

# Universalism vs. Particularism: On the Limits of Major Power Order\*

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Relations between major powers can be described as shifting between universalism and particularism. In periods of universalism, major powers try to work out acceptable rules of behavior among one another, whereas in periods of particularism, they emphasize special interests of special powers. The way historians see shifts in major power relations since 1816 largely follows such a classification. By comparing the policies pursued during four periods of universalism and four periods of particularism, as well as analysing what ended or initiated such periods, the limits of major power universalism can be evaluated. Particularly, the short-comings of the recent period of detente are illuminated. Also some principles for a more enduring form of universalism are suggested.

## 1. *Universalism vs. particularism*

Autonomy has been a most cherished value for major powers throughout history. It has been a motivating force for smaller powers to free themselves from the influence of others. Liberation has been the ambition of revolutionaries. Still, at no time has autonomy been more restrained than today, even for the major powers. Nuclear threats and strategic doctrines link even the most powerful to one another and restrict the space for independent action. In spite of nuclear vulnerability, major powers can pursue policies to further their particularist interest as witnessed in Eastern Europe, West Asia or Central America. Also, they may pursue policies of universalist application, taking into account legitimate interests of others as witnessed during the period of detente. In this sense, nothing is new. Similar options have always been available to major powers, and, at some period in time, universalism has been

preferred to particularism. This study analyses experiences of major power universalism as opposed to particularism: what has historically been the difference, what has been the result, why have policies shifted and which lessons can be drawn?

Universalist policies are understood to be concerted efforts among major powers to organize relations between themselves to work out acceptable rules of behavior (general standards). Particularist policies, in contrast, are understood to be policies which emphasize the special interest of a given power, even at the price of disrupting existing organizations or power relationship.<sup>1</sup> In the first case, the aim is order, but this is not to say that order is the result or that disorder necessarily follows from the other. On the contrary, some would argue that the pursuit of self-interest is creating more order than is altruism, as it redirects imbalances in power distribution and makes possible the voicing of grievances. Thus, it is for the historical record to decide whether universalism or particularism results in war.

This formulation of the problem is hardly novel or original, but still there have been few efforts to systematically compare the outcome of the different set of policies. Under the concept of world order fruitful incursions into the area have been made by the Institute

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for World Order, as well as by scholars like Stanley Hoffmann.<sup>2</sup> The conceptions might be different, but mostly they point in a similar direction: world order policies aim at including more than the particularistic interest of a given actor as the actor's goals. There is, in other words, a more universalistic ambition. Apart from preserving the actor itself as an actor, there is also an understanding of the demands and worries of the opponent. Obviously, the structural framework in which such globalistic policies are carried out differ; the Institute for World Order in general wants to go beyond the nation-state, and develop policies more fitting for local ('smaller') actors, whereas the Hoffmann conception clearly focuses on the role of the major powers. Here it suffices to note that the structure of the global system makes it necessary to point to the significance of the major powers and their mutual relations. It is also evident that mutual relations between these powers tend to undergo dramatic shifts and changes, swinging between more universalistic and more particularistic emphases. Thus, major powers pursuing universalistic policies would, for some, be world order policies. For others, this might still be unsatisfactory if the basic question is policies *by whom?* It is self-evident that there are limits to universalism of the major powers. Their status as major is not to be threatened. On the contrary it constitutes the postulate of their policies. Thus, at some point, the divergent definitions of world order also become incompatible, boiling down to the question of whether, in the long-run, major powers are to remain majors or not.

Individual actors can have individual orders of preference and priorities can change over time. However, we are interested in the collectivity of major powers. General standards are general only to the extent they have support from many actors. Major powers are significant in setting such standards and in achieving adherence to them. Thus, if a collectivity of major powers, tacitly or openly, sets up certain rules of behavior and applies them consistently over time, this will have an effect beyond the collectivity. If, on the contrary,

there are no such agreed rules, particularism is likely to become a predominant pattern.

Here the focus is on comparing periods of collective major power universalism, and on contrasting them to periods of predominant particularism. Historical experiences of universalism can give insight into useful methods, but also into the limits of such efforts. The study of particularism might yield knowledge of legitimate dissatisfaction with existing arrangements. If a given — formal or informal — collective arrangement constantly works to the advantage of some and to the disadvantage of others, the arrangement itself becomes questioned.

## 2. *Identifying universalism and particularism*

Since the Napoleonic era, there have been several serious attempts at creating universalist relations among major powers. These attempts, initiated by major powers, have built on the consent of all or most major powers. They have sometimes been constructed around particular organizations (such as the League of Nations) or around more informal arrangements (such as the Concert of Europe). Common to them is the ambition to develop general rules of behavior among the major powers, and attempts to reconcile differences so as to maintain the consensus among the involved powers. Thus, what historians refer to as periods of concerts, orders, or detente, is what we here label universalism. Such periods are delimited on two grounds. First, there has to be a certain consistency and continuity in the policies pursued by the major powers within the particular period. Secondly, there has to be a marked difference (qualitative break) between these policies and those in the following period. The analysis, in other words, has a double task: to find the consistent elements within a given period and to find the important factors contributing to the qualitative change in relations.

Table I reproduces eight periods of universalist and particularist policies among major powers since the Napoleonic age. The periodization is drawn from customary historical writing. The organizing principle is that of policy.

Table I. Universalism and Particularism, 1816-1976. Periodization of Relations among Major Powers.

Analytical Classification	Historical Labelling	Time Period	No. of Years	No. of Majors
Universalist	Concert of Europe	1816-1848	33	5-6
Particularist	Bismarck's order	1849-1870	22	5-6
Universalist		1871-1895	25	6
Particularist		1896-1918	23	8
Universalist	League of Nations	1919-1932	14	7
Particularist		1933-1944	12	7
Particularist	Cold War	1945-1962	18	5
Universalist		Detente/ Peaceful Coexistence	1963-1976	14

Note: Major Power definitions follow the usual Correlates of War practice. (See Small & Singer 1982, pp. 44-45.)

The periods are separated with respect to the existence or non-existence of a consistent effort among the major powers to pursue universalist ambitions. These periods are our units of analysis in the following.<sup>3</sup>

Table I gives some characteristics of each of the periods, at the same time explaining the various delimitations. However, some comments are necessary. The European Concert of 1816-1848 is recognized by historians as a period of its own, centered on the activities of the Austrian Chancellor Metternich, but involving all the major European powers. The revolutions of 1848, rather than those of 1830, are seen to mean the ending of this period. The following period was one exhibiting many of the marks of particularism, as we have defined it. Several countries were, in this period, pursuing more limited ambitions (notably unification and aggrandizement). Thus, in the writings of historians, also this period stands out clearly.

The following two periods are more difficult to separate. Bismarck's policy had a universalist coloring, where the definition of Germany's interest was not equated with the expansion of the Reich, but rather the establishment of a workable relationship, cementing what had already been gained. Germany, then, was a central force in this attempt at universalist construction. Following the downfall of Bismarck, and the rise of a more daring political leadership in Germany, the situation changed during the 1890s. The exact dating might be hard to pinpoint, but the difference is there.

Here it has been set as 1895, but that is an approximation. It should be noted that also other, non-European countries, at this time, began to pursue particularistic interests (United States and Japan).

The organization created after the First World War was a more conscious attempt to work out constructive relations among the majors, this time centering on France and Britain. However, the universalism was incomplete, a great number of countries were not involved or supportive of these attempts, and with Hitler's taking of power in 1933, the arrangement rapidly fell apart. Finally, following the Second World War, the alliance between the victors, containing a potential for universalist relations, was quickly changed into a severe confrontation. Not until after the Cuban missile crisis did a period of more constructive relations emerge.

This means that our analysis will concentrate on eight periods, four of each type. It is interesting to note, from Table I, that there is more consensus among historians on the labelling of periods of universalism. The particularist periods are not dominated by one overarching ambition, and consequently, the naming becomes problematic. There is, however, one exception to that, the period 1945-1962. The bipolarization of the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union has given it one customary label. Universalism in this bipolar world has, however, attracted two different conceptions, suggesting that there might, at this time, be more

Table II. Wars and Military Confrontations Involving Major Powers, in Universalist and Particularist Periods, 1816-1976.

	Universalist Periods	Particularist Periods
Major-Major Wars	0	10
Major-Minor Wars	10	16
Major-Major Confrontations	24	49
Major-Minor Confrontations	72	84
Length, Years	86	74
Average no. of Wars and Confrontation per year	1.2	2.1
Wars to Confrontations, ratio	1:9.6	1:5.1

Source: Wars: Small & Singer (1982). Military Confrontations: Data from the Correlates of War project, 1980.

agreement about conflict than about collaboration.

The fact that the periods in general appear to become shorter, and that the universalist periods are smaller relative to the particularist ones, might be indicative of a general rise in confrontation among major powers. The development of conflict behavior in the different periods can be seen more closely in Table II.

Table II shows a different pattern for the two sets of policies. There are no major-major wars reported in the periods of universalism, whereas all the major-major wars are to be found in periods of particularism. This observation should be treated cautiously, however, as it could be affected by the labelling. Historians might be quicker to find an orderly pattern in periods without major power wars, and thus we would face a tautology. It might, however, also suggest that universalist policies are successful, at least with respect to major power relations. As the ambition is to develop constructive relations, and as a dominant group among the majors agree on this, major power war could be avoided. An indication is that no periods of universalism end with the outbreak of a major power war. Rather, such wars come way into a period of particularism.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, it could be noted in Table II that there is some conflict behavior recorded in all other categories. One third of all major power confrontations have taken place in periods of universalism. This might mean that such periods have witnessed a somewhat greater ability to cope with confrontation than have

periods of particularism: none escalated into a major war. With respect to major-minor confrontations, fewer escalated into war in periods of universalism than in periods of particularism. The ratio of wars to confrontation (a rough measure of escalation) for all categories shows a lower frequency of war per confrontation in periods of universalism. This reinforces, although does not prove, the thesis that major power policies have a significant bearing on the chances for war. If such relations are couched in a cooperative, constructive fashion, the danger of war might decrease.

Many of the typical structural traits that often are pointed to in order to explain differences will not help in discriminating between these periods; often the same countries found themselves involved in both. The five states making up the Concert of Europe are also those involved in the following, more tumultuous period. Similarly, the countries setting up the League in 1919 are also those confronted with German challenges in the 1930s. The actors of the global competition after World War II, from 1963 onward, attempted to work out an orderly relationship. Thus, it appears more promising to relate such changes to short-term variations rather than to lasting properties of the global system.

Let us only note that as none of the four periods of universalism have lasted, but all have been transformed into periods of particularism, the inadequacies of the policies pursued need to be specified. The shifts and changes obviously give food for thought to the pessimist as well as to the optimist: no period of universalism has lasted, but neither has a period of particularism.

### 3. *Universalism and particularism in practice*

The strongly different outcomes of periods of universalism and particularism make a closer scrutiny important. Thus, we ask what the differences in policy consist of. The eight periods of major power relations differ from one another in many ways. The economic conditions, the reach of weapons, the speed of communication, the ideological framework have greatly changed over time. Thus, the periods are comparable in some respects but not in others. A comparison over time becomes less comprehensive the longer the time span applied. In this case, it means that considerable detail is lost in the search for general phenomena. Still, a general observation, such as the shifts in the predominant pattern of policy, could be expected to be associated with a general explanation. In this light we attempt to search for discriminating patterns of policies in some admittedly limited, but still crucial areas.

First, Table II suggests a difference in symmetric and asymmetric relations: major powers might approach one another differently from how they approach non-majors at the same time. Thus, we will compare the experiences of universalism and particularism in both these relationships. Second, the analysis employs a framework of four sets of policy, introduced in earlier work: *Geopolitik*, *Realpolitik*, *Idealpolitik* and *Kapitalpolitik*.<sup>5</sup> *Geopolitik* is, in particular, concerned with the geographical conditions: contiguity and ways to handle contiguity, as well as control over distant (from the point of view of core countries) territories. *Realpolitik* emphasizes military capability, arms build-up of particular countries and the formation of alliances. *Idealpolitik* concerns the handling of nationalistic or ideological disputes, ranging from messianism to neutrality with respect to such issues, whereas *Kapitalpolitik* refers to the economic capabilities and interactions among states.

The difference between the two patterns in *Geopolitik* terms can be seen in the different policies pursued in the 'core' areas, in territories particularly close or militarily significant to

the major powers. During several periods of universalism, conscious attempts were made to separate the parties geographically, thus attempting to reduce the fear of attack or the danger of provocation. The creation of buffer zones was a particularly pronounced effort, for instance, in relation to France after 1814 or Germany after 1918. In times of particularism, policies were reversed: the buffer zones were perceived as dangerous areas of 'vacuum', making majors compete for control. Examples are the Prussian expansion into Central Europe in the 1850s and the 1860s and Germany's invasion of demilitarized zones or neighboring countries during the 1930s. Also, following the Second World War, the United States as well as the Soviet Union tried to secure as much territory as possible before and after the German and Japanese capitulations. Indeed, in the 1945-1962 period, 'free' territory was equally disliked on both sides, neither being willing to accept neutrality or neutralism, for instance. In the periods 1870-1895 and 1963-1975 such basic arrangements were left intact, keeping the parties at close geographical confrontation, but at the same time other measures were instituted to somewhat reduce the fear of attack from the opponent (e.g. confidence-building measures in the latter period). Compared to earlier experiences of universalism, these periods saw less of such attempts, however.<sup>6</sup>

Looking at the major-minor relations, the patterns are less clear-cut. Although the expectation might be for 'softer' attitudes during periods of universalism, this appears not to be born out. Rather, during periods of universalism, major powers tried to establish or extend control, as in periods of particularism. Perhaps there is a discernable trend of greater major power collaboration during the former than during the latter. Thus, the colonization of Africa took place largely during a period of universalism, and partly this process was mutually agreed on by the major powers themselves (notably the Berlin Congress in 1884-1885). Similarly, British and French control were extended into Arab countries during such periods, during the 1880s as well

as in the 1920s. It is, furthermore, interesting to observe that the decolonization process was initiated during a period of confrontation between the major powers. The peak year of African independence, 1960, coincided with particularly tense times in American-Soviet relations (e.g. the aborted Paris summit meeting and the U-2 affair).

*Realpolitik* concerns itself with military power and alliance patterns. In periods of universalism, we would expect less emphasis to be put on military armaments, while greater efforts would go into diplomatic means to work out major power relations. Studying the four periods, this is clearly true for three, but not for the fourth one (1963-1976). Conversely, the periods of particularist policies would exhibit a more rapid arms build-up among the majors. Again, this is true for three out of four periods, the exception being the 1849-1870 period. Partly, this might reflect an important inter-century difference: during the 19th century, the institutionalized pressures for arms build-up did not exist to the same degree that has been true for the 20th century. With respect to the nuclear age, the patterns are somewhat surprising. In terms of military expenditures, the increase seems less striking during the 1950s than during the 1960s or 1970s, for the United States and the Soviet Union. In terms of the amassing of nuclear arsenals, however, there is a continuous increase for both sides.<sup>7</sup> Again, the 1963-1976 period does not follow the pattern of previous universalist periods.

Most periods of universalism seem associated with a loose alliance system. The exception is the 1963-1976 period, but also in this period there are some elements of a loosening-up of the system (notably the withdrawal of France from military cooperation in NATO, and Rumania taking a special position within the Warsaw Pact). However, also particularism could go well with a loose alliance pattern, as alliances might restrain rather than give freedom to a given actor. Three periods of particularism showed fairly tight alliance patterns, but in one of these (1933-1945) not all powers were involved in the alliance con-

figurations. In one, the 1849-1870 period, loose alliances served the particularist ambitions well.

There is an interesting trade off between alliance patterns and arms build-up. In a sense, one reason for entering into an alliance is to reduce the need for armaments. In this way, a major power can increase its military strength, at a lower cost and at a faster rate than otherwise would have been possible. This, then, favors the emergence of loose alliance patterns, and thus makes it plausible that universalism as well as particularism might be associated with such a pattern. On the other hand, if the alliances are closely knit, and the option of withdrawing or switching is not available, the only way to increase the strength for a given actor and for the alliance as a whole is through arms build-ups. Thus, in bipolarized situations with 'permanent' alliances, arms races become a more likely outcome. The few examples available of such situations indeed suggest this to be the case (1895-1918, 1933-1945 and the post-1945 periods).

Armaments and alliance patterns largely concern the relations between major powers. We would expect *Realpolitik* policies in major-minor relations to be less different for the two patterns. Thus, it is noteworthy that, in Table II above, universalist periods have also been periods of extensive major power involvement in major-minor disputes. If we take into account the length of the periods and the number of majors, we find that the majors, in fact, during such periods are heavily concerned with minors.

With respect to *Idealpolitik*, universalist policies would be less chauvinistic and less messianic among majors than particularism. Earlier it has been demonstrated that *Idealpolitik* contradictions correlate with wars and confrontations among major powers for the entire epoch (Wallensteen 1981), but we now expect a pattern of shifting periods. It is probably enough to have one major displaying messianism in a given period to upset all relations. This expectation is well borne out: the four universalist periods show very little of either of these types of *Idealpolitik*, whereas,

in each of the four particularist periods, there was at least one major power pursuing such a policy. Chauvinism certainly was part of the German unification policy during Bismarck, as was French renaissance during Napoleon III, both appearing in the same 1849-1870 period. The policies of Wilhelm II and of Hitler are typical examples. In the 1945-1962 period too there was a strong element of messianism, for very different reasons than previous ones, in Soviet as well as American postures.

In their relations to minor powers, the majors have often been less constrained, also in times of universalism. Thus, in the Concert of Europe period, majors did not hesitate to intervene against changes in minor countries going against the convictions held by the major. In the 1870-1895 period, this might have been less marked, as this to a large degree was a period of parallel nationalism, as well as in the period of the League of Nations. In the detente period, however, the reluctance among the majors to accept dissent within areas of their domination has drawn increasing tension, also among the majors. Thus, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia significantly affected the formulation of detente policies. The American warfare in Vietnam seems to have slowed down the pace of collaboration between the two superpowers. Thus, a policy of coexistence between the majors also might require the acceptance of coexistence between different social forms in major-minor relations.

As to *Kapitalpolitik* patterns, there are some interesting divergencies, necessitating a lengthier discussion. Universalism would here refer to a policy that attempts to be more inclusive, such as setting up of a joint international regime for economic affairs, or extending trade, investment or capital flows in an equitable way among the major powers. Particularist policies, on the contrary, would be those that aim at self-reliance, autarchy or exclusion from ties with other countries. Taken in this way, there seems to be little relationship between the universalist policies described previously and economic relations. Thus, in the period of the European Concert,

introvert policies or policies of exclusion seem to have been the predominant pattern. Free trade actually cannot be dated until the end of this very period, with the repeal of the Corn Laws in Britain in 1846. The following period, then, is one of a more ambitious attempt at spreading international trade, pressing for free trade. An important breakthrough was the Anglo-French Treaty of 1860, during a period which, in terms of other affairs, is most appropriately described as a particularist one. Prussia and the German Customs Union followed in this period, to return to high tariff policies only in the next period, in 1879. Thus, this universalist period is characterized by a retreat from free trade, rather than the reverse (Kindleberger 1978).

In the period of particularism leading to the First World War, the growth of international trade was strong, but it appears that it also to a larger degree took place within the colonial empires (Kindleberger 1964). Thus, in this period, there might have been a closer correspondence with particularism. The same is true for the post-World War I periods, the universalist period being one of increasing international interdependence, followed after the Great Depression with increasing attempts at withdrawing from the international economic exchanges.

Also, in the post-1945 periods, there is a correspondence between the economic policies and other policies. Thus, for the first, particularist period, the West clearly expanded free trade within its area, but consciously tried to exclude the Soviet bloc from trade (e.g. the strategic embargo). Such policies were partially reversed with the onset of detente, symbolized by the first major grain deal between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1963. In US-Soviet as well as in West European-East European relations, the development of economic relations was strongly favored by the political leadership.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, we find that in several of the periods there has been a close correspondence between increasing economic interaction and universalism, but that this is perhaps more pronounced for the periods after 1895 than before. In

Table III. Typical Policies in Periods of Universalism and Particularism, 1816-1976.

	Universalism	Particularism
Geopolitik	Buffer zones (not 1871-1895, 1963-1976)	Elimination of vacuum
Realpolitik	Caution in vital areas Loose alliances (not 1963-1976?) Slow arms build-up (not 1963-1976)	Boldness in vital areas Solid alliances (not 1849-1870) Rapid arms build-up (not 1849-1870)
Idealpolitik	Coexistence among majors	Messianism also among majors
Kapitalpolitik	Extension of relations among majors (not 1816-1848, 1871-1895)	Seclusion for majors or major blocs (not 1849-1870)

Periods are the unit of analysis. In parenthesis: periods departing from the overall pattern. Few systematic differences concern direct major-minor relations.

periods of particularism, however, policies of economic bloc-building or economic autarchy have been preferred. The closer correspondence between these sets of policies in the 20th century might suggest closer coordination of international interaction than previously was the case. Political-strategic conditions seem increasingly to have colored economic relationship.

Table III shows that the policies pursued in different areas have been designed to support one another, and on the whole, few contradictions or inconsistencies are to be reported. Thus, periods of universalism have generally involved attempts at separation of majors through buffer zone arrangements or self-imposed restraint in vital areas. Predominantly a pattern of slow arms build-ups and loose alliances has been pursued. Ideologically, a policy of coexistence has prevailed and economically, trade has been extended among the dominant countries. Taken together, this means that the concept of 'universalism' summarizes consistent efforts among many major powers, working in the same direction of building constructive and multi-dimensional relations. We have already observed, in Table II, that in such periods the incidence of war and confrontation among major powers is lower.

The patterns displayed in periods of particularism are in sharp contrast. Buffer zone arrangements have been overturned, less restraint has been exhibited in vital areas,

rapid arms build-ups have occurred and solid, internationally binding alliances have been formed. Among at least some of the majors, messianism/chauvinism has been prevalent, and trade has been used as an instrument for coercion or exclusion. Again this is a pattern of internally consistent policies, all reinforcing the underlying conflict between major powers. Indeed, as we have already noted, periods of particularism are also periods with major power wars and military confrontations.

However, there are some notable inconsistencies in these patterns. Most exceptional is the 1849-1870 period: in several ways it had traits also typical for the periods immediately preceding or succeeding: loose alliance structures and little arms build-up, apart from the time immediately before a major war. Thus, in these respects, there is considerable intra-19th century similarity. Also, with respect to economic relations, this period was one of free trade becoming more acceptable as a general policy, and countries, in most other respects aiming at their own self-aggrandizement, embraced the concept. This, then, is in contrast to the other 19th century periods, which both were, for a considerable extent of time, markedly inner- or intra-bloc-oriented.

For the 20th century the inconsistencies are few but still obvious. First, the 1933-1944 period showed less solidification of opposing blocs than could be expected. Secondly, the



period 1963-1976 saw a notable lack of the loosening of blocs that previously had been associated with universalist patterns, and most markedly, a failure to curtail the arms build-up and accept internal dissent.

Looking over the entire period, most of these inconsistencies refer to the Realpolitik domain; the alliances and the armaments do not correspond with the message from other policies. In Geopolitik terms, the consistency is fairly complete (with some exceptions as to buffer zone policies), as is also the case for Idealpolitik, and Kapitalpolitik (with the exceptions of the 19th century pointed to). In one period the Realpolitik divergence goes in a universalist direction, perhaps influencing the major wars of the period to become shorter (1849-1870). In another period the outcome might well have been the reverse, meaning the abandoning of universalist policies altogether (1963-1976).

Consistency would, in particular, have the effect of reducing uncertainty among the major powers. Given that these powers have a fairly uniform understanding of the dimensions involved, consistency would reinforce a given message. Thus, at times some inconsistency might have been less important, notably the lack of correspondence of Kapitalpolitik policies with other elements in the 19th century. In the 20th century, however, Kapitalpolitik might have been more important. With such an understanding it becomes clear that all universalist periods are highly internally consistent, with one exception, 1963-1976. Also, on the whole, all the 20th century particularist periods are highly consistent. Of the latter, two ended in world wars, and one in a crisis that might well have resulted in the third one.

Inconsistency could give rise to a demand for change, consistency being a more preferable condition. Thus, a given period could change into its opposite. But change would also have other roots and to these we now turn.

#### 4. From Universalism to particularism, and vice-versa

Although the universalist policies have largely

been consistent and not resulted in major war, they were all abandoned. Obviously, the policies pursued were not satisfactory to all involved. This means that they were built on a foundation that was solid enough for a certain period of time, but not solid enough to handle particular changes.

Also the conditions that brought about the universalist periods in the first place should be considered, as this might suggest the outer limits of the policies. Thus, there are two particular points of change that need to be scrutinized: the change from universalism to particularism and changes in the opposite direction.

Such changes could be sought in three particular areas:

1. Changes among the majors: the composition of their relationships, relative capabilities, but also inconsistency in policy.
2. Changes involving the minors: their direct relations to the majors, degree of independence, etc.
3. Internal changes in the different actors, notably in the majors: revolutions, change of perspectives.

Altogether, there are six shifts to consider, three in each direction. In all cases, the years of change have been identified and factors mentioned by historians as influential have been collected. Some typical variables are presented in Table IV.

Although Table IV indicates dates for changes, such dates of course are but symbolic; changes are always the result of long-term trends. Some of the changes, consequently, are harder to locate exactly in time. However, dates are important for understanding change; their symbolic value is highly educational.

First, the transformation from *universalism* to *particularism* is comparatively non-violent; there are some wars recorded, but no sharp change is evident in the power relationships between the leading actors. The wars at the time were those of major powers solidifying their position by attacking minors (e.g. Prussia on Denmark, Japan on China, the United States on Spain), but such wars are hardly novel or directly related to the shifts. More interesting,

Table IV. Factors Affecting Change in Policy Pattern

	From Universalism to Particularism	From Particularism to Universalism
Identified Timepoints of change	1848/1849, 1895/1896 1932/1933	1870/1871, 1918/1919 1962/1963
Geopolitik	End of expansionism in 1895/1896	Territorial redistribution 1870/1871, 1918/1919
Realpolitik	Entrance new actors 1895/1896	Defeat in War 1870/1871, 1918/1919
Idealpolitik	New alliances 1895/1896 Internal revolution 1848/1849, 1932/1933	Close to War 1962/1963 Revolutions 1870/1871, 1918/1919
Kapitalpolitik	Internal change 1895/1896 Economic crisis 1932/1933	Economic turmoil following war 1918/1919

and more frequently emphasized by historians, are the internal changes within major powers. The revolutions in France, Austria and Germany are related to the breakdown of the existing order. In the first two cases, revolution brought back a Napoleon and brought down a Metternich, in the third case it overthrew the Weimar Republic and created the Third Reich. These changes were not ordinary domestic shifts of power, as the internal orders were integral parts of the entire international arrangement at the time. Consequently, these revolutions were as much challenges to predominant universalism as to the internal order. With Louis Philippe and the Weimar Republic removed, not only were symbols of the previous order replaced, but something more fundamental had changed; the role of these countries as majors were redefined. The shifts in 1848/1849 and 1932/1933 could both be seen this way.

The third change away from universalism is more difficult to analyse. The shifts around the turn of the century resulting in the confrontation patterns leading to World War I were more gradual. There is no particular revolution to point to. Instead factors such as the removal of Bismarck from power in Germany, the realignment among European powers, the decreasing number of territories available to territory-seeking European countries and the emergence of non-European major states seem important.

However, the parallel between the changes in 1848/1849 and those of 1932/1933 might still permit a more general conclusion; the revolutionary changes were related to economic crisis, uneven development of industry, unemployment, and, thus, to protest and radicalism ('leftist' as well as 'rightist', and in both situations 'rightists' coming out on the top). The regimes that were overthrown were closely identified with the previous 'world order' either in personal capacity or in (close to) legal terms. This close association between the internal and international arrangement led to the downfall of both.

Possibly, we can specify a chain of events that is potentially very destabilizing for a given international arrangement; economic mismanagement and reduced popular support for a regime whose role is highly significant for universalist policies will endanger not only these regimes, but, very likely, also upset the entire policy. In other words, a weakness of these universalist policies might have been their excessive reliance on the maintenance of a particular order in particular countries. The policies were, in a sense, not adaptive enough to handle the internal changes of leading and crucial states. Indeed, the policies of appeasement, pursued during the 1930s, rested on the assumption that adaptation was possible, and that, at a given moment, Germany's ambitions could be satisfied, preserving most of the League arrangement.

The challenge to the entire Versailles construction was only understood at a very late moment. Such a policy of adaptation is, in other words, not likely to be successful if/when the entire international arrangement is the matter of dispute. The only alternative might be a policy of 'pre-emptive' adaptation to defuse tensions when they are still latent. However, to change an already existing arrangement before it has become an issue will mostly not have sufficient political support. Politics seem to require much more concrete signals of warnings.

The changes in the mid-1890s followed a slightly different logic. There were no internal revolutions, but the interaction between inter-state relations and internal politics was still there. The removal of Bismarck suggested that Germany's role in the world could be seen in a different light by Germany as well as by others, notably Russia. The rapid colonization meant that there were fewer distant territories to struggle for. Together these factors might have contributed to making Germany take a stronger, less compromising stand.<sup>10</sup>

Turning to the transformation from *particularism to universalism*, we find more violent change, and at that, among the majors themselves. Two of the shifts are multi-dimensional, and relate to two major wars: 1870/1871 and 1918/1919. These changes are, however, not ordinary major power defeats; the era investigated has seen a number of such defeats (e.g. Russia in the Crimean war or in the Russo-Japanese war). In addition they involved considerable internal changes. New regimes and new constitutions were developed in France and Germany, respectively. The new orders created were not simply rearrangements of inter-state relations. Rather, the three universalist periods following a major war (including, for the sake of the argument, 1814, as well as 1871 and 1919) are parallel; they aimed not only at containing a given major power but also at reducing the perceived threat of certain types of internal policies. Thus, universalism became linked to particular regimes. In post-Napoleonic France, as well

as in the Weimar Republic, these new regimes became identified with the defeat. This seems, however, not to have been the case for the post-1871 Third Republic.

As was the case with transformations away from universalism, there is one case which is less clear-cut. It is comparable to the 1895/1896 shift but the direction is the opposite one: 1962/1963. There can be no doubt that the policy of detente, introduced in the immediate aftermath of the 1962 nuclear confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, reflected a fear of a nuclear war between the two. Also, at this time, increased attention was given to Third World problems (the United States becoming increasingly involved in the Vietnam war, the Soviet Union extending support to liberation movements throughout the Third World). The process of decolonization created a new area for the leading majors, the year 1960 and the Congo crisis being symbolic. Thus, the universalism introduced and pursued until the end of the 1970s seems to have had a double origin: fear of nuclear war and focus on Third World activities.

This means that the policy of detente had a different origin than the other universalist policies encountered in this analysis; it was not a matter of victors setting up a system to be preserved against others, but rather of the competitors trying to preserve themselves against a possible catastrophe. Nuclear weapons, in other words, changed the dynamics of relations between the major powers. In one sense, this was a profound change; it meant that anticipation of devastation was brought into the calculations before devastation actually took place. In another sense, it was less profound; the consensus among the majors was less developed than was the case in earlier universalist periods. An argument could still be made in favor of confrontation, brinkmanship, in order to continue the battle between the majors. Unlike the other situations, there was no reordering of priorities; rather a policy of caution succeeded a policy of boldness. In this vein, the shift in 1962/1963 is comparable to the one of 1895/1896: no change in basic

goals or basic perception of incompatibility, but a change in the means to be used. Wilhelm II grasped for vigor, Kennedy/Khrushchev for caution; Wilhelm was in a hurry to arrive at final victory, Kennedy/Khrushchev settled down to wait for the ultimate collapse of the other, either from internal contradictions or from changes in global relationships.

In 1895/1896 the lack of 'empty' territory meant that the conflict had to be pursued in more vital (to the majors) areas, in 1962/1963 the 'opening up' of new territory through decolonization meant that the same conflict could be pursued in less vital areas. Either way, the armament build-up received new stimuli.

This, in other words, suggests a possible link between 'central' and 'peripheral' areas, the one replacing the other as a forum for continued confrontation between major powers having defined themselves in incompatibility with one another. In general terms, such incompatibilities can either end in major wars (as indeed has been the outcome for two periods of particularism, as shown above) or internal revolutions (as indeed has been the outcome for two periods of universalism), or in a continuous shift between 'arenas' of competition, as long as such arenas exist (as happened in the two remaining transformations). In the latter case, this means that 'peripheral' areas are 'outlets' for major powers, striving to gain a leverage on the other, but hoping to manage this without a direct onslaught.

A final note: 1976 is here, as a matter of convenience and availability of data, regarded as the ending of one universalist period. In retrospect, it appears correct to suggest that detente gradually thinned out beginning at approximately this time, culminating with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. Seen in this light, it is interesting to relate some of our previous findings to this development. Neither in terms of *Idealpolitik* nor *Kapitalpolitik* are there any important changes among or within the major powers. In *Realpolitik* terms there are some changes: a new actor entering more

actively, China, during these years of transition forming new relations with the West. Also, there is a set of new challenges emerging from the Third World: the oil crisis and rising Islamic fundamentalism, the latter resulting in confrontation with both superpowers (in Iran and Afghanistan, respectively). A criterion for success for detente might have been the ability of the United States and the Soviet Union to win Third World support, but these developments were set-backs, for both. Thus, there is a parallel between this transition and the one in 1895/1896. Failure in promoting success in distant areas (from the point of view of the major powers) tends to result in increasing tension in the central arena. To this, then, should be added the obvious inconsistencies in the policies of detente, pointed to in the previous section, primarily the failure to control the arms race.

##### 5. *Limits of major power universalism*

Major powers have continuously tried to work out constructive relations among themselves. Such attempts have, in some periods, lasted for a considerable period of time. The record suggests that the pursuit of such universalist policies is associated with fewer wars and confrontations in general and among the major powers in particular. Such policies have served at the same time to maintain the independence of the majors and reduce the dangers of war among them. Invariably, however, they have been superseded by periods of particularism, when one or several of the majors have embarked on policies advancing the particular interest, rather than the joint interest of all. Such periods are associated with higher levels of war and confrontations among the majors. In several instances they have resulted in the dismemberment or defeat of one or several of the majors. Invariably, such periods have been followed by universalist policies.

Looking at the four concerted attempts of universalism in the 1816-1976 period, they display some discernable common traits.

First, they have been arrangements worked out among *major powers, normally the victors* in a previous war: the Concert of Europe,

Bismarck's order and the League of Nations all followed immediately on major wars. Thus, they represented attempts by the victors to handle their victory, to avoid the reemergence of threat from the losers. The detente period differs, but in some respect it could be seen as a belated attempt among the victors to agree on a set of relations, in particular for Europe. More directly, however, it attempted to stabilize the relations between the majors themselves in the face of a mutual nuclear threat. The three first examples of universalist policies, consequently, built on a much more developed common interest than did the period of detente. In the former situations, the victors had a clear actor to worry about, in the latter case, the fear came primarily from the other party or from the general threat of nuclear war. There was, consequently, less of an incentive to solve conflict in the latter case. The focus was more on avoiding escalation than on conflict settlement.

Second, all these arrangements have been *conservative* as they have tried to stabilize the status quo: maintaining the major powers as majors, keeping the existing power relationships among them and upholding the distance to non-majors. In the face of challenges, the policy has been one of adaptation, trying to make the challenges fit within the existing framework, rather than substantially alter the framework itself. The duration of some of the periods of universalism indicates that this sometimes has been possible: confrontations among majors have been resolved without escalation to war. However, the conservative nature obviously has some short-comings, as there are many challenges which are less easily accommodated.

Thirdly, the *consistency across several dimensions* of policy have been marked for most of the periods, except most notably for the detente period. This internal consistency might well have contributed to reducing uncertainty and thus to make actions and reactions more predictable. Such more predictable relations, it could be argued, would reduce the emergence of conflict in the first place. An indication of this is that

the number of wars and confrontations with major powers involved per year is much lower for the periods of consistent universalism than for the period of detente.<sup>11</sup>

Fourthly, all universalist periods witnessed a shift in focus away from direct major-major confrontations in central areas to a *preoccupation with major-minor relations*. Most markedly this is true for the Concert of Europe, Bismarckian and detente periods. This diversion of attention could deflect some of the tension in the central areas and point to common interests in other areas. Inevitably, however, it means that the universalist policies become dependent on the degree of success in that field, resulting in interventionism. For both the Bismarckian and detente period, frustrations in these respects seem to have made the powers turn to the central area again. If that is where the origin of conflict is, this can be seen as logic within this framework. In both these cases it resulted in an intensification of arms build-ups and increasingly unpredictable major power relations.

Fifth, the universalist policies have not simply been an arrangement built among states. There has also been a *significant internal component* to them. In the cases where victors worked out an order for the post-war period, new regimes have been installed in the defeated countries. These regimes have been the ultimate guarantors of the new order, meaning that the orders become vulnerable to the efficacy of these regimes. Internal change in such countries becomes directly relevant to international relations. Thus, French reconstruction in 1815 and the German Weimar Republic had to carry a double burden of confirming the defeat and reconstructing their countries. In the end neither succeeded. Most notable, however, is the fact that the Third Republic was not, in the same way, identified with the war defeat. In somewhat the same way, the new German governments after 1949 have been absolved of the misdeeds of their predecessors.<sup>12</sup>

Major power universalism has been highly constrained. Most markedly this appears true for the most recent attempt, the period of

detente. It could not build on the power of united victors, it failed to be consistent across significant dimensions and ultimately internal inconsistencies brought it down. The question, then, arises if there is an alternative to such universalist policies.

This analysis suggests some principles for an alternative form of universalism, making it possible to break out of some of the historically observed constraints:

- a greater involvement of non-major powers in questions of world peace and security,
- a greater openness, on the part of the major powers, to change in non-major countries and in relations among states,
- a greater consistency in major power relations, particularly in the fields of disengagement, disarmament and consensus,
- a greater restraint on permissible behavior of major powers in Third World conflicts,
- a greater domestic accountability for the foreign policies of major powers,
- and breaking out of the framework:
- a greater reliance on non-governmental organizations.

These principles would serve to make universalism truly universal, not simply the universalism of major powers.

## NOTES

1. Universalism and particularism as defined by Parsons focuses on norms rather than actions. Still the concepts are useful as they point to the general rather than the specific as the center of attention. (See Parsons & Shils 1951, p. 82).
2. Most definitions of world order are multi-dimensional. Falk & Mendlovitz find world order to be the answer to questions of worldwide economic welfare, social justice, ecological stability as well as to reduction of international violence. (See Falk & Mendlovitz 1973, p. 6.) A broad and most stimulating contribution is Falk (1975). Hoffman (1980, p. 188) also gives a very broad definition of the concept of world order, as a state in which violence and economic disruptions have been 'tamed', 'moderation' has emerged, economies progress and collective institutions act. The concept of Common Security, introduced in the so-called Palme Commission, involved a conception similar to the one of Hoffmann. (See *Common Security*, 1982.)
3. Thus we attempt to describe dominant traits in the major power relations during these periods. A most interesting contribution in the same direction is Rosecrance (1963). Recently, the interest in long waves has resulted in similar generalizations for particular periods, mostly focusing economic variables. A contribution pertinent to the present discussion is Väyrynen (1983).
4. Such wars have come at earliest in the sixth year of particularist policy: the Crimean War in 1854, the Russo-Japanese War in 1938 (Changkuofeng War) and the Korean War in 1950, all within this range, the Russo-Japanese war of 1904 being somewhat later. This list, furthermore, suggests that such first major-major wars occur in areas fairly distant from the main major power area of contention (at all these times being Europe). For data, see Small & Singer (1982).
5. This distinction, built on the basic arguments in different schools of thinking, is elaborated in Wallensteen (1981).
6. The lack of disengagement in German-French relations following the war of 1871 is often pointed to by historians. The annexation of Alsace-Lorraine became a humiliating experience for the French, although the military value of the area to either party could be disputed. Thus, no buffers were created between the two, making the relations tense. A result of this was the War Scare of 1875. See Kennan (1979, pp. 11-23). For a general discussion, see Patem (1983).
7. For an overview of the development of arms expenditure for these periods, see Nincic (1982). For an overview of the nuclear arsenals, drawn from several sources, see Botnen (1982) and SIPRI (1983). The total nuclear arsenals are estimated at 1000 in 1952, 23,500 in 1960, 35,500 in 1970 and 48,800 in 1975.
9. Reporting to the US Congress on his visit to Moscow in 1972 Nixon summarized this policy as one of 'creating a momentum of achievement in which progress in one area could contribute to progress in others', and 'when the two largest economies in the world start trading with each other on a much larger scale, living standards in both nations will rise, and the stake which both have in peace will increase'. Cooperation in space exploration was also part of this, resulting in a joint orbital mission in 1975. See 'Address by President Nixon to a Joint Session of the Congress', June 1, 1972 in Stebbins & Adams (1976, pp. 80-81). The resulting space mission was in 1975 hailed by *Le Canard Enchaîné*: Vive La Coexistence Espacifique!
10. Such links form some of the conclusions in Choucri & North (1975, ch. 16). On the significance of Bismarck's departure, see Kennan, op.cit.

11. The average annual major power involvement in war or confrontation is, for 1816-1848 1.0, for 1871-1895 0.9, for 1919-1932 1.7 and for 1963-1976 2.2. The latter figure actually puts the detente period parallel to some of the particularist periods, notably the 1896-1918 period with 2.3 and 1933-1944 with 2.2.
12. The significance of the German question is given an extensive and interesting treatment in DePorte (1979).

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