) Major power violent dispute	(3) Major power violent dispute
Monopolization ordinal	0.070* (0.034)	0.711*** (0.268)	
Monopolization ordinal (level 1)			0.427** (0.209)
Monopolization ordinal (level 2)			1.348*** (0.467)
Status dissatisfaction	0.008** (0.003)	0.062** (0.027)	0.061** (0.027)
Joint democracy	-0.166* (0.084)	-2.050 (1.279)	-2.097 (1.338)
Rising power polity	0.008 (0.005)	0.085 (0.057)	0.087 (0.056)
Hegemon/challenger polity	0.005 (0.005)	0.047 (0.057)	0.048 (0.056)
Military balance, log	-0.175*** (0.035)	-0.704*** (0.257)	-0.732*** (0.263)
Rising power nuclear weapons dummy	-0.000 (0.096)	-0.867 (1.449)	-0.831 (1.460)
Major power nuclear weapons dummy	-0.030 (0.076)	0.064 (0.487)	-0.050 (0.568)
Unbalanced multipolarity	0.174 (0.111)	1.776 (1.216)	1.817 (1.206)
Number of major powers	-0.040 (0.026)	-0.397 (0.323)	-0.410 (0.314)
Dispute participants	0.038*** (0.007)	0.433*** (0.142)	0.426*** (0.140)
Region dummy	-0.061 (0.045)	-0.281 (0.366)	-0.245 (0.363)
Dispute duration, log	0.033*** (0.009)	0.392*** (0.110)	0.402*** (0.109)
Post-1945 dummy	0.095 (0.137)	1.296 (1.824)	1.384 (1.919)
Constant	0.537** (0.189)	-2.771** (1.413)	-2.559** (1.296)
Model type	OLS	Logit	Logit
Observations	368	368	368

Robust standard errors clustered by rising power in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 4: Monopolization marginal effects

VARIABLES	Predicted probability
Monopolization = 0	0.047** (0.010 - 0.084)
Monopolization = 1	0.091*** (0.047 - 0.136)
Monopolization = 2	0.170*** (0.075 - 0.265)
Observations	368

95% confidence interval in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Note: All predictors at their mean value.

Robustness checks

The robustness of the results is bolstered by the relatively stable findings shown in Appendix B when alternative models, dependent variables, and independent variables are specified. Of particular note is that Table B2, in which alternative dependent variables are used, ‘major power war’ (Model 2), is statistically significant at a $p<0.05$ level and has a large, positive coefficient. This variable is defined according to the Correlates of War coding for war, that is, a conflict incorporating at least 1,000 battle deaths. The reader should be reassured, therefore, that the alternative dependent variable used in the main analysis – major power violent dispute – was not created to mask a null finding for war. In addition, Table B4, Model 1, shows that prior monopolization is associated with the onset of future major power violent disputes, going some way to discount the possibility of reverse causality.

Comparative case study analysis: the Spanish-American and Russo-Japanese wars

The Spanish-American War did not result in a major power violent dispute. The United States was not opposed by a major power, though German intervention during the ‘Manila Incident’ brought this very close. In contrast, the Russo-Japanese War was a major power

violent dispute, since Japan was opposed by a major power, Russia. These cases help to elucidate the theory since the United States' approach to the Philippines was quite different from Japan's approach to Korea and Manchuria. Two contextual factors are particularly important for comparing these conflicts, firstly, that imperial expansion from the late nineteenth century required others to contract, and secondly, that the system was both multipolar and unbalanced.

In the nineteenth century, major power dynamics were heavily shaped by empire and colonialism.²⁵ Territorial concessions and exchanges were key methods to reduce tensions among powers, but by the late 1800s, most new lands for colonial expansion had been claimed.²⁶ The Spanish-American War was, to paraphrase Lenin, the first war for redistribution of territory already distributed amongst the powerful.²⁷ A similar observation was made by Mackinder, who motivated his development of heartland theory by stating that 'there is scarcely a region left for the pegging out of a claim of ownership, unless as the result of war.'²⁸ The late nineteenth century also saw a shift towards multipolarity, with new powers like Japan and the United States joining the ranks of imperial competitors, relative British decline, and the increasing importance and prominence of major power alliances. Alliances, such as the Franco-Russian Alliance, were formed to balance rising powers like Germany. However, these alliances proved fragile as relative power shifted over time. Moreover, the alliance systems that emerged – France and Russia versus Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy – prevented collective action against aggressive states. As a result, monopolization of subordinate territories was inconsistently checked, contributing to instability and escalating

²⁵ Tarak Barkawi, 'Empire and Order in International Relations and Security Studies', in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies* (Oxford: OUP, 2010); Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey, 'Retrieving the Imperial: Empire and International Relations', *Millennium* 31, no. 1 (2002): 109–127.

²⁶ Wight, *Power Politics*, 43.

²⁷ Ludmila N. Popkova, 'Russian Press Coverage of American Intervention in the Spanish-Cuban War', in *European Perceptions of the Spanish-American War of 1898*, ed. Sylvia L. Hilton and Steve Ickringill (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999), 124.

²⁸ H. J. Mackinder, 'The Geographical Pivot of History', *The Geographical Journal* (Oxford, UK) 23, no. 4 (1904): 421.

competition among the major powers. This lack of coordinated resistance ultimately destabilized the international system, leading to unchecked imperial ambitions and growing rivalries.

Spanish-American War

The Spanish-American War of 1898 presents a notable deviant case for the theory of subordinate monopolization and conflict. A rising power, the United States, gained control over several subordinates, including the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, without provoking violent opposition from other major powers. The future of the Philippines was the critical issue, since the other territories were already understood to fall under an American sphere of influence, as articulated by the Monroe Doctrine.²⁹ This outcome challenges the theory's expectation that monopolization by a rising power increases the likelihood of major power conflict. However, a closer examination suggests that the case instead clarifies key boundary conditions. It particularly shows how the signaling of openness can mediate the threat posed by monopolization.

For Britain, the chief concerns were economic. Britain and its empire accounted for 50% of the trade with the Philippines, and moreover, control of the Philippines by a rival major power could threaten British trade with China and Britain's colonies in southeast Asia.³⁰ France meanwhile had close economic ties with Spain, while Austria-Hungary saw

²⁹ Ivan Musicant, *Empire by Default: The Spanish-American War and the Dawn of the American Century* (New York: HHolt, 1998), 107; Popkova, 'Russian Press Coverage of American Intervention in the Spanish-Cuban War', 120; Richard Warner Van Alstyne, *The Rising American Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1960), 164; Paul Gibb, 'Unmasterly Inactivity? Sir Julian Pauncefote, Lord Salisbury, and the Venezuela Boundary Dispute', *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 16, no. 1 (2005): 49; Stephen Grover Cleveland, *Presidential Problems* (Lond. &c. :, 1904), 280; Nelson M Blake, 'Background of Cleveland's Venezuelan Policy', *The American Historical Review* 47, no. 2 (1942): 276.

³⁰ Cecilio E. Burigay, 'British Foreign Policy towards the Philippines during the Spanish-American War' (University of Southern California, 1941), 18, 80; Musicant, *Empire by Default*, 616–17; Maria Dolores Elizalde, '1898: The Coordinates of the Spanish Crisis in the Pacific', in *The Crisis of 1898: Colonial Redistribution and Nationalist Mobilization*, ed. Angel Smith and Emma Aurora Dávila-Cox (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 134.

America's hostility to a fellow monarchy as an affront.³¹ Germany, though theoretically neutral, was supportive of Spain, but as the future of the Philippines came into question, was keen to acquire new territory.³² Japan was anxious that should the United States not retain the islands that they should gain them.³³ Finally, Russian interest was limited to desiring that Britain should not gain the islands, but was distracted by competition with Japan in East Asia.³⁴

Though norms of open subordinate governance had been weakened in the late nineteenth century, a strong undercurrent of openness remained, and this was not limited to Britain and the United States. Rather, France suggested that the Philippines be governed by 'a shared administration with the other Great Powers', however, 'not one of the powers recurred seriously to the thought of uniting against an American peril.'³⁵ The preference for open – even shared – governance was not, therefore, backed with any substantial collective effort to prevent the annexation beyond a vague call for 'a continuance of peace' made on 6 April 1898.³⁶ However, multiple states sent warships to Manila. In addition to the American fleet, Germany sent a large fleet (examined below), while three British, one French, one Japanese, and one (obsolete) Austro-Hungarian warships were present in Manila Harbor during May 1898.

The appearance of the German East Asia Squadron was regarded with suspicion by the commander of the American fleet, Commodore Dewey, whose forces had annihilated the grossly inferior Spanish Pacific Fleet on 1 May, ending any hope of defending the Philippines

³¹ John L. Offner, *An Unwanted War: The Diplomacy of the United States and Spain over Cuba, 1895-1898* (Chapel Hill ; London: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 160; Burigay, 'British Foreign Policy towards the Philippines', 62.

³² Ernest R. May, *Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America as a Great Power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), 228; Offner, *An Unwanted War*, 160.

³³ Burigay, 'British Foreign Policy towards the Philippines', 58.

³⁴ Musicant, *Empire by Default*, 616–17; May, *Imperial Democracy*, 235.

³⁵ May, *Imperial Democracy*, 238; Elizalde, '1898: The Coordinates of the Spanish Crisis in the Pacific', 137.

³⁶ Elbert Jay Benton, *International Law and Diplomacy of the Spanish-American War* (Maryland: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1908), 89.

from American intervention. The power of the German fleet, which was superior to that of the American, was sufficient in itself to cause alarm, particularly in Washington, especially given the potential value of the islands to Germany.³⁷ At the height of these tensions, a British warship positioned itself between the two fleets with the purpose of reducing tensions.³⁸

In contrast, Britain backed the United States in the war with Spain, and was ambivalent about the annexation of the islands, preferring this outcome to one where a rival might control them.³⁹ This is surprising, since British economic interests in the islands were substantial. Crucially, the United States successfully signaled continuity with norms of openness emphasizing that they did not intend to close the Philippines to foreign commerce and that the islands would be opened to trade.⁴⁰ Moreover, annexation of the entire territory was not perceived as likely by the other major powers.⁴¹ This claim was credible due to the United States' historical approach to subordinate governance, which had emphasized commercial openness and minimal colonial entanglement. Moreover, British officials, including the pro-American Ambassador Sir Julian Pauncefote, trusted American intentions.⁴² American annexation might advance British goals in East Asia and so did not oppose the eventual annexation, in return for aligning on China in the Open Door Notes which committed the United States to the protection of equal trading rights for all in China, restraining the ambitions of Russia, Japan, and Germany, as well as a commitment to

³⁷ Volker Schult and Karl-Heinz Wionzek, eds, *The German and Austrian Navies in the Philippines, and Their Role in the Spanish-American War of 1898: A Collection of Original Documents*, with Michael G. Price (Manila, Philippines: National Historical Commission of the Philippines, 2017), 11; Karl-Heinz Wionzek, *Germany, the Philippines, and the Spanish-American War: Four Accounts by Officers of the Imperial German Navy*, trans. Thomas Clark (Manila: National Historical Institute, 2004), xvi.

³⁸ Burigay, 'British Foreign Policy towards the Philippines', 42.

³⁹ Musicant, *Empire by Default*, 557; Offner, *An Unwanted War*, 213.

⁴⁰ Benton, *International Law and Diplomacy of the Spanish-American War*, 242; Elizalde, '1898: The Coordinates of the Spanish Crisis in the Pacific', 143.

⁴¹ Burigay, 'British Foreign Policy towards the Philippines', 56–57.

⁴² H. Wayne Morgan, *America's Road to Empire: The War with Spain and Overseas Expansion, America in Crisis* (New York ; London: Wiley, 1965), 58.

economic openness: an attempt to codify open norms of subordinate governance.⁴³ Finally, the blockade of the Philippines was lifted immediately following the armistice, further reassuring Britain about the American commitment to openness.⁴⁴

Two major alternative explanations – power politics and status dissatisfaction – also illuminate this case, but they do not displace the theory. From a power politics perspective, Germany's decision not to escalate despite superior local naval strength reflects systemic calculations. Any German aggression risked British intervention – as evidenced by Britain's refusal to sell coal to a Spanish fleet en route to reinforce Manila.⁴⁵ The broader great power system, shaped by unbalanced alliances and conflicting regional interests, rendered coordinated resistance to American action difficult. Fragmentation among the European powers created an opening for American consolidation.

From a status perspective, domestic actors in the United States, including Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Theodore Roosevelt, and Alfred Thayer Mahan, viewed military capabilities and the annexation of overseas territory as a route to major power status.⁴⁶ This helps explain the United States's motivation, but not the absence of international resistance. The case confirms that the effects of monopolization are filtered through international perceptions of status-seeking. Britain interpreted American action as a one-off assertion of regional influence, not as the start of a broader revisionist project. Germany and others disagreed but lacked the alignment or will to oppose it.

⁴³ Ephraim K. Smith, 'William McKinley's Enduring Legacy: The Historiographical Debate on the Taking of the Philippine Islands', in *Crucible of Empire: The Spanish-American War & Its Aftermath*, ed. James C. Bradford (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1993), xv; May, *Imperial Democracy*, 238–39.

⁴⁴ Benton, *International Law and Diplomacy of the Spanish-American War*, 232.

⁴⁵ Burigay, 'British Foreign Policy towards the Philippines', 43.

⁴⁶ Walter LaFeber, 'Preserving the American System', in *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations: Documents and Essays*, 4th ed., ed. Thomas G. Paterson and Dennis Merrill, Major Problems in American History Series (Lexington, Mass.: DCHearth, 1995), 397; Michelle Murray, *The Struggle for Recognition in International Relations: Status, Revisionism, and Rising Powers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 7; M. E. Chamberlain, *'Pax Britannica': British Foreign Policy, 1789-1914* (London: Longman, 2003), 151.

The Spanish-American War clarifies the limits of the monopolization-conflict pathway. The presence of strategic interest, economic stakes, and even fleet deployments did not produce war, though it should be recalled that unbalanced alliances and European disunity stymied a coordinated response. This is because the monopolizer, the United States, was not yet perceived as a rival or as violating shared norms in a clear or sustained way. American rhetorical restraint, historical reputation, and the fragmentation of other powers all contributed to suppressing escalation. Monopolization is therefore best seen as a probabilistic mechanism, not a deterministic trigger. Its escalatory potential is mediated by how other powers interpret the action. In this case, Britain's response, arguably the pivotal one, reflected a deliberate calculation that American monopolization would not violate its core interests or broader normative vision. Even Germany, despite provocations, pulled back when it became clear that escalation might result in isolation or war with multiple opponents.

Russo-Japanese War

The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5 provides strong support for the theory that monopolization of a subordinate by a rising power increases the probability of major power war. Japan's aggressive moves to dominate Korea and contest Russian influence in Manchuria provoked direct military conflict with Russia, a major power, after diplomatic overtures failed. The war illustrates how rising powers' monopolization efforts, when perceived as revisionist and conducted against the backdrop of rivalry, escalate to armed conflict.

The roots of the conflict lay in the increasing Japanese effort to monopolize control over Korea. While Japan had long held commercial and political influence in Korea – formalized in the 1876 Treaty of Kanghwa – Russian power remained a significant

counterweight, especially through its influence over King Gojong.⁴⁷ Japan's strategic view was clear: controlling Korea was essential for Japanese security, given its proximity and potential use as a base for major power adversaries.⁴⁸ By the early 1900s, Japan had secured a dominant, if not exclusive, position in Korea, but Russian interference continued to constrain Japanese ambitions. Japan recognized that further monopolization would only be possible by eliminating Russian influence – a goal that drove it to war. Nish summarizes the Japanese position succinctly: Japan sought supremacy in Korea and understood that 'only by removing Russian influence from the court and the territory as a whole' could this be achieved.⁴⁹ Manchuria, while distinct from Korea, was deeply entangled in the conflict. Japan had recognized Manchuria as formally outside its sphere of influence, but the linkage between Korea and Manchuria was blurred in both diplomatic practice and strategic thinking and at the outset of the conflict Japan sought to reduce Russian influence in Manchuria and reestablish rights for all major powers, a position designed to appeal to Britain and the United States.⁵⁰ Control over Manchuria was seen as vital to securing Korea and, by extension, broader Japanese ambitions in China.⁵¹ Thus, the Japanese war aim was monopolization, not only the expulsion of Russian influence from Korea but securing dominance over southern Manchuria, including the crucial Port Arthur base ceded in the Treaty of Portsmouth.⁵²

⁴⁷ Sheila Miyoshi Jager, *The Other Great Game: The Opening of Korea and the Birth of Modern East Asia*, 1st edn (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2023); Brahm Swaroop Agrawal, 'The Opening of Korea and the Kanghwa Treaty of 1876', in *Japan and the Pacific, 1540-1920*, ed. Mark Caprio and Kōichirō Matsuda, Pacific World ; v. 10 (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006), 320.

⁴⁸ Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword*, 49.

⁴⁹ Ian Nish, *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War*, Origins of Modern Wars (London: Longman, 1985), 254.

⁵⁰ Yōko Katō, 'What Caused the Russo-Japanese War: Korea or Manchuria?', *Social Science Japan Journal* 10, no. 1 (2007): 61, 101; Richard Storry, *Japan and the Decline of the West in Asia, 1894-1943*, Making of the 20th Century (London: Macmillan, 1979), 61; J. A. White, 'Portsmouth 1905: Peace or Truce?', *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 4 (1969): 362; R. M. Connaughton, *The War of the Rising Sun and Tumbling Bear: A Military History of the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-5* (London: Routledge, 1988), 10.

⁵¹ *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War*, 243.

⁵² Tosh Minohara, 'The Diplomatic Dimension of the Russo-Japanese War: The Portsmouth Conference and Its Aftermath', in *A History of Russo-Japanese Relations: Over Two Centuries of Cooperation and Competition*, ed. D. V. Strel'tsov and Nobuo Shimotomai, Brill's Japanese Studies Library ; Volume 66 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 55.

Tensions had escalated steadily over the previous decade through several crises: the long running territorial dispute over Russian control of Sakhalin, the Triple Intervention following Japan's victory in the First Sino-Japanese War, Russian encroachment into Port Arthur and Manchuria, and repeated Russian failures to honor withdrawal agreements.⁵³ This pattern created both strategic and normative grievances. Diplomatic negotiations failed because of a classic commitment problem. Japan feared that allowing Russia time to reinforce – especially with the near-completion of the Trans-Siberian Railway – would erode its bargaining power. In Fearon's terms, Japan had strong incentives to misrepresent its willingness to fight, but faced the risk that continued diplomacy would strengthen Russia's position.⁵⁴ Consequently, preemptive war became the preferred option.⁵⁵ The strategic balance at the outbreak slightly favored Japan, but Russian reinforcement over time could have reversed this.⁵⁶ Japan thus seized the initiative with a surprise naval attack on Port Arthur, followed by declarations of war. Both strategic necessity and the desire to secure monopolization drove this decision.

Unlike the Spanish-American War, where monopolization triggered little external resistance, Japan's war provoked widespread international concern, but no intervention of the collective major powers. Several factors shaped this outcome. Japan's actions were framed as restoring the balance of interests in China, appealing to the Open Door policy advocated by Britain and the United States.⁵⁷ Japanese diplomats skillfully portrayed Russian behavior, particularly its occupation of Manchuria, as the true violation of norms, thereby presenting

⁵³ David Goldfrank, 'Crimea Redux? On the Origins of the War', in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero*, ed. John W. Steinberg et al., History of Warfare 29 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 95.

⁵⁴ James D. Fearon, 'Rationalist Explanations for War', *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (1995): 400; Goldfrank, 'Crimea Redux? On the Origins of the War', 95.

⁵⁵ Andrew Malozemoff, *Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904: With Special Emphasis on the Causes of the Russo-Japanese War*, Russian and East European Studies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), 249.

⁵⁶ Yoji Koda, 'The Russo-Japanese War: Primary Causes of Japanese Success', *Naval War College Review* 58, no. 2 (2005): 24.

⁵⁷ Storry, *Japan and the Decline of the West in Asia, 1894-1943*, 61.

Japan's war as a defense of openness rather than a naked grab for territory. The effectiveness of this hinged on how British and American policymakers interpreted Japan's appeals, since their endorsement of the Open Door made their perceptions central to whether Japan's actions were seen as legitimate or revisionist. In the short-term, both concluded that Japan was acting legitimately, but the annexations which followed set the context for further encroachment in China and rising British and American suspicion. It is this aspect of the case – the causal mechanism – which differentiates the theory of subordinate monopolization from realist perspectives. As Japan had secured favorable diplomatic conditions before launching the war through the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902, deterring Russian allies from intervening as they had in 1895, realism would not expect Japan to issue a normative appeal.⁵⁸ Yet, despite the alliance, Japan actively sought to portray its actions as being in support of openness, suggesting an acute awareness of the sensitivity surrounding the norm. Beyond British neutrality, France, despite its formal alliance with Russia, prioritized its rapprochement with Britain and neutrality vis-à-vis East Asia.⁵⁹ Germany, meanwhile, declared strict neutrality, driven by strategic interests in Europe. This outcome shows that what mattered was not just the deterrent effect of alliances, as realism would suggest, but the normative framing that allowed Japan's monopolization to appear consistent with shared principles.

Alternative explanations grounded in power politics and status dissatisfaction also illuminate important aspects of the conflict but ultimately reinforce rather than displace the core theory. From a power politics perspective, Japan's timing was driven by fear of Russian reinforcement. Early action offered the best chance to win before Russia's military logistics

⁵⁸ Rotem Kowner, '“Light than Yellow, but Not Enough”: Western Discourse on the Japanese “Race”, 1854-1904', *The Historical Journal* 43, no. 1 (2000): 129.

⁵⁹ T. G. Otte, 'The Fragmenting of the Old World Order Britain, the Great Powers, and the War', in *The Impact of the Russo-Japanese War [Electronic Resource]*, ed. Rotem Kowner, Routledge Studies in the Modern History of Asia (2005) 43 (New York: Routledge, 2007), 96.

improved. Moreover, Russia underestimated Japan's willingness and capacity to fight, reflecting deep-seated racial and strategic biases, a miscalculation that enabled Japan's initial success. Status concerns also mattered. The memory of the 1895 Triple Intervention, when Russia, Germany, and France forced Japan to surrender territorial gains after the Sino-Japanese War, lingered heavily.⁶⁰ The Japanese leadership sought not only material security but symbolic recognition as a major power. A successful war against Russia would vindicate Japan's claim to this status. Post-war, Japan achieved diplomatic upgrades, including the elevation of its mission in London to an embassy, signaling acceptance into the top ranks of international society.⁶¹ Yet while status motivations explain Japan's incentives for war, they do not fully explain why war broke out at that moment. Monopolization – the drive to eliminate Russian influence and secure exclusive control over Korean and Manchurian territories – provided the concrete, immediate stakes that made conflict unavoidable once diplomacy failed.

The Russo-Japanese War strongly supports the argument that rising power monopolization of subordinates increases the probability of major power war. The stakes (Korea and Manchuria) were strategic, the actors (Russia and Japan) were rivals, and the norms governing subordinate status were weak and contested. Power politics and status dissatisfaction certainly mattered – but they operated through the channel of monopolization. Japan sought status and security by monopolizing strategic subordinates, and Russia resisted, leading to war. Thus, the case confirms the theoretical logic while highlighting important refinements: monopolization triggers conflict especially when combined with rivalry, normative contestation, and a dynamic strategic environment that renders peaceful bargaining unstable.

⁶⁰ John W. Steinberg, 'Was the Russo-Japanese War World War Zero?', *The Russian Review* (Stanford) 67, no. 1 (2008): 3.

⁶¹ Kowner, 'Light than Yellow, but Not Enough', 129; Otte, 'The Fragmenting of the Old World Order Britain, the Great Powers, and the War', 100.

Case study findings

The Spanish-American and Russo-Japanese Wars occurred just six years apart, within a common strategic and normative environment. Both took place in East Asia, then emerging as the primary arena of international interest, and within a system of comparable polarity and prevailing, if contested, norms of subordinate governance.⁶² This shared context enhances the validity of comparing the two cases, which differ significantly in both their independent and dependent variables: the presence and degree of monopolization, and the onset or absence of major power conflict. The Russo-Japanese War offers strong support for the theory. Japan's efforts to monopolize Korea – and, by extension, to contest Russian dominance in Manchuria – were embedded in a decade of direct rivalry and strategic competition. Japan had well-established interests in Korea, pursued its objectives through a closure of access to other powers, and initiated war when diplomacy failed. This aligns closely with the argument that monopolization by a rising power, especially when interpreted as revisionist by other major powers, raises the probability of war. By contrast, the Spanish-American War appears as a deviant case. The United States monopolized the Philippines, but did not face major power opposition. However, this divergence clarifies the theory's scope conditions. The United States was not perceived as a systemic rival, had a track record of advocating openness, and reassured other powers – especially Britain – that commercial access would be preserved. Taken together, the cases demonstrate that subordinate monopolization is a powerful mechanism, but not a deterministic trigger, for major power conflict. It is most likely to provoke escalation when embedded in rivalrous relationships and framed as a challenge to prevailing norms of open governance.

Conclusion

⁶² Otte, 'The Fragmenting of the Old World Order Britain, the Great Powers, and the War', 91–92.

The statistical analysis shows that subordinate monopolization has a statistically significant effect on the probability of major power violent dispute onset. This suggests that when rising powers monopolize subordinates, that the risk of major power conflict increases. The case studies, meanwhile, provide evidence that the issues in disputes between major powers were not only material interests, but rather, norms of subordinate governance also shaped their behavior, though the two do often move simultaneously, making differentiation difficult. Four further points follow: the agency of subordinates, the limited learning of rising powers, the framework's scope conditions and limitations, and the implications for the contemporary order.

Agency

Little agency is ascribed to subordinates in this article, whether these are states or territories. Though this assumption allows an exploration of how major powers squabble for access and influence over subordinates, it ignores the bargaining of the weak. Small states, and territories, or more accurately, their leaders, are able to exert some agency over their futures.⁶³ That they are deficient in capabilities relative to major powers, does not mean that they lack resolve – that is, a willingness to pay costs – nor choice. There are several strategies that may allow a small state to deter monopolization and thereby reduce sovereignty losses including: diplomatic appeals to international authorities, seeking extended deterrence, militarization, and alliances with other small states. Although President Nasser skillfully navigated between the Soviet Union and United States as he sought economic aid, military equipment, and diplomatic support, Egypt remained dependent on one or the other throughout the Cold War. While it frustrated both superpowers, and may have prevented deeper penetration by either, this strategy also left Egypt relatively isolated. Similarly, Franco-British rivalry over Siam in the late

⁶³ Michael I. Handel, *Weak States in the International System*, 2nd ed (London: Cass, 1990).

nineteenth century eventually led to the 1903 agreement maintaining the independence of that state, allowing both colonial powers to pursue their interests.⁶⁴

An alternative approach was taken by Finland during the late 1930s and 1940s. Fierce Finnish defense of its territory during the Winter and Continuation Wars convinced Stalin that occupying the country would be too costly. Finland secured its sovereignty during the Cold War, but at the cost of foreign policy independence. Militarization and high-cost acceptance is risky since it relies on a potential monopolizer being more cost sensitive, which is far from guaranteed. Finally, coalitions of smaller states are also plausible, though have high transaction costs since coordination is complex. This pathway relies on creating an international organization, typically defined by the issue-area where the influence of the potential monopolizer is greatest. The Visegrád Group allows Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, and Hungary to coordinate on a variety of issues. While this gives them more effective lobbying power within the EU and NATO than they would have individually, ultimately these organizations are dominated by Germany and France, and the United States, respectively. Though small states can choose, it is from a menu of options which all involve subordination, and may fail to prevent monopolization by a determined and more powerful state.

Learning

The argument made here is that subordinate monopolization increases the probability of major power violent disputes. Though it seems logical for more recent rising powers to learn from the experiences of predecessors, and thereby reduce this probability, the record suggests learning is less than expected. There is, however, evidence of change over time in the expected direction. Pre-1945 disputes had an average monopolization value of 1.2, whereas post-1945

⁶⁴ Minton F. Goldman, 'Franco-British Rivalry over Siam, 1896–1904', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 3, no. 2, (1972): 210–228.

this is 0.9. This may reflect learning – but may also reflect changes in the nature of monopolization, which I return to below. Nevertheless, learning appears to be limited. Two, potentially interacting, aspects shape this. The number of rising power cases is small. It is plausible, therefore, for leaders of rising powers to ascribe the outcome of conflict to other factors, rather than the common strand of subordinate monopolization. Relatedly, regime type may well shape the probability of a rising power pursuing subordinate monopolization in the first place. That the British, both American, West German, and Cold War Japanese cases all involved limited monopolization, and all were democracies, may not be coincidental. Having more domestic veto players and voices in decision-making improves institutional learning, reducing the probability of pursuing monopolization. This potentially has implications for the contemporary world, given that China is now a dictatorship under Xi, and India is a democratic backslider under Modi. More research is required on the relationship between regime type and rising powers.

A second, related, argument is that if open subordinate governance has contributed to their rise, it appears irrational to take steps which jeopardize these gains. This argument is regularly made with reference to contemporary China. Though superficially logical, there are three flaws. It assumes that the rising power could not have risen faster under an alternative order, and implies it should be satisfied with what it has. In contrast, it is likely that the leaders of such states, while welcoming growth, place more emphasis upon the factors that have impeded them, rather than benefited, as prospect theory suggests. Secondly, it presumes that the international system – and especially major powers – remain static. But, they experience their own fortunes domestically, and may also increasingly perceive a rising power a threat. The rising power, knowing this, might increasingly suspect that they will face rivals, and so, seek to entrench themselves. Thirdly, this logic over-emphasizes the importance of economic interests at the expense of security. This is true in two ways. Economic openness can allow

dependency to be exploited. In addition, though economic growth may be perceived in terms of absolute gains, security rarely is. Instead, it is relative. When relative security is emphasized, the argument for an open economic order, which open subordinate governance is part of, is diminished.

Scope conditions and limitations

The framework is less informative in contexts where norms of open subordinate governance are weakly institutionalized or not widely shared, and where attempts at monopolization are therefore less likely to be politically contested. In such settings, materialist accounts centered on strategic denial and power projection may provide sufficient explanations. More broadly, the argument does not seek to replace realist accounts but to complement them by identifying a pathway through which social expectations about openness shape the interpretation and escalation of competition. Future work could more directly integrate these perspectives by examining how the material characteristics of subordinates condition when and how openness norms are activated.

Implications for the contemporary order

In the contemporary order territorial control is less crucial to relative capabilities and international standing than at any point in the last two centuries due to the value imbued in supply chains, standard setting, control of data, and finance. For rising powers, monopolization of subordinates, therefore, may be less crucial. The decline in average monopolization value post-1945 is likely shaped by these changes. This suggests that the theory is less relevant at explaining the behavior of rising powers today than historically, but it is not irrelevant. For example, a significant part of the fear of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan is that it would at least severely disrupt the supply of advanced semiconductor chips, an industry dominated by

Taiwanese companies. Chinese control would give it greater access to these critical supplies and make Chinese adversaries vulnerable to the strangling of supply.

However, the core of the theory of subordinate monopolization concerns norm violations, and it is this which differentiates the theory from realist accounts. When norms of open subordinate governance are challenged through subordinate monopolization, this is understood to be an escalatory signal demonstrating revisionist intent by other major powers. Control of territory is visible – the signal is relatively unambiguous – but control of networks may be opaquer. If monopolization once meant only exclusive territorial control or the denial of rival influence, today it may manifest in additional exclusionary forms. These include the fostering of economic dependency through debt or supply chain dominance, the imposition of technical and digital standards that lock subordinates into asymmetric relationships, and the use of financial leverage to foreclose alternative alignments. While such strategies may not involve physical annexation, they can still be perceived by rival major powers as norm violations, particularly when they limit subordinate choice and signal a revisionist intent to restructure access and influence.

These dynamics are especially salient in the cases of China and India. China combines traditional territorial ambitions in the South China Sea and over Taiwan with extensive efforts to monopolize through networked means, including the Belt and Road Initiative, digital infrastructure projects, and the shaping of global standards. India's position is more ambiguous. It has long dominated its South Asian neighborhood, and episodes of intervention in Nepal⁶⁵, Bhutan, or Sri Lanka bear resemblance to earlier patterns of subordinate monopolization. Taken together, these cases suggest that while the specific modalities of monopolization have evolved, the basic logic of the theory remains relevant: violations of norms of open subordinate

⁶⁵ Sanjay Upadhya, *Nepal and the Geo-Strategic Rivalry Between China and India*, Routledge Studies in South Asian Politics (London: Routledge, 2012).

governance continue to be read as escalatory signals by other major powers, and thus remain a potential pathway to conflict in the contemporary order.

If, however, norms of open subordinate governance weaken at the systemic level, the risks are profound. The retreat of the United States from its post-1945 role as guarantor of openness, combined with Russia's resort to territorial aggression, signals a fraying of the normative consensus that underpinned the post-1945 order. What remains is a rump of the weaker major powers – Britain, France, Germany, and Japan – attempting to sustain these norms. Their coordination is uncertain and costly, yet the costs of failure are greater still, both for individual states and for the international system. The breakdown of norms of open subordinate governance would not simply return the world to major-power rivalry as usual; it would herald a more predatory order, in which subordinates are treated as objects of exclusionary control, with all the escalatory dangers this entails.

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Appendices

Appendix A: coding of independent variable

To explain the coding process more fully, the coding for MID 178 is detailed here. The dispute concerns Soviet-Japanese tensions of Manchuria, between 1932 and 1935. Japan is the rising power in this dispute, with the subordinate being Manchukuo. Monopolization is coded as '2', that is, high-level monopolization was sought by Japan in the dispute. This is on the basis that Japan sought formal and specialized political roles, and did similarly in the economic sphere.

Japanese control of Manchukuo was extensive prior to the dispute, and was deeper and broader than that of the Soviet Union. The dispute itself focuses on Japanese efforts to further deepen its control, and to end the Soviet Union's ability to pursue interests in the subordinate. The description of the dispute in *International Conflicts, 1816-2010*, reads as follows:

'The Soviet Union began building up troops in the east in response to the Japanese takeover of Manchuria and the establishment of the puppet state Manchukuo.

Tensions continued to escalate, particularly over Soviet control of the major railway in the region. Japanese and Manchukuoan forces arrested and attacked Soviet rail workers on several occasions and exchanged fire with Soviet troops in one incident.

The Japanese foreign minister eventually negotiated a transfer of the railway from the Soviet Union to Manchukuo.'⁶⁶

This description is succinct, but allows coding of several variables. Firstly, monopolization is coded as a '2' on the basis that 'Japanese...forces arrested and attacked Soviet rail

⁶⁶ Gibler, *International Conflicts, 1816-2010*, 1004.

workers.’⁶⁷ Japanese troops (or rather, the Kwantung Army), therefore, were directed to remove Soviet control over the railway. Moreover, in the political sphere, relations between Japan and Manchukuo were clearly monopolistic, as Manchukuo is described as a ‘puppet state’.⁶⁸ This suggests a specialized relationship, that is, that Manchukuo was a political vehicle for Japanese interests, and which is clearly closed to others by dint of occupation (or annexation). The information above does not allow assessment of the economic relationship, but two chapters of the *Cambridge History of Japan, Volume 6: The Twentieth Century* do, and provide further evidence on the political relationship.

On political role specialization, Hata and Coox write that ‘Japanese troops had to advance outside the railway zone where Japan had treaty rights.’⁶⁹ These treaty rights are the Japan–Manchukuo Protocol of September 1931, which gave Japan the right to station troops in Manchukuo and outlined a mutual defence treaty, in essence meaning a pledge by Japan to defend its puppet from China and the Soviet Union. This is clear evidence of a political role specialization, bolstering the conclusion that this was high-level monopolization. Moreover, Hata and Coox explain that ‘real power was kept in the hands of the commander of the Kwantung Army, who concurrently held the post of Japanese ambassador to Manchukuo’,⁷⁰ further demonstrating the tight political control Japan had over Manchukuo.

Japan had strong economic interests in Manchuria,⁷¹ which amounted to monopolization since during the 1930s Japan’s leaders ‘became convinced that Japan must build its own

⁶⁷ Gibler, 1004.

⁶⁸ Gibler, 1004.

⁶⁹ Ikuhiko Hata and Alvin D. Coox, ‘Continental Expansion, 1905-1941’, in *The Cambridge History of Japan: Volume 6, The Twentieth Century*, vol. 6, ed. Peter Duus, The Cambridge History of Japan (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 295.

⁷⁰ Hata and Coox, 298.

⁷¹ Mark R. Peattie, ‘The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945’, in *The Cambridge History of Japan: Volume 6, The Twentieth Century*, vol. 6, ed. Peter Duus, The Cambridge History of Japan (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 223.

economic bloc to which the nation must look for its survival. In this perspective the colonies were chiefly seen as productive units of a central economic engine, geared to the creation of a self-sufficient garrison state.’⁷² The economic relationship between Japan and Manchukuo was formal, since it was based around control of the South Manchuria Railway Company and underpinned by the aforementioned treaty rights which focused on the railway, resulting in ‘the notion of a "Japan-Manchukuo economic bloc"’.⁷³ Finally, economic role specialization is evidenced two ways, firstly, Manchuria was to supply raw materials for Japan, and secondly, serve as territory for colonization: ‘Manchuria was a new frontier where they could fulfill their dreams of fame and fortune. Adventurers and merchants with a desire to get rich quick rushed to Manchuria.’⁷⁴

⁷² Peattie, 237.

⁷³ Hata and Coox, ‘Continental Expansion, 1905-1941’, 299; Peattie, ‘The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945’, 231.

⁷⁴ Hata and Coox, ‘Continental Expansion, 1905-1941’, 290–91.

Appendix B: robustness checks*Alternative model specification*

The nine alternative model specifications reported in Table B1 alter the model type (OLS, logit, rare event logit, and Firth logit) and standard errors (no clustering, clustering by rising power, clustering by year, and robust) in different combinations. As can be seen, monopolization remains statistically significant in all cases, though in Model 2 this drops to just $p < 0.1$, and in Model 8 to $p < 0.05$.

Table B1: Alternative model types

VARIABLES	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)		(6)		(7)		(8)		(9)	
	Major power violent	dispute	Major power violent	dispute	Major power violent	dispute	Major power violent	dispute	Major power violent	dispute	Major power violent	dispute	Major power violent	dispute	Major power violent	dispute	Major power violent	dispute
Monopolization ordinal	0.070*** (0.022)		0.070* (0.034)		0.711*** (0.247)		0.711*** (0.268)		0.711*** (0.251)		0.711*** (0.242)		0.655*** (0.232)		0.655*** (0.257)		0.656*** (0.237)	
Status dissatisfaction	0.008*** (0.003)		0.008*** (0.003)		0.062*** (0.029)		0.062*** (0.027)		0.062*** (0.027)		0.062*** (0.027)		0.056*** (0.026)		0.056*** (0.026)		0.057*** (0.028)	
Joint democracy	-0.166*** (0.083)		-0.166*** (0.084)		-2.050*** (1.216)		-2.050*** (1.279)		-2.050*** (1.459)		-2.050*** (1.356)		-1.552*** (1.302)		-1.552*** (1.228)		-1.643*** (1.045)	
Rising power polity	0.008*** (0.004)		0.008*** (0.005)		0.085*** (0.045)		0.085*** (0.057)		0.085*** (0.050)		0.085*** (0.040)		0.081*** (0.039)		0.081*** (0.055)		0.080*** (0.043)	
Hegemon/challenger polity	0.005 (0.005)		0.005 (0.005)		0.047 (0.050)		0.047 (0.057)		0.047 (0.048)		0.047 (0.039)		0.042 (0.038)		0.042 (0.055)		0.043 (0.047)	
Military balance, log	-0.175*** (0.077)		-0.175*** (0.035)		-0.704*** (0.600)		-0.704*** (0.257)		-0.704*** (0.448)		-0.704*** (0.416)		-0.410*** (0.399)		-0.410*** (0.247)		-0.526*** (0.438)	
Rising power nuclear weapons dummy	-0.000 (0.103)		-0.000 (0.096)		-0.867 (1.540)		-0.867 (1.449)		-0.867 (1.538)		-0.867 (1.618)		-0.674 (1.555)		-0.674 (1.392)		-0.706 (1.353)	
Major power nuclear weapons dummy	-0.030 (0.195)		-0.030 (0.076)		0.064 (1.472)		0.064 (0.487)		0.064 (1.267)		0.064 (1.186)		0.021 (1.140)		0.021 (0.467)		0.012 (1.279)	
Unbalanced multipolarity	0.174*** (0.060)		0.174 (0.111)		1.776*** (0.603)		1.776*** (1.216)		1.776*** (0.982)		1.776*** (0.710)		1.662*** (0.682)		1.662*** (1.168)		1.664*** (0.579)	
Number of major powers	-0.040 (0.026)		-0.040 (0.026)		-0.397 (0.277)		-0.397 (0.323)		-0.397 (0.342)		-0.397 (0.281)		-0.373 (0.270)		-0.373 (0.310)		-0.374 (0.265)	
Number of dispute participants	0.038*** (0.006)		0.038*** (0.007)		0.433*** (0.105)		0.433*** (0.142)		0.433*** (0.129)		0.433*** (0.096)		0.402*** (0.092)		0.402*** (0.137)		0.402*** (0.101)	
Region dummy	-0.061 (0.040)		-0.061 (0.045)		-0.281 (0.426)		-0.281 (0.366)		-0.281 (0.453)		-0.281 (0.446)		-0.275 (0.428)		-0.275 (0.352)		-0.278 (0.409)	
Dispute duration, log	0.033*** (0.008)		0.033*** (0.009)		0.392*** (0.110)		0.392*** (0.110)		0.392*** (0.126)		0.392*** (0.136)		0.361*** (0.131)		0.361*** (0.106)		0.361*** (0.105)	
Post-1945 dummy	0.095 (0.224)		0.095 (0.137)		1.296 (2.225)		1.296 (1.824)		1.296 (2.199)		1.296 (2.177)		1.120 (2.092)		1.120 (1.753)		1.152 (1.960)	
Constant	0.537*** (0.311)		0.537*** (0.189)		-2.771*** (2.770)		-2.771*** (1.413)		-2.771*** (2.360)		-2.771*** (2.135)		-3.387*** (2.051)		-3.387*** (1.358)		-2.984*** (2.297)	
Model type	OLS		OLS		Logit		Logit		Logit		Logit		Rare event logit		Rare event logit		Firth logit	
Standard errors	Normal		Clustered by rising power		Normal		Clustered by rising power		Clustered by year		Robust		Normal		Clustered by rising power		Normal	
Observations	368		368		368		368		368		368		368		368		368	

Standard errors in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Note: Firth logit is penalized maximum likelihood estimation and does not allow clustering.

Alternative dependent variables

Three alternative dependent variables are reported and compared against that used in the main analysis in Table B2. While monopolization remains statistically significant in Model 2 (major power war) and with a larger coefficient, it does not attain any level of statistical significance in Model 3 (all wars) or Model 4 (all violent disputes). However, that a statistically significant finding is reported in Model 2 should reassure sceptical readers on the reasoning behind the dependent variable used in the main analysis.

Table B2: *Alternative dependent variables*

VARIABLES	(1) Major power violent dispute	(2) Major power war	(3) All wars	(4) Violent dispute
Monopolization ordinal	0.711*** (0.268)	1.565** (0.759)	0.472 (0.301)	0.054 (0.155)
Status dissatisfaction	0.062** (0.027)	0.038 (0.088)	-0.034 (0.033)	0.012 (0.026)
Joint democracy	-2.050 (1.279)		0.507 (1.419)	-0.080 (0.415)
Rising power polity	0.085 (0.057)	-0.072 (0.056)	-0.039 (0.049)	0.004 (0.043)
Hegemon/challenger polity	0.047 (0.057)	-0.065 (0.068)	0.023 (0.058)	0.059* (0.032)
Military balance, log	-0.704*** (0.257)	-0.808 (0.691)	0.124 (1.048)	-2.044* (1.138)
Rising power nuclear weapons dummy	-0.867 (1.449)	0.480 (1.832)	12.665*** (1.996)	-1.835** (0.773)
Major power nuclear weapons dummy	0.064 (0.487)	-0.566 (1.324)	14.988*** (0.308)	0.583 (0.688)
Unbalanced multipolarity	1.776 (1.216)	2.751** (1.385)	-0.366 (0.690)	1.014* (0.584)
Number of major powers	-0.397 (0.323)	-0.792 (0.538)	-0.147 (0.511)	-0.388 (0.308)
Number of dispute participants	0.433*** (0.142)	0.949*** (0.313)	0.463*** (0.111)	0.090 (0.067)
Region dummy	-0.281 (0.366)	2.025 (1.421)	0.305 (0.630)	-0.125 (0.299)
Dispute duration, log	0.392*** (0.110)	2.994*** (0.704)	1.452*** (0.248)	0.335*** (0.060)
Post-1945 dummy	1.296 (1.824)		-28.416*** (2.735)	1.600 (1.151)
Constant	-2.771** (1.413)	-19.261*** (4.642)	-11.297*** (3.773)	7.767** (3.713)
Observations	368	368	368	368

Robust standard errors clustered by rising power in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Model (2) note: no major power wars have taken place under joint democracy between a rising power and the hegemon. This variable, therefore, is excluded to prevent the problem of perfect prediction and the loss of 55 observations. The inclusion of the post-1945 dummy variable prevents model convergence.

Alternative independent variables

To examine the stability of the results when alternative independent variables are used, Table B3 reports results from seven alternative models. Model 1 is the main analysis, and is included for comparison. Model 2 restricts the meaning of monopolization to only include political and military meanings, removing the economic. Model 3 reverses this. Model 4 reports findings for a binary version of the monopolization ordinal variable (essentially comparing levels 0 with 2). Model 5 does the same, but instead compares level 0 with 1 (here termed ‘closure’). Model 6 includes both of these variables. Finally, Model 7 includes both, along with their interaction. With the exception of Model 7, these alternatives retain at least $p < 0.05$ levels of statistical significance.

Table B3: *Alternative independent variables*

VARIABLES	(1) Major power violent dispute	(2) Major power violent dispute	(3) Major power violent dispute	(4) Major power violent dispute	(5) Major power violent dispute	(6) Major power violent dispute	(7) Major power violent dispute
Monopolization ordinal	0.711*** (0.268)						
Monopolization ordinal (political only)		0.714*** (0.266)					
Monopolization ordinal (economic only)			0.858*** (0.144)				
Monopolization sought				0.939*** (0.355)		0.479** (0.234)	0.347* (0.178)
Closure					1.093** (0.456)	0.901** (0.421)	0.634 (0.546)
Monopolization X Closure							0.358 (0.639)
Status dissatisfaction	0.062** (0.027)	0.062** (0.027)	0.057** (0.028)	0.072*** (0.026)	0.055* (0.029)	0.059** (0.029)	0.059** (0.029)
Joint democracy	-2.050 (1.279)	-2.049 (1.278)	-2.039 (1.399)	-1.885 (1.223)	-2.315* (1.308)	-2.144* (1.272)	-2.145* (1.299)
Rising power polity	0.085 (0.057)	0.084 (0.057)	0.079 (0.059)	0.078 (0.060)	0.093 (0.057)	0.088 (0.055)	0.088 (0.055)
Hegemon/challenger polity	0.047 (0.057)	0.047 (0.057)	0.043 (0.057)	0.041 (0.060)	0.061 (0.056)	0.052 (0.055)	0.051 (0.055)
Military balance, log	-0.704*** (0.257)	-0.704*** (0.257)	-0.697*** (0.246)	-0.623*** (0.252)	-0.800*** (0.288)	-0.741*** (0.269)	-0.750*** (0.276)
Rising power nuclear weapons dummy	-0.867 (1.449)	-0.878 (1.448)	-0.968 (1.556)	-0.719 (1.359)	-0.659 (1.413)	-0.821 (1.430)	-0.806 (1.442)
Major power nuclear weapons dummy	0.064 (0.487)	0.066 (0.484)	0.222 (0.455)	0.398 (0.404)	-0.249 (0.656)	-0.065 (0.590)	-0.105 (0.626)
Unbalanced multipolarity	1.776 (1.216)	1.766 (1.219)	1.682 (1.188)	1.604 (1.249)	1.950 (1.206)	1.844 (1.201)	1.851 (1.191)
Number of major powers	-0.397 (0.323)	-0.396 (0.323)	-0.372 (0.337)	-0.369 (0.326)	-0.415 (0.310)	-0.406 (0.315)	-0.413 (0.311)
Dispute participants	0.433*** (0.142)	0.432*** (0.142)	0.426*** (0.140)	0.401*** (0.149)	0.413*** (0.150)	0.431*** (0.146)	0.426*** (0.143)
Region dummy	-0.281 (0.366)	-0.281 (0.366)	-0.375 (0.368)	-0.368 (0.365)	-0.248 (0.365)	-0.263 (0.367)	-0.242 (0.365)
Dispute duration, log	0.392*** (0.110)	0.392*** (0.110)	0.379*** (0.117)	0.387*** (0.116)	0.422*** (0.105)	0.401*** (0.108)	0.405*** (0.108)
Post-1945 dummy	1.296 (1.824)	1.294 (1.820)	1.173 (1.924)	0.658 (1.671)	1.576 (1.892)	1.447 (1.906)	1.454 (1.937)
Constant	-2.771** (1.413)	-2.757* (1.412)	-2.585* (1.473)	-2.627* (1.528)	-2.482* (1.460)	-2.699* (1.405)	-2.560** (1.290)
Observations	368	368	368	368	368	368	368

Robust standard errors clustered by rising power in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Prior monopolization and future conflict

Reverse causality – that conflict generates future monopolization – is a potential problem. Ideally, such a robustness check would utilize all cases where monopolization occurred. As explained in the methodology section, this is not possible. To address this, here, the impact of prior levels of monopolization is examined on future disputes. This means calculating the mean cumulative value of monopolization in all prior disputes for each of the 13 rising powers, with the theoretical expectation remaining the same, that is, higher levels of prior monopolization should be associated with a higher probability of the onset of major power violent disputes in the future. Table B4 shows that the variable is statistically significant at a $p < 0.05$ level. The level of statistical significance, and coefficient size, are smaller than in the main analysis, but this is a reassuring finding, which suggests that suggests that the relationship is not wholly driven by reverse causality.

Table B4: Prior monopolization and future conflict

VARIABLES	(1) Major power violent dispute
Mean cumulative prior monopolization	0.105** (0.048)
Status dissatisfaction	0.075** (0.029)
Joint democracy	-1.455 (0.981)
Rising power polity	0.080 (0.050)
Hegemon/challenger polity	0.052 (0.058)
Military balance, log	-0.544** (0.255)
Rising power nuclear weapons dummy	-0.283 (1.266)
Major power nuclear weapons dummy	0.296 (0.341)
Unbalanced multipolarity	2.209* (1.183)
Number of major powers	-0.588 (0.374)
Number of dispute participants	0.390*** (0.148)
Region dummy	-0.415 (0.384)
Dispute duration, log	0.447*** (0.106)
Post-1945 dummy	0.259 (1.656)
Constant	-2.137 (1.586)
Observations	368
Robust standard errors clustered by rising power in parentheses	
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1	