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Great Power Politics Among Asante and its Neighbours in the 18th and 19th Centuries: An Offensive Realist Explanation

by

Valerie Anne Yankey-Wayne

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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Abstract

Pre-colonial African history has been excluded from realists' analysis of great power politics because they consider Africa to have had no significant history of influence before the World Wars. This thesis seeks to determine whether a pre-colonial African states system was equivalent to the European model, and whether the same factors influenced security competition and the motivation to maximize military power. The thesis answers the above assertion by testing Mearsheimer's offensive realism's central proposition—'maximizing military power with the ultimate aim of becoming a hegemon is the logical solution in an anarchic environment'—against the international relations of Asante and its neighbors in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Although both Africanists and realists may reject the application of offensive realism to pre-colonial African history, there is evidence to suggest that this maybe a viable argument. The Asante case, just like Mearsheimer's great power politics of Europe, was characterized by the lack of higher authority, which generated a climate of uncertainty that manifested itself through maximization of military power, formation of alliances and wars. The African polities' drive to maximize their military power arguably made the concept of 'balance of power' unworkable, in the sense that almost all the polities in the system were prepared to use military power to achieve their objectives, and this made wars more frequent. In this case, whereas Asante used military aggression to aspire for hegemony, its neighbors rather used military aggression to defend their status quo, that is, their control of the trade routes.

Mearsheimer's theory was useful in explaining how structural factors such as anarchy and the distribution of military power strongly shaped the behavior of the polities of the Asante case, but it has little to say about why Asante, a revisionist state was revisionist. Furthermore, although Mearsheimer introduces the argument that nationalism, a sub-unit factor can directly influence structural factors, it may benefit realism to build on Mearsheimer's theory by looking into non-Western ways of thinking, which incorporates non-structural factors like collective identity (glorification of the nation) and regime (personal) power into their understanding of great power politics and revisionism.

Acknowledgements

Not all those who wander are lost;

The old that is strong does not wither,

Deep roots are not reached by the frost.

From the ashes a fire shall be woken,

A light from the shadows shall spring;

Renewed shall be blade that was broken.

J. R. R. Tolkien

I wandered so far afield but still managed to complete the task with the support of my Supervisory Committee: Dr. Robert Neil Huebert, Dr. John Robert Ferris, Dr. Maureen Sharon Hiebert, and Dr. James Francis Keeley. I owe all four of them a debt that I cannot repay, in part for their sound advice but mostly for taking a chance on me. I am particularly indebted to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Huebert for the confidence he inspired in me, and his unwavering support and encouragement throughout my PhD journey.

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Chapter 1: Rationale for the Study

1.1. Introduction

This thesis is a response to the lack of significant academic inquiry into great power politics of pre-colonial Africa within the realist school of thought. Generally, great power politics roughly fall within the broader field of political science (Carr, 1964; Clark, 2011; Destradi, 2010; Williams, Lobell, & Jesse, 2012; Levy & Thompson, 2005; Mearsheimer, 2001; Morgenthau, 1956; Posen, 1984; Vasquez & Elman, 2003; Waltz, 1979, 2002; Zakaria, 1998). To most proponents of realism (International Relations), great power politics are largely determined by material capabilities, especially, how military capability is used by the principal actors of the system to influence outcomes at the international level (Carr, 1964, p. 109; Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 55-56; Morgenthau, 1956, p. 9; Waltz, 1979, 1990). Essentially, great powers need military power to remain great powers.

Meanwhile, other scholarly approaches take a broader view of power than simply military capability. Some broaden their analyses to include how lesser powers balance against a threatening hegemon (Williams, Lobell, & Jesse, 2012; Rapkin, 1990). Some scholars focus on how a mix of material, immaterial, subunit and unit factors create hegemonic power (Ikenberry & Kupchan, 1990; James & Lake, 1989; Gill, 2009; Ikenberry 1989; Hogan 1987), while other political scientists look into how emerging regional powers shape the regional order (Destradi, 2010; Acharya, 2007; Osterud, 1992; Prys, 2009, 2010; Flemes, 2010; Alden & Marco, 2005; Hurrell 1992, 1995, 2005).

Military analysis is, however, central to realist's debate on great power politics. For this reason, any historical data that lacks credible military content will not be useful for realism's analysis of great power politics. Pre-colonial African politics has, therefore, not received the academic rigor it deserves in realism's analysis of great power politics because of a lack of statistical data on its military history comparable to that used for the analysis of European great power politics (Lamphear, 2007). It is presumed by realism that pre-colonial Africa has no reliable military history (Morgenthau & Thompson, 1985, p. 369). The statistical data on pre-colonial Asante (an African Empire) and its neighbours in the 18th and 19th centuries, for example, may not be as rich or certain as that used for the analysis of European great power politics, but I contend that it has some reliable military content for realism's analyses. The European classic system is not the only case that explains great power politics. Many proponents of great power politics attest that hegemonic threats and great power balancing also occur outside of Europe (Hurrell 1992; Ebert, Flemes, Daniel, Strüver, 2014; Prys, 2009, 2010; Alden & Marco, 2005). Realist scholars have yet to test their presumptions systematically against the historical data of pre-colonial African history.

It should be noted, however, that Africanist[1] historians, anthropologists, archaeologists and political scientists have provided historical facts and analysis on statehood, sovereignty, anarchy, alliances, balancing, rational choice and diplomacy (all important features of great power politics) in pre-colonial Africa. Yet, they have not moved beyond the facts to effectively present, for example, how the political (sovereign) entities used military power, balancing and wars to prioritize their national self-interest

1 "Africanists" refers to scholars who focus on African studies. This may include African scholars or scholars based outside the African continent. These scholars may represent different schools of thought or disciplines.

over the interest of other polities[2] in a political system. Besides, most Africanist political and social science theorists tend to rather focus on power politics in the 'modern' African state. They hardly theorize about pre-colonial power politics. Besides, they tend to apply the concepts of the state, sovereignty, power, national self-interest and rational choice differently to their understanding of the 'modern' African state. Issues of personal identity, community identity and culture are essential to their understanding of these concepts (Brown, 2006; Neuman, 1998; Dunn & Shaw, 2001; Dunn, 2000).

While there are many positions in the debate on great power politics, this thesis will be testing a core hypothesis of one of the most controversial variants of political realism, John Mearsheimer's offensive realism, a structural theory belonging to the neorealist school of thought.[3] I will test Mearsheimer's brand of offensive realism against pre-colonial Asante and its neighbours in the 18th and 19th centuries. I am using Mearsheimer's (2001) brand of offensive realism because he stands as the only self-proclaimed offensive realist who has fully developed his thoughts on the theory.[4] I choose to test Mearsheimer's offensive realism against the Asante case because, at first glance, it seems Mearsheimer's theory is applicable to the Asante predatory system.

Mearsheimer's (2001) offensive realism rests on the assumption that great powers

2 I use the term states and polities interchangeably to denote the principal actors in the pre-colonial African states system.
3 I will provide further elaboration on my selection of Mearsheimer's offensive realism as opposed to other variants of realism in the sections where I discuss the theoretical framework for the thesis.
4 Glenn Synder (2001) notes that there are probably three kinds of offensive realism. They are Eric J. Labs' "Beyond Victory: Offensive Realism and the Expansion of War Aims," (1997); Robert Gilpin's *War and Change in World Politics* (1981); and Fareed Zakaria's, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role* (1998). All these authors present the inherently aggressive (offensive) nature of states in their publications but they are not self-acclaimed offensive realists.

basically use military capability to gain power over their rivals, with hegemony as their final goal (p. 29). His proposition makes his international system more predatory and more prone to conflict.[5] Mearsheimer (2001) holds that a state's aggression is the product of the constant search for survival in a world of uncertainty, offensive military capability, and a changing distribution of power (p. 31). The primary purpose of my case study is to determine whether Mearsheimer's assumptions on why states maximize their (military) power hold up when applied to the Asante case[6]. I draw upon the assumptions held by Mearsheimer to the extent to which the Asante case substantiates it. Whether Mearsheimer's offensive realism theory will hold against the Asante case is yet to be determined.

This introductory chapter will lay the foundation for the thesis by looking into the rationale of the study. I will present the research problem from both realists' and Africanists' perspectives. In my review of the Africanists' perspective, I will not be contesting how Africanists apply the concepts of sovereignty, anarchy, power, alliances, balancing, rational choice and national self-interest in their analyses of power politics. Nor will I be treating the Africanists' position as a rival position to be assessed. Africanists are justified in treating African politics differently since it has its own unique socio-political characteristics. I will merely be commenting on why the Africanists' academy should broaden their perspective by engaging the realists and not miss out on the major intellectual debate on great power politics. In reviewing the realist's perspective, I will be focussing on realism on its own terms, to see how well it

5 Mearsheimer's perspective contrasts with arguments within his own field of study. It is at variance, for example, with defensive realism, which posits that states seek security rather than (military) power, making the international system of defensive realism less predatory and that of offensive realism more predatory.

6 I will be using the terms "Asante case" and "Asante and its neighbours" interchangeably throughout the thesis.

may work in the pre-colonial African context. The general argument will be that the understanding of the key concepts of statehood, sovereignty, anarchy, power, alliances, balancing, rational choice and national self-interest as used by offensive realism for the analysis of European great power politics could be applicable to the pre-colonial African context. Realism and the Africanist academy may be missing out on what an analysis of pre-colonial African great power politics from the perspective of structural theory and power analysis could offer to their respective fields of study. It would be interesting to know if variations in the pre-colonial African and European system structures influenced the pursuit of (military) power, balancing and security considerations differently.

I will also provide justification for selecting the Asante Empire and its neighbours in the 18th and 19th centuries as my case study. Great power politics, as they are presented in Mearsheimer's (2001) offensive realism, take place in a political environment where security competition revolves around an especially powerful state or a potential hegemon (p. 334). For my purposes, this will be the Asante Empire in the Gold Coast region of West Africa in the 18th and 19th centuries. I will explain why a focus on a distinct geographical area will serve my purpose. Before I present the rationale for selecting Mearsheimer's offensive realism, I will present the primary research question and the subsidiary questions that will help me set the context for and present the case study. I begin my analysis below by explaining why realism and African international relations is usually left out of the theoretical debates of both the realist school of thought and the Africanist academy. I contend that pre-colonial African politics should not be omitted from the great power politics debate by the realist school of thought.

1.2. Why realism (including IR theory) is not applied to the Understanding of African International Relations.

Realism has not been used in the analysis of African politics simply because realists identify 'international politics' with what is effectively European history (Danilovic, 2002, p. 26; Levy, 1983; Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 6; Waltz, 1979, p. 65). Realists also posit that Africa did not have significant history of influence during the World Wars and the Cold War period (Morgenthau & Thompson, 1985, p. 369; Neuman, 1998; Van Evera 1990, pp. 25-30; Waltz, 1979). Hans Morgenthau, a champion of classical realism, claims that Africa is left out of theoretical debates on international relations because it did not have a significant history before the First World War, and that it is, thus, "a politically empty space" (Morgenthau & Thompson, 1985, p. 369; see also Van Evera, 1990, pp. 25-30). Likewise, Kenneth Waltz (1979), a leading proponent of neorealism, insists that a general theory of international politics must be based on a study of states capable of 'shaping and shoving' international politics. The arguments above are supported by Douglas Lemke's (2003) suggestion that the African experience is omitted from international relations research because of the profound underdevelopment and fragility of African states (pp. 114-138).

In his article, "Africa and the Theoretical Peace in IR", Vineet Thakur (2015) argues that the field of International Relations (IR) pays more attention to European politics because its theorists are usually located in the West, and therefore, base their theories on their Western experience (p. 217). Accordingly, to even be considered as part of the great power 'club', a state should be somewhat connected to the core of Europe. Politics of European great powers have consequently dominated realist debates for about the last two hundred years. Realist theories are grounded in the European experience on continental Europe, extending back to Westphalia (1648) and to the late

15th century Italian city-state system (Levy & Thompson, 2005; Mattingly, 1955). For example, even though Britain, in its prime, dominated large territories in the Americas, Africa, and Asia, realists still defined its interests in terms of a balance of power on the European continent, not a balance of power in the global system (Levy & Thompson, 2005, p. 10; Mearsheimer, 2001; Sheehan, 1996, p. 115). Mearsheimer (2001), for instance, considers Japan and the United States to have achieved great power status in 1895 and 1898 respectively, because of their interaction with the core of Europe (p. 6).

Realism has remained focused on militarily, politically, and economically powerful states that are capable of significantly influencing outcomes on the European continent. For that reason, any state that does not significantly contribute to what is perceived to be the international security competition (that is, security competition that involves or affects at least one of the European great powers), and does not have the capability of shaping the international anarchic structure (basically the structure of the West), is left out of their theoretical debates (Danilovic, 2002, p. 26; Levy, 1983, p. xi; Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 17). As a result of this implicit Eurocentric bias, any reference to Africa's role in IR is viewed through the lens of European history. Realist literature of the Cold War period, for example, limits its references to Africa (Neuman, 1998).

IR's theoretical debates throughout most of 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s have, however, provided opportunities to apply IR to international politics in other regions of the world (Jones, 2005). For instance, some neorealists and neo-classical realists moved realist analysis beyond the limiting confines of systemic explanations and

incorporated domestic considerations or sub-unit level analysis deemed to be central to African politics (Buzan, 1991; Buzan & Little, 2000; Buzan, Waever, & deWilde, 1997; Rose, 1998, 2004; Wohlforth, 1993; Zakaria, 1998). This shift in focus to include unit and sub-unit level analyses into their theoretical debates is important to some distinct regions of the world, including Africa, where unit and sub-unit level variables are more important in explaining strategic state behaviour (Bayart, 1993; Boone, 2003; Chabal & Daloz, 1999; Clapham, 1996; Davidson, 1992; Dunn, 2001b; Malaquias, 2001; Osaghae, 2005; Reno, 1998; Thakur, 2015).

A few other IR scholars have also pioneered scholarly work on Africa in international affairs. Christopher Clapham's (2005) book, *Africa and the International System,* attempts to provide an alternative view to the structural realist's bias that just concentrates on structural dynamics, by introducing a "bottom-up" approach that complements the structural realist's "top-down" approach in explaining international politics (p. 4). He asserts that "Africa remains a peculiar part of the global system. Economically almost excluded … At the same time it has become an important site for other features of global politics that are identified as 'threats' or sources of 'insecurity' for the core zones of the system" (p. 36). Such an approach shifts African politics towards the center of international politics. Furthermore, the academic discipline of International Political Economy (IPE), including dependency theory, Marxist-inspired theories on anti-imperialism, and world-system theory, developed in the 1970s, have provided an understanding of Africa's position in international politics. For instance, IPE approaches explain why foreign policies of the African states are strongly influenced by the political and economic interests of Western countries (Amin, 1972, 1976; Dunn, 2001; Mazrui, 1977, p. xvii; Nweke, 1980;

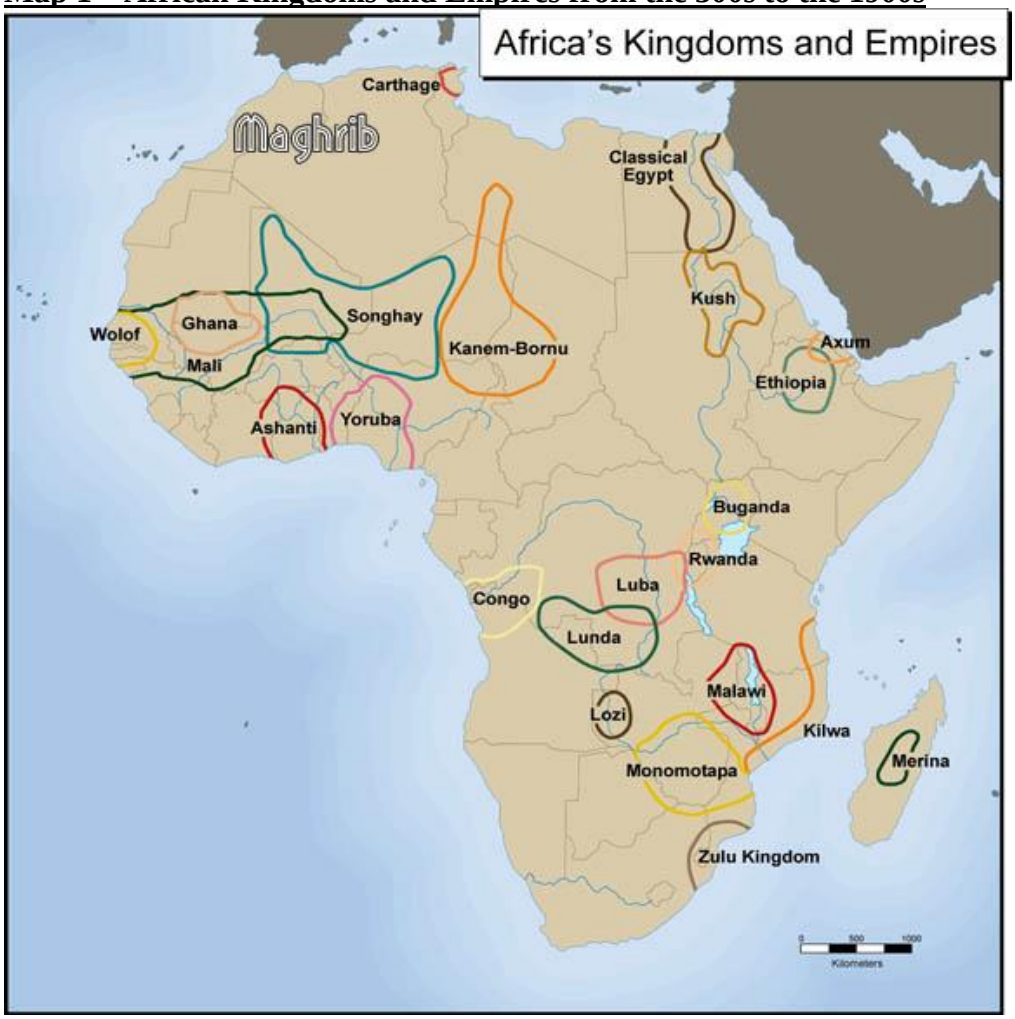
Rodney, 1972; Shaw, 1987; Shaw & Aluko, 1984; Shaw & Heard, 1979; Shaw & Newburry, 1979).

In spite of these theoretical advances that benefit "Africa and IR", IR is still limited in explaining African great power politics. The African state is viewed as a victim of great powers of the West and as part of a global periphery (Clapham, 1987, pp. 575, 582; Dickson, 1997; Jones, 2005; Thomson, 2004, p. 16). Thakur (2015), for example, holds that IR theory is structured around issues that are, at best, of peripheral concern to Africa. Interstate wars, which are central to realist discussions, are less important than intrastate ones for Africa. The African experience is usually mentioned in IR theory with references to failed states, civil wars, regional security complexes, and shadow economies (Thakur, 2015).

The Eurocentric nature of IR is problematic because large areas of the Earth with militarily and economically powerful polities have been excluded from IR's system membership. Realism in particular has shown a consistent disregard for great power politics in modern and pre-colonial Africa. Realists have not found African polities useful for their political analyses. Realism has hardly made any use of the historiography of great African empires prior to colonialism. In light of this, I wonder about the potential theoretical contributions that would come from a study of the great power politics of the Ethiopian Empire of 1137 to 1974 (Budge, 2014; Pankhurst, 2001; Saheed, 2007; Shillington, 2004), the Ghana Empire of 300 to 1235 (Conrad & Fisher, 1983; Mauny, 1971; Munson, 1980), the Mali Empire of 1230 to 1600 (Levtzion, 1963; Niane, 1994; Stride & Ifeka, 1971), the Songhay Empire of 1350 to 1600 (Hunwick, 1988; Lugard, 1997), the Monomotapa (Mutapa) Empire (the Great

Zimbabwe) between the 12th and 15th centuries (Bairoch, 1991; Oliver & Atmore, 1975; Owomoyela, 2002), and the Zulu Empire from 1816 to 1897 (Bryant, 1964; Morris, 1965). See Map 1 below for a list of some likely great powers in Africa from 300 AD to the 1900s.

Map 1 – African Kingdoms and Empires from the 300s to the 1900s



Source: Exploring African Studies Center, Michigan State University, Author unknown, Year produced unknown. Retrieved June 2016

Considering the number of likely great powers that may have been founded in Africa since 300 AD, realism may have missed out on the potential contribution of pre-colonial African history to its theory. It is probable that some state systems in pre-colonial Africa were similar to the European model, but variations in the system

structure influenced security considerations differently. If IR is now paying attention to great power politics of distinct regions such as South America, Southern Africa, South Asia, East Asia, and Northeast Asia (Chan, 2010; Destradi, 2008; Khanna, 2009; Kristof, 1993; Mansingh, 2010; Prys, 2009; Ringmar, 2012; Roy, 1994, 2003; Segal, 1996; Shambaugh, 2004/2005; Womack, 2006; Yadav & Barwa, 2011; Zhang & Buzan, 2012), why can we not apply offensive realism to the great power politics of pre-colonial Africa?

Mearsheimer (2001) points out that although the focus of his offensive realist theory is the European states system, "realist logic can be applied to other kinds of anarchic systems" (p. 30). He posits that, after all, it is the absence of central authority at the system level, and not any special characteristic of states that causes them to compete for power. To illustrate this point, Mearsheimer (2001) makes reference to Markus Fischer, who applies realist logic to Europe in the Middle Ages, and thus, to a period before 1648, and the emergence of the state system (Chapter 2, Footnote 5; also see Fischer 1992, pp. 427-466). Even Waltz (1979), another structural realist, admits that the general theory of international politics also applies to lesser states in so far as their interactions are insulated from the intervention of the outside world (p. 73). I agree that realism should not be limited in scope. For my purpose, insofar as the same indicators and measurements apply to my case study, offensive realism should apply.

Since realism, in particular, has been oblivious to pre-colonial African history, I will take on the task to fill in the gap by introducing a perspective on pre-colonial African great power politics to the realist debate. Through my use of elements of offensive realism to understand the great power politics of Asante and its neighbours in the 18th

and 19th centuries, I hope to determine if concepts such as anarchy, (military) power, national interest and balancing, as used by offensive realism, hold when applied to this distinct pre-colonial African context.

1.3. Why the Africanist Academy should not miss out on the Major Intellectual Debate on Great Power Politics.

The Africanist academy dismisses traditional IR theory, arguing that IR theory is essentially Eurocentric and that it forces Western concepts on African politics (Brown, 2006; Dunn, 2000; Neuman, 1998; Ofuho, 2000; Swatuk, 2001; Tandeka, 2001). Africanists' criticisms are mostly centered around the argument that traditional IR theory's models of the international system, when applied to the African continent, do not explain much about the key problems and issues that are deemed to be central to African politics and Africa's international relations. Certainly these reservations by Africanists are warranted. Without a doubt, IR theory has been essentially Eurocentric, with little appreciation for the unique socio-political characteristics of present day Africa (Ayoob, 1998; Brown, 2006; Croft, 1997; Jones, 2005; Neuman, 1998). IR and Africanist scholars both agree that African politics are experienced differently from European politics (Bayart, 1993; Boone, 2003; Chabal & Daloz, 1999; Clapham, 1996; Davidson, 1992; Dunn, 2001b; Malaquias, 2001; Osaghae, 2005; Reno, 1998).

African politics, like any other regional politics, have unique socio-cultural and economic characteristics (Dunn, 2001; Jackson & Rosberg, 1982; Sandbrook, 1986). For example, African power politics have mostly been associated with personal rule and determined by considerations of special interest groups, not necessarily structural

concerns (Jackson & Rosberg, 1982; Sandbrook, 1986). For this reason, many post-colonial African states were not considered to be "unitary actors" of the sort presumed by realist thinking (Donnelly, 2000; Mearsheimer, 2001; Waltz, 1979). According to Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg (1982), if the persistence of a state were primarily based on the attributes of empirical statehood,[7] some countries in Africa would not qualify as states at times (p. 2).

Furthermore, the realist notion of an international-domestic dichotomy, in which the international is characterized by anarchy and the domestic by order, is unfounded in most modern African states (Brown, 2006). Most postcolonial African states were burdened with ethno-sectarian tensions especially through the 1970s to 1990s (Chazan, 1982; Price, 1973; Udogu, 1999; Welsh, 1996). Admittedly, wars in Africa during this period were predominantly intrastate in nature. The distinctive features of African politics make it difficult to apply the simplified indicators and measurements of offensive realism to the modern African state (Aning, 2004; Ayoob, 1995; Bakut tswah Bakut, 2000; Jackson & Rosberg, 1982; Lujala, Gleditsch, & Gilmore, 2005; Migdal, 1988; Ron, 2005; Thomson, 2004; Welsh, 1996). William Brown (2006) posits that when African states are squeezed into European models it "produces analyses and concepts – such as failed, quasi-state … Africa becomes the subordinated 'other' to the western 'self'" (p. 121, see also Dunn & Shaw, 2001, p. 4; Neuman, 1998, p. 2).

7 According to international law, there are two types of statehood. These are empirical statehood, which is associated with the Westphalian state of the West, and juridical statehood, which is associated with weak or new states established after colonialism. The concept of the empirical state is influenced by Max Weber's definition: a corporate group that has compulsory jurisdiction, exercises continuous organization, and claims a monopoly of force over a territory and its population, including all actions taking place in its jurisdiction. See Weber (1947, p. 156) and Brownlie (1979, pp. 73-76).

Though it is important to recognize that African politics do not necessarily fit within the realist debate on international politics, it should also be noted that in some cases the Africanist academy has also misrepresented or misunderstood some IR concepts. For example, Kwasi Tieku (2008) contends that when it comes to African diplomacy, the African understanding of personhood is different from the Western understanding of personhood. Tieku argues that the African notion of personhood is an embedded one, in contrast to the individuated Western notion. However, Tieku's perception of the Western world may apply to relationships within personal settings but not inter-state diplomacy. In fact, realism's notion of personhood, in terms of diplomacy, is an embedded one as well. Realists consider statesmen and leaders as unitary political actors that calculate interests of the state they represent in terms of the collective self-interest (Mearsheimer, 2001; Morgenthau, 1965; Rose, 1998; Waltz, 1979; Wohlforth, 1993). Morgenthau (1965), for example, maintains that the conduct of a nation's foreign policy affairs by its diplomats and military leaders is done for the sake of "national" security (pp. 9, 129). Similarly, Gideon Rose (1998) argues that foreign policy choices are made by actual political leaders and elites who represent the state's perceptions of relative power abroad (p. 147).

In my thesis, I am not interested in Africa's place in "international or global politics". What is essential for my thesis is to determine whether Mearsheimer's Eurocentric theory of great power politics will hold when applied to a distinct regional context of pre-colonial African history where interstate wars, military power, hegemonic threats, and hegemonic balancing also mattered. I am dealing with a period and a context in which wars between territorially-based (sovereign) polities were prevalent, and

interactions and the distribution of military capabilities among its principal actors mattered. I am not proposing that African institutions and developments should necessarily be patterned after foreign constructs. I am suggesting that offensive realism's concepts could possibly be applied to this particular Asante case and these concepts should, therefore, not be presumed *a priori* to be limited to Western politics. My thesis will not focus on the applicability of realist logic to the "modern" African state, where intrastate security complexes matter more than interstate ones. Whether realist theory is a sound theory for today's world or the modern African state is not a question that I address. The principal argument that I will make is that pre-colonial Africa had a significant, although insulated, history before the colonial period, and that, it was thus not a "politically empty space" as assumed by Morgenthau and other realist scholars. For this reason, it should not be left out of realist theoretical debates on great power politics.

1.4. Selection of Case Study: Why the Asante and its Neighbours in the 18th and 19th Centuries?

First and foremost, great power politics, as understood by offensive realism, take place in a political environment where security competition revolves around an especially powerful state(s)—in other words, a potential hegemon (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 5). Even if the political system does not contain a hegemon, at least one or more of the states in the system should be substantially more powerful than other great powers[8] in the system. The domineering power(s) must have sufficient military assets to put up a serious fight in an all-out war against the most powerful states in the political system.

8 In my analysis, I will use "great powers" and "states" interchangeably, unless I specifically state that I am discussing less powerful states or minor states.

The principal actor (s) need not have the capability to completely overcome other great or major powers, but must have some reasonable prospect of turning a conflict into a war of attrition that leaves other powerful states seriously weakened, even if another great power ultimately wins the war (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 5). I contend that as an especially high-threat environment, where states were aggressive and fought wars of conquest, the Asante Empire (and its neighbours) in the 18th and 19th centuries is a good case that can be used to test offensive realism's claims about great power politics.

My thesis is based on the argument that the Asante Empire's experience, in particular, could qualify as one of Mearsheimer's (2001) potential hegemons during its time period. The Asante Empire, as a powerful militaristic state, was almost always primed for offense (Aidoo, 1977; Fynn, 1971; Hallet, 1974; Johnson, 1965; Wilks, 1975). It had the overriding goal of maximizing its share of regional power, which means gaining power at the expense of others in the region. Asante did not merely strive to be the strongest of all the great powers, but ultimately aimed for hegemony. It had the goal of becoming the only great power in its regional system (Fynn, 1971; Wilks, 1975).

I will seek to determine if the Asante Empire exhibited behaviour that would fit Mearsheimer's analysis. Mearsheimer's great powers are rarely content with whatever the current distribution of power might be. They face a constant incentive to change or manipulate the balance of power - that is, the distribution of military power - in their favour (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 55-56). They almost always have hegemonic intentions, and they will use force to alter the balance of power if they think it will not undermine their military power (Jervis, 1978; Mearsheimer, 1986, pp. 6-8). For

Mearsheimer (2001), states are great powers largely by virtue of their military capability relative to others in the system (p. 5).

The Gold Coast region had a concentrated number of polities with offensive military capabilities and acted aggressively toward each other in a world of uncertainty (Fynn, 1971; McCaskie, 1995; Vandervort, 1998; Wilks, 1975). This was a period when borders shifted regularly, and polities easily became extinct. During this period, stronger polities easily claimed dominance over other territories. They engaged in shifting alliances, fought wars of conquest, and engaged in *realpolitik* similar to that of the classic European states system. Moreover, there were no political organizations above the principal polities in the Gold Coast, and there were no foreign actors that claimed full or partial authority over local politics for the greater part of the 18th and 19th centuries. [9] This, in part, made the Gold Coast system as predatory as Mearsheimer's predatory system.

For example, historical evidence indicates that no traditional African polity in the Gold Coast region has a record of conquest that even comes close to approximating that of the Asante Empire in the 18th and 19th centuries (Bowdich, 1819; Fynn, 1971; McCaskie, 1995; Vandervort, 1998; Wilks, 1975). The Asante Empire was one of the great powers within its sub-region, and it went to enormous lengths to establish itself across the North, hinterland and coastal belt of the Gold Coast region (Fynn, 1971; McCaskie, 1995; Vandervort, 1998; Wilks, 1975). The Asante Empire in particular

9 The European traders arrived at the Gold Coast in 1471. It was not until 1874 that the British formally proclaimed the coastal region of the Gold Coast as a protectorate. They eventually extended their sphere of influence to include the Asante, following the Asante's defeat in 1901, and the Northern Territories in 1902 (Adu Boahen, 1966; Claridge, 1915; Kimble, 1963).

made sure it did not have a peer competitor in its own sub-region (the hinterland) or in any other sub-region (southern and northern regions) of the Gold Coast.

In fact, the word Asante means "for the sake of war". The word comes from the Twi (African) phrase *Asa*, meaning 'war', and *Nti*, meaning 'because of'. It was first used by the Denkyira state of the hinterland of the Gold Coast region to refer to the group that formed the Asante union to resist Denkyira's sovereignty (Fynn, 1971; McCaskie, 1995; Wilks, 1975). The Asante Empire employed war in the 18th and 19th centuries as an instrument to facilitate its imperial ambitions (Adu Boahen, Ajayi, & Tidy, 1986; Wilks, 1975). It was a powerful, militaristic, and highly disciplined political system (Aidoo, 1977).

From 1701 to 1896, the Asante Empire was in a perpetual state of war to expand and defend its territory. According to Thomas Bowdich (1819), a British commercial agent to the Asante capital in 1817, "Ashantee (was) indisputably the greatest and the rising power of western Africa" (p. 341; see also Aidoo, 1977, p.1; Fynn, 1971, p.1). The Asante Empire was one of the most powerful political and military traditional polities in pre-colonial Africa. Bruce Vandervort (1998) claims that the Asante army was by far the largest and most sophisticated army in sub-Saharan Africa, on a par with the Zulu of South Africa and probably the Madhist warriors of the Sudan and the Ethiopian Empire in the late 1890s (pp. 16-37; see also Churchill, 1902). The Asante Empire was one of the few African states to decisively defeat the proxy army of the British Empire in a war.[10] Like the states within the European states system, the Asante Empire used

10 The British-Asante Wars were a series of five conflicts between the Asante Empire and the British (the Royal African Corps with support from some additional West Indian and African soldiers attached to the unit) between 1824 and 1901. The British were overwhelmed by the Asante military force in 1824 and were decisively defeated in the Battle of Nsamankow. The British again

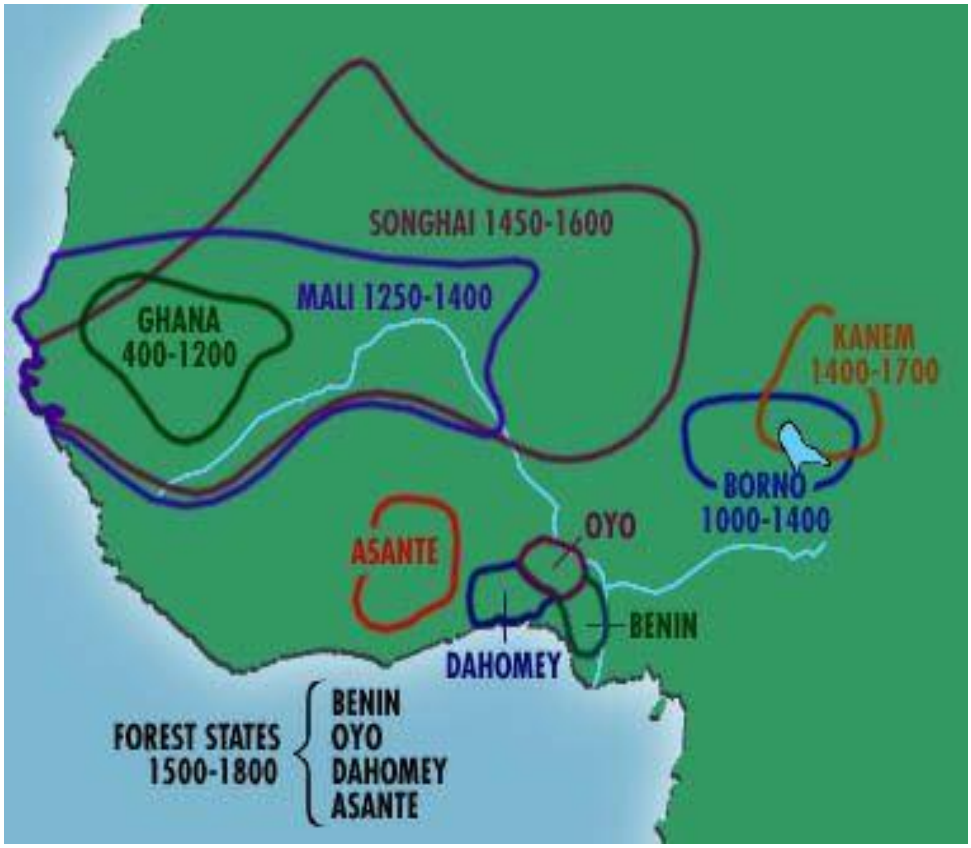
war, alliances, diplomacy, deterrence, and self-defence to maximize its own power relative to others (Adjaye 1984; Adu Boahen 1974; Edgerton, 1995; Fynn, 1971; Irwin, 1985, McCaskie, 1995; Rattray, 1929; Vandervort, 1998; Wilks, 1975).

There have been a number of traditional African polities, varying in size and influence, from the Iron Age to the medieval period and the immediate pre-colonial period (see Map 1 above). In the geographical region of West Africa, it is alleged, there were more than thirteen influential African polities.[11] Benin, Oyo, Dahomey, and the Asante Empires were great powers or potential hegemons on the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa between 1500 and 1900. See the strategic positions of these great powers in Map 2.

Map 2: Strategic positions of the great powers of Benin, Oyo, Dahomey and Asante 1500-1800

gave in to the Asante in 1863 due to sickness and a shortage of troops (Baldry, 1935, pp. 233-234; Edgerton, 1995; Fynn, 1971; Lloyd, 1964; McCaskie, 1995; Raugh, 2004; Stapleton, 2013; Vandervort, 1998; Wilks, 1975).

11 Examples of medieval empires centered on the West African Sahel, the area of grasslands south of the Sahara, are as follows: the Kingdom of Ghana (750 and 1078), the Songhai Empire, the Sosso (after 1235), the Mali Empire (1350s-1400), the Songhai Empire, the Mossi Kingdoms of Mamprussi and Dagomba, the kingdoms of Kanem-Bornu, the Fulani Empire, the Wolof Empire (1350-1889), the Shilluk Kingdom (1490-1865), Alodia (7th century - 1504), Nobatia (350 - c. 650), the Kingdom of Makuria (4th century - 1312), and Bonoman (11th century - 19th century) (Bawuro, 1985; Collins & Burns, 2007; Davidson, 1991; Shillington, 2005; Skinner, 1958; Vansina, 1962).



Source: New York State Education Department, Global History and Geography, Author unknown, Year produced unknown. Retrieved June 2016

The Oyo Empire conquered the Dahomey Empire in 1747 (Alpern, 1998; Smith, 1989; Thornton, 1999). However, Oyo did not have the military wherewithal to overrun the Asante Empire to its west. Asante's military prowess was known far and wide (Bowdich, 1819, pp. 3, 341), so probably, the Oyo did not want to risk losing a war to the great Asante Empire. Or perhaps, the Oyo could not extend their imperial ambitions beyond Dahomey to the Asante territory to its west due to geographical obstacles such as the thick forest and dangerous rivers. However, in the 1760s Oyo together with Dahomey formed an alliance with an arch-enemy of Asante, the Akyem state, to fight the Asante Empire in a region south of the Gold Coast under Asante's protectorate (Fynn, 1971). This was not a direct conflict with the Asante central government, but a war with one of Asante's divisional states waging the war on behalf of the Asante king (Fynn, 1971). Oyo and Dahomey's support for Akyem in this war was not to occupy or

absorb the Asante Empire. Some scholars argue that they were probably just interested in weakening Asante's hold on the trans-Atlantic slave trade with the European traders on the West coast of Africa (Fynn, 1971; Thornton, 1999).

According to offensive realism, the best outcome a great power can hope for is to be a regional hegemon and possibly control another accessible region. No state can achieve "global hegemony". The principal impediment to domination is the difficulty of projecting power across difficult geographical terrains (Mearsheimer, 1990, 2001). In view of that, probably, the great forest states of 1500 to 1800 – Asante, Oyo, Dahomey, Benin - were faced with the difficulty of projecting power across difficult geographical terrains (Bowdich 1819; Cruickshank, 1853),[12] so they were content with being the hegemons in their respective regions of the world.

Of the numerous pre-colonial West African polities of varying sizes and influence, the Asante Empire stands as the only ancient African polity that has survived as a sub-nation state within a modern, independent nation**.** Today the Asante state continues as a constitutionally protected sub-nation state within modern Ghana.[13] Furthermore, due to the Asante Empire's military prowess, wealth, and sophisticated external relations with European traders and other African polities, it is one of the most studied

12 In numerous accounts of the Gold Coast region, the writers made reference to the 'deep, impenetrable thick and magnificent forests of the region (Cruickshank, 1853, pp. 2, 291, 299; Bowdich, 1819, pp. 27, 156, 321). Cruickshank (1853) mentioned that the forests were so dense that it was difficult to obtain a thorough knowledge of the movement and relative position of an enemy (p. pp. 152-153).

13 Act 759 (Section 58) of the Chieftaincy Act 2008 categorizes the position of chiefs as follows: (a) "The Asante King" and paramount chiefs, (b) divisional chiefs, (c) sub-divisional chiefs, (d) Adikrofo, and (e) other chiefs recognized by the National House of Chiefs. Note that of all the paramount chiefs in Ghana, only the Asante chief is mentioned by name in this section of the Chieftaincy Act. This suggests that the Asante chief and the Asante kingdom are not categorized as equal to all the other chiefs and chiefdoms in Ghana. This makes the Asante kingdom more or less like a supra-kingdom and, for that matter, a constitutionally protected, sub-nation state and traditional state within Ghana.

indigenous political entities of sub-Saharan Africa (Lamphear, 2007, p. xxiv; Adjaye, 1984; Aidoo, 1977; Adu Boahen, 1975, 1979/1980; Buah, 1980; Fynn, 1971; McCaskie, 1993; Wilks, 1975; Yorak, 1990).

1.5. Research Question

Does Mearsheimer's proposition, which states that 'maximizing military power with the ultimate aim of becoming a hegemon is the logical solution in an anarchic environment', hold up as an explanation when applied to the Asante case in the 18th and 19th centuries?

In order to answer my principal question, I need to reflect on the following questions:

1) Since anarchy is a fundamental and central feature of offensive realist's theory, is the offensive realist understanding of anarchy comparable to the context of the Asante and its neighbours in the 18th and 19th centuries?
2) What key assumptions and variables explain the aggressive behaviour (maximization of military power and war) of Mearsheimer's states, and how do they hold up against the Asante context?
3) Did Asante and its neighbors experience 'maximization of military power' differently from Mearsheimer's classic European state system?
4) Did the Gold Coast in the 18th and 19th centuries actually see the emergence of a genuinely hegemonic system, or did it rather see a multipolar system that contained an especially powerful state?

I hypothesise that if pre-colonial Asante and its neighbours in the 18th and 19th centuries had formidable military capabilities (according to their own standards) and

acted aggressively towards each other, and engaged in numerous wars of conquest with the ultimate goal of hegemony, then it is, at first glance, most likely that their behaviour resembled what Mearsheimer defines as "great power politics" (*realpolitik* of the classic European states system). To test my hypothesis, I use Mearsheimer's theory of offensive realism (Mearsheimer, 1990, 2001, 2010).

1.6. Why Offensive Realism?

Of all the variants of realism, I select Mearsheimer's brand of offensive realism because of two main reasons. First, since there is limited information on the domestic policies (foreign policy objectives) of the polities in the Gold Coast in the 18th and 19th centuries, I choose the variant of realism that uses structural analysis (but also acknowledges the relevance of some potent sub-unit level variables) to explain aggressive state behavior in international politics. Second, since I am dealing with a predatory system–the Asante case in the 18th and 19th centuries–I want to use the variant of structural realism that claims to explain why states use excessive offensive power (military power) to tilt the balance of power in their favor, with hegemony as their final goal.

Generally, all the strands of realism view structural considerations as a useful point to begin their analysis of international politics (Carr, 1964; Mearsheimer, 2001; Morgenthau, 1956; Posen, 1984; Waltz, 1979, 2002; Zakaria, 1998). They hold that the structure of the system creates a powerful incentive for aggression and hostility in international politics (Gilpin, 1981; Mearsheimer, 2001; Waltz, 1979). The powerful incentive for aggression emanates from the ordering principle of the international system, anarchy, and by the distribution of capabilities of the great powers within the

international system (Dunn, 1948; Grieco, 1990; Kohane, 1986; Lobell, Ripsman, & Taliaferro, 2009; Mearsheimer, 2001; Powell, 1994; Rathbun, 2008; Rose, 1998; Waltz, 1979, 1990; Wight, 1978). Waltz (1986) a leading structural realist hold that structural factors transcend the characteristics of its units (p. 121). This means that ultimately pressures from the distribution of power among the leading states in the system and their interactions with each other determine international outcomes (Mearsheimer, 2001; Gilpin, 1981; Waltz, 1986, 1979).

Additionally, the realist school of thought (with the exception of Kenneth Waltz's brand of neorealism) acknowledge the relevance of some unit-level factors in explaining outcomes at the system level. Mearsheimer's (2009, 2001) discussions on 'nationalism' indicate that it is probably the most powerful unit-level variables with the potential to influence system-level outcomes. In his view, when nationalism unifies the country and galvanizes its citizens to take up arms against a common adversary, it should not violate the balance-of-power logic[14] (Mearsheimer, 1990, 2001, 2009). Neorealist like Posen, Snyder and Van Evera also agree that domestic politics are an important part of the explanation for states' foreign policies, and has an influence on international relations (Posen, 1984; Snyder, 1984, 1991; Van Evera, 1984). They argue that, for example, organizational biases of professional militaries lead them to advocate offensive military doctrines, and their biases often influence foreign policies that result in war. Thus, suggesting that domestic politics cause states to adopt irrationally offensive military doctrines or policies. Morgenthau (1948), a leading proponent of classical realism,

14 On the contrary, nationalism can also disintegrate a country, especially if it is a multinational state, and most of its composite ethnic groups want to be independent states of their own. According to Mearsheimer, nationalism was the principal source of Austria-Hungary's weakness (Mearsheimer 2001, p. 297).

refers to the fact that foreign policies are developed by statesmen. He does not necessarily take the view that unit-level factors cause states to act in non-strategic ways. He merely argues that, for example, diplomats predict foreign policy during peace times, while military leaders predict military strategy and tactics during wartime. To Morgenthau, statesmen's intellectual ability to comprehend the essentials of foreign policy, as well as their political ability to translate what they have comprehended into successful political action helps design foreign policy (Morgenthau, 1965, pp. 4-15, and p. 129). Likewise, neoclassical realism also holds that though state behavior in the international system can also be explained by systemic variables, they can also be explained by the perception and misperception of statesmen and pressures from state institutions, elites, and societal actors within society (Wohlforth, 1993; Christensen, 1996; Rose, 1998; Schweller, 1998).

Since classical realism, neoclassical realism and some variants of neorealism acknowledge the relevance of domestic politics to outcomes at the system level, I could have chosen them for my study. I did not choose them because they hardly study revisionist states,[15] and treat revisionism as an anomaly, making them inadequate for my purpose. As a consequence, I have to rely on Mearsheimer's offensive realism theory to explain great power politics during this period, with the hope that it will provide some satisfactory explanations of state behaviour during that period. Mearsheimer's (2001) offensive realism is the only strand that makes a strong argument for how the structure of the system creates a powerful incentive for great powers to be aggressive and maximize their military power with the ultimate goal of achieving

15 Revisionist states are powerful states dissatisfied with their place in the international system and seek hegemony as their ultimate goal (See Kugler & Lemke, 2000; Organski, 1958)

hegemony (pp. 30-31). Arguably, the Asante and its neighbours in the 18th and 19th centuries could fit into this model because they were fixated on their access to firearms and wars of conquest. The Asante Empire, in particular, used its military power to embark on wars of expansion and dominate the Gold Coast system for about two centuries (Fynn, 1971; Lamphear, 2007; Vandervort, 1998; Wilks 1975).

It should be noted however that Morgenthau (1948) also hints on the aggressive nature of states. He argues that states are inherently aggressive, and the source of this aggression is rooted in human nature (Morgenthau 1978, p. 27; Morgenthau, 1948; see also Doyle 1997, p. 46). I cannot use Morgenthau's theory for the Asante case since his explanation on the aggressive nature of states is especially problematic because it is linked to human nature, which cannot be clearly measured and explained. The difference between Morgenthau and Mearsheimer is the fact that in the latter's theory, the disposition to aggression is not intrinsic to states, but is instead the product of the constant search for survival in a world of uncertainty, offensive military capability, and a changing distribution of power. Meanwhile, Waltz (1979, 1988), who insists that the ultimate concern of states is not to maximize military power but to seek for adequate security that limits conflict, also does not clearly explain why some states constantly act aggressively and seek more power even after they have attained the adequate level of power that is needed for their security. Mearsheimer (2001) stands as the only realist who claims he has developed his thoughts on why states are driven to be aggressive and seek power beyond what is needed to maintain and sustain their security.

Building on existing realist's assumptions, Mearsheimer (2001) does not only offer new insights into the role of offensive power (military capability), but also puts new

emphasis on how to predict offensive power with geographical proximity, nationalism (a non-structural factor), great power balancing and polarity of the system. He introduces the useful notion of balanced and unbalanced systems, and how equilibrium can never be achieved in a power-balancing model, not even in a balanced bipolar or multipolar model. It should be noted, however, that Mearsheimer's ideas about balancing are usually related to realism's broader concepts in alliance theory. In the realist's anarchic system, states have an interest in maximizing their long-term odds of survival. Consequently, they check dangerous concentrations of power in the international system, by building up their own and/or choosing to aggregate their capabilities with others in alliances to balance against their adversary. Ultimately, they seek the level of power that is needed to attain and maintain their security (Wohlforth et al 2007; Grieco 1997; Waltz 1988, 1979) or seek as much power as possible to pursue hegemony (Mearsheimer 2001, 2009).

Mearsheimer also advances on realists' discussions of geopolitics by demonstrating that his theory applies to regional systems. In fact, the inclusion of geopolitics is not alien to the realist tradition (Brooks, 1997; Haslam, 2002, Chapter 4; Taliaferro, 2001; Walt, 1990, 1996; Wivel, 2000). In "Back to the Future," Mearsheimer (1995) argues that polarity arguments can be used to assess the prospects for stability in a particular region, provided that the global and regional balances are distinguished from one another and the analysis is focused on the structure of power in the relevant region (p. 80, Footnote 4). For my purposes, I find Mearsheimer's focus on a distinct region useful. My analysis will be focused on the structural dynamics of the Gold Coast region in the 18th and 19th centuries.

It may be assumed from the name of Mearsheimer's theory that it is unapologetically offensive in nature. Yet Mearsheimer's offensive theory advocates caution. Mearsheimer claims that his great powers are strategic calculators. For instance, if the costs and risks of trying to shift the balance of power are too great, they strategically wait for more favourable circumstances (Mearsheimer, 2001). This indicates that Mearsheimer's states, as revisionist's states, still have aggressive and expansionist intentions while applying caution in unfavorable circumstances.

For this reason, Synder (2001) assumes Mearsheimer's offensive realism nicely complements Waltz's defensive realism by introducing a theoretical rationale for offensive and defensive strategies (p. 151). Yet, Mearsheimer claims his theory is in no way in line with Waltz's defensive realism or Robert Jervis (1978), Thomas Christensen and Jack Snyder (1990), and Stephen Van Evera's (1984) debate on offense-defense balance. Mearsheimer believes that the offense-defense balance is usually heavily tilted toward defense, thus making conquest extremely difficult. He argues that it encourages great powers to have little incentive to use force to gain power and to instead concentrate on protecting and maintaining the status quo than upset the balance of power (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 20).

Asante's external relations in the 18th century and 19th centuries were principally offensive military campaigns of conquest and annexation by which the Empire was established and sustained. However, there were some instances where Asante demonstrated their commitment to peace and diplomacy (Dupius 1824, pp. 225-226), which could be interpreted as defensive strategies to reclaim defected territories and consolidate its hegemonic position. I am yet to know if Mearsheimer's line of argument

or the alternative views offered by other theories on the offense-defense debate hold true for the Asante case.

Mearsheimer's offensive realism may fall short of explaining peaceful change or protecting the status quo. However, I hope that, for my purposes, his theory provides a helpful and testable explanation of great power politics of Asante and its neighbours in the 18th and 19th centuries. I will not preoccupy myself with the limitations of his theory in today's world (Elman, 2004; Layne, 2002/2003; Pashakhanlou, 2013; Synder, 2001; Toft, 2005). Like all other social science theories, offensive realism has its limitations. By Mearsheimer's own admission, his theory is ultimately a descriptive theory. It explains how great powers have behaved in the past (Mearsheimer, 2001).

Although Mearsheimer's empirical argument concerning what actually drives states to be revisionists may be limited to a specific region and a certain period in history (European great power politics from 1792 to1990), I hope his theory provides some explanation for why Asante and its neighbors in the 18th and 19th centuries continually sought to maximize their (military) power and behave aggressively in the Gold Coast system. I have yet to determine whether his offensive theory will hold when applied to Asante case.

1.7. Conclusion

As noted above, (offensive) realism has not been applied to the study of African politics because its analyses mostly focus on militarily strong states capable of significantly shaping what they identify as "international politics". The realist's perception of

international politics is usually associated with European and global politics. For this reason, Africanists believe that realism shares a neocolonial epistemology that privileges the global North over the global South (Ayoob, 1998, p. 37). Thus, they hold that any reference to Africa in IR studies misrepresents or misunderstands African reality and often participates in an exercise of neo-colonial theoretical hegemony (Brown, 2006, p. 119).

I, however, hold that Africa's pre-colonial experience could possibly open a theoretical space to either advance or disprove some foundations of the theory of realism. I am yet to determine if Asante and its neighbours in the 18th and 19th centuries had some qualities similar to those of Western states in the debate over great power politics. I am not contesting the Africanist's debates on power politics. I am merely focusing on realism on its own terms, to see how well it explains the pre-colonial African context. The next chapter presents the methodology and plan of study of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1. Introduction

Having established the rationale for the study in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 follows up with a discussion of the methodology and plan of the study. I am adopting a qualitative

historical approach for the research (Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, 2003). I will borrow a methodological perspective from the structured and focused method developed by Alexander George to build my case (George, 1979a, 1979b; George & Bennet, 2004, Chapter 3; see also Bennett & Elman, 2006; George & McKeown, 1985; Van Evera, 1997). The methodology for my study will be 'structured' in that in support of the primary research question noted in Chapter 1, I will generate a set of general questions in chapters 3 and 4 that reflect the research objective. The method will also be 'focused' in that it will deal only with relevant aspects of the historical cases examined.

In the discussion below, I will also address the advantages and limitations of a single regional case study analysis. I acknowledge that there is some inherent weakness in single case analysis, just as is in any research method (Maoz, 2002, pp. 164-165). I try to make a case that there will be an advantage to my single case study analysis if it is empirically rich, context-specific, and used for theory-testing (Yin, 1994). In support of the methodology I am using, I will also lay out the context and unit of analysis I use for the study. Given the fact that Africa's experience and historical emergence are not exactly the same as the Western experience used by realists, it is assumed that Africa experiences international relations differently. In fact, it is not necessary for my African case to have similar qualities as those used by realism in the European context. So far as I have equivalent qualities, it will prove useful for realism analysis.

2.2. Method

My primary goal is to test a theory against a specific historical narrative. I will be identifying not just the series of empirical events, but also the underlying hypothesized causal mechanism proposed by Mearsheimer's offensive realism (Bennett, 2010, p.

208; Gerring, 2004, p. 342; Gerring, 2007; Owen, 1994). I will be aiming at identifying the key variables that promote the following patterns of behavior: fear, self-help, and eventually power maximization.

From a methodological perspective, I will formulate a set of questions based on offensive realists' assumptions on power maximization, recognizing both the problematic issues within offensive realism and the alternative views held by other theories (George, 2004, p. 69; see also George & Bennet, 2005, Chapter 3). In doing so, I will generate questions that reflect the research objective and guides the historical analysis. Generating questions in a structured method will allow me to stay focused on retrieving the relevant information to support the analysis of a complex case study (Bennett & Checkel, 2012, p. 10; Bennett & Elman, 2006; George & Bennet, 2005; Owen, 1994). Retrieving relevant information on the behaviour of polities over a period of two hundred years will be quite challenging. There is a high degree of contextuality and contingency that is characteristic of changing state behaviour over long periods of time. With limited access to specific foreign policy objectives of the polities in the Gold Coast in the 18th and 19th centuries, it would be difficult to establish which unit level factors in particular influenced the behavior of the polities in the Gold Coast system (Fynn, 1971; Hargrove, 2015; Osei Kwadwo, 1994; Vandervort, 1998). A structured and focused approach will therefore guide and standardize the data I have to collect to test the theory, thereby making it easier to analyze the chains of events that reflect the key political processes that led to either defensive or offensive strategies (Bennett, 2010, pp. 207-219; George, 2004, p. 67).

Furthermore, I recognize that social scientists do not want to rely on a single historical analogy in dealing with a new case (George & Bennet, 2005, p. 67). Some believe individual case studies are often instructive and do not lend themselves readily to strict comparison or orderly cumulation. Single case study analysis is criticized for its lack of methodological rigour, external validity, and research subjectivity, as well as having little basis for scientific generalization (Maoz, 2002, pp.164-165; Yin, 2009, pp. 14-15). This critique seems somewhat unfair because, in principle, single case studies are no different from other methodological techniques (Bennett & Elman, 2010, pp. 499-500). All methodological techniques, like my single regional case study, investigate a "spatially bounded phenomenon", such as the causes of great power war observed at a "delimited period of time" (Gerring, 2004, p. 342).

The critical question here is how one case can reliably offer anything beyond the particular. Surely, my intention is not to establish any kind of generalizations about African politics. The criticism of a lack of generalizability is of little relevance for my purposes, because my intention is one of particularization, not generalization. Consequently, unlike some political science scholarship, my historical analysis does not necessarily aim to generate generally applicable arguments that extend to other similar cases. My single regional case study analysis will hold insofar as my context-specific case is empirically rich enough to test the validity of offensive realist theory.

In essence, what is important to my theory-testing approach is whether the theorized causal mechanisms are sound enough to warrant my case to be most likely or least likely compatible with the theory being tested. According to Bennett and Elman (2010), most likely cases are those in which a theory is likely to provide a good explanation, whereas

least likely cases are "tough test" ones, in which the theory under analysis is unlikely to provide a good explanation. A crucial case is a tough case in both senses. In crucial cases, the test must fit one explanation if the explanation is true, and not fit any other explanations (p. 505). Bennett and Elman (2010) point out that whether a case is most likely or least likely for a theory, it should be judged not just by its values on the variables of that theory, but values of variables pointed to by alternative theories as well (p. 505; see also George & Bennett, 2005, Chapter 3). I can claim my case is a most-likely case provided that predictions are relatively precise and measurement error is low (Levy, 2008, pp. 12-13).

2.3. Establishing the Context and Unit of Analysis

For the sake of methodological rigor and research objectivity, it is important to establish the specific context and unit of analysis for my case. To be able to use Mearsheimer's theory, at least, the context and unit of analysis for both the Gold Coast and the classic European system used by Mearsheimer should be fairly comparable, with little appreciable variance across them. As noted in Chapter 1, Africanists believe that the context of IR's work has been strongly influenced by the positionality of their 'storytellers' (Thakur, 2015). I should be able to determine whether 'African exceptionalism' presents something quite different in this case. William Moul (1989) notes that "to test a theory in various historical and temporal contexts requires equivalent, not identical, measures" (p. 103).

2.3.1. Establishing the Context: From a methodological standpoint, the concept of the international system as understood by the realist school of thought will be superimposed on the geographical space where Asante and its neighbours existed in the 18th and 19th

centuries, that is, the Gold Coast region of West Africa. Viotti and Kaupi (1993) argue that viewing systems as mental images help generate propositions or hypotheses about interactions between states that can be used to describe or explain outcomes at the system level (see also Smith, 2009; Thakur, 2015). I will therefore shift the realists' established center or focus, the Western context, to the Gold Coast context. In this sense, the worldview I will be working with will be the "Gold Coast international system". Shifting offensive realism's focus from its Eurocentric context to the Gold Coast context should not necessarily give offensive realism a new general condition, as assumed by Africanists, like Homi Bhabha (1994, p. 6; see also Dunn, 2001; Nkiwane, 2001; Smith, 2009, p. 277; Thakur, 2015).

Furthermore, the 'ordering principle' of a political system has an implication on how security considerations and power are perceived. For methodological purposes, offensive realism and other strands of realism find it useful to assume that the domestic realm is characterized by hierarchy and the international realm is characterized by anarchy. The distinction between anarchy and hierarchy, however, is not a distinction between order and disorder. Waltz (1979) for example, points out that the distinction between hierarchy and anarchy is not determined by the level of violence or disorder (p. 114). He admits that the struggle to maintain and uphold hierarchical rule within states may well be more violent than conflicts among states in the international system (Waltz, 1979, p. 103). For methodological reasons, so long as there is a legitimate authority attempting to uphold its right to monopolize legitimate force, the assumption of domestic hierarchy is useful to a realist's analysis; and so long as the international system lacks a central enforcer that can act in ways that can ensure the security of its principal actors above all, the assumption of international anarchy is useful for realist's

analysis (Buzan, Jones, & Little, 1993; Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 18; Waltz, 1979, 1993; Wight, 1978).

The Gold Coast context, however, presents a complex states system quite different from Mearsheimer's states system. Mearsheimer (2001) presents a straightforward Westphalian system in which his states are a set of independent political actors with equal standing, and not under the authority of anyone. This case study presents two overlapping states systems – the Gold Coast states system and the Asante states system. The Asante states system was a sub-state system within the Gold Coast states system. The Gold Coast states system supposedly contained "independent" interacting political actors with no overriding authority, and the Asante sub-states system (Empire) on the other hand, supposedly embodied a hierarchical form of relationship yet loose and with very substantial autonomy for its constituent units.

The Asante states system was made up of three parts: Greater Asante, Provincial Asante, and Annexed Asante. Greater Asante consisted of the original city-states or polities that founded the "Asante union" in 1700. Polities within Greater Asante were known as divisional states. These polities were represented on the Asante Council (Kotoko Council). The Asante king was the head of the Council, but the divisional states had an equal say in the conduct of external relations (Arhin 1967, p. 69). The divisional states maintained their own system of government, paid tributes to the Asante central court (the Asante king), and supplied the Asante king with troops for war campaigns as and when required (Fynn, 1971). The leadership of the divisional states were appointed as commanders of the different divisions of the Asante military organization. Divisional states could be assigned to undertake separate war campaigns

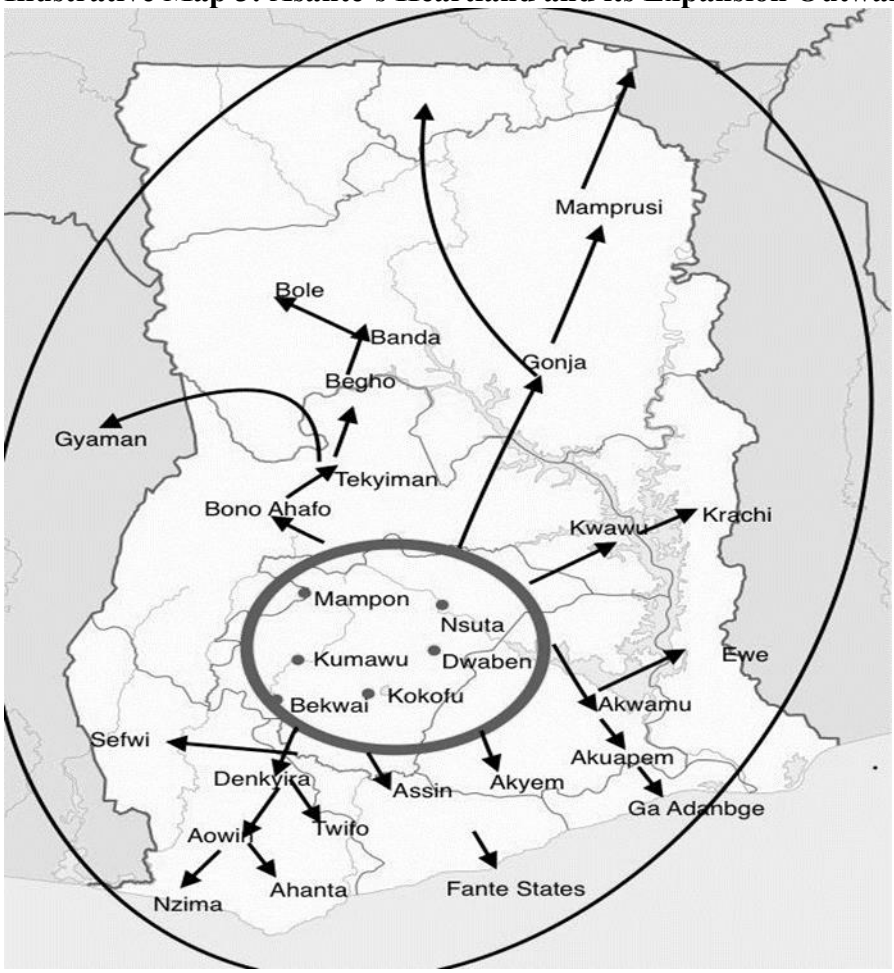
on behalf of the Asante king. Although these divisional states occasionally engaged in skirmishes with each other over territory, they upheld the values of their Union (Wilks, 1993). The existence of Asante was dependent on the survival of this Union.

Provincial Asante was made up of polities (including great and major powers) overrun and incorporated into the Asante Empire through conquest or annexation. Though most of these territories were taken by force, just like the polities in Greater Asante, they were allowed to maintain their own system of government, but were obliged to be loyal to the Asante king, pay tributes, and supply the Asante king with troops for war campaigns when the need arose. The Asante king had representatives stationed in the provincial states to collect taxes and tributes. However, this system of a loose centralized government over the provincial states allowed the polities under the Asante Empire to exercise a substantial degree of autonomy and influence (Dupius 1824; Wilks, 1993; Fynn, 1971; Arhin 1967, 1980).

Annexed Asante were territories that were forcibly absorbed into the Asante Empire as a consequence of the conquest of polities that held those territories. These were mostly territories in distant lands further away from Greater Asante. Most of these territories never engaged the Asante in a direct war. Annexed territories were also expected to be loyal to the Asante king. They were allowed to maintain their own system of government, but were obliged to pay tributes to the Asante king. Resident-chiefs were stationed in some annexed territories. For example, the southern states of Accra and Elmina housed Asante resident-chiefs who had judicial and political functions. Additionally, roaming ambassadors acting on behalf of the Asante king acted as dispute settlers (Cruickshank, 1853). However, in other cases, these annexed territories joined

forces with major powers within or outside the Asante Empire to fight the Asante king (Arhin, 1980; Fynn, 1971). See Map 3 below for Asante's heartland and its expansion outward to incorporate territories into its empire.

Illustrative Map 3: Asante's Heartland and its Expansion Outward by 1824



In principle, Asante exercised authority and power over all the polities within its empire, yet, this system structure was not rigidly hierarchically ordered. Though Asante attempted to claim authority and uphold its right to monopolize legitimate force over the polities, the Asante states system (Empire) was still anarchically ordered. Most polities supposedly under the Asante Empire were autonomous, interacting, territorially-based political actors that did not have any form of overriding authority

regulating their interactions with other polities in the system all the time. In most cases, Greater Asante had no control over the interactions of the provincial states. Most of the provincial states were able to evade the constraints of Asante's authority and pursue their own political goals within a competitive setting. Consequently, Asante's compulsory jurisdiction, continuous organization, and claims a monopoly of force over its territory was questionable (Arhin, 1980; McCaskie, 1995; Fynn, 1971; Bowdich, 1819; Wilks, 1975; Cruickshank, 1853).

Of course, the Asante had a hierarchy of power in the sense that it was clearly more powerful than the other polities in the system (Mearsheimer 2001; Viotti & Kaupi, 1993, p. 68). Yet, the polities within the Asante states system were "like units", in the sense that they were substantially autonomous and equally motivated to seek power and shift the balance of power to their advantage (Mearsheimer 2001; Springborg, 2007, p. 110; Waltz, 1979, pp. 73-99). Often, the 'subordinate states' of the Asante formed alliances against each other or formed alliances among themselves against Greater Asante. There were instances in which provincial states formed alliances to fight Greater Asante or Greater Asante formed alliances with its own provincial states to crush the rebellion of other provincial states (Meredith, 1812; Bowdich 1819; Rattray, 1929; Fynn 1971; Wilks, 1975; McCaskie, 1995; Vandervort, 1998). Aggression, threats of wars, and wars became standard practices within the Asante Empire. The 'subordinate' states could attempt to move out of the Asante sub-states system, depending on the effectiveness of the Asante hierarchical system. For example, when the provincial states of Aowin and Twifo openly revolted against Asante's authority in the early 1700s (see analysis in Chapter 4), they shifted towards the Gold Coast states system, but when they were subdued by the Asante in 1714 and 1715, they shifted back

into the Asante states system (Fynn 1971, Reade 1874). The extent to which Asante's authority over polities within its Empire was centralized, and the extent to which legitimacy over the polities existed, varied considerably with each polity and from time to time. The sovereign functions of the polities in the Asante states system and the measure of power they held relative to others and Greater Asante determined how they pursued power and security considerations during that period. While hierarchy was supposed to be the ordering principle, anarchy was an important feature of the 'states system'. The Asante states system was therefore not a rigid dichotomy of anarchy or hierarchy; it was rather located on a continuum, because for most periods of its history, it was anarchically ordered, and in other periods of its history, it was hierarchically ordered. In this sense, the concept of anarchy as understood and applied by the realist school could somewhat be applicable to this Asante case most of the time.

2.3.2. Establishing the Unit of Analysis (principal actors of the system): One of the key assumptions of realism is that states are the principal actors of the international system. States within the international system are unitary and rational actors, and tend to pursue competitive self-interest. The sovereign nature of principal actors in a political system is what gives them power and authority to mobilize internal resources to balance outside units (Rose, 1998, p.147; Waltz, 1979, pp. 136, 163, 167, 168, 170, 171, 195, 196; Wohlforth et al., 2007). The independent status of states also grants them the right to enter relations with other states (Brownlie, 1979, pp. 73-76). Simply because European analysts do not take pre-colonial African states into consideration does not mean that some pre-colonial African polities did not have similar qualities like the Westphalian model.

It is important to establish if the units of analysis (principal actors) of the Gold Coast and Asante states systems constituted differently from those of the classic European states system. I will establish what counts as a political unit and under what circumstances generalizations about statehood can be applied to Asante and its neighbours in the 18th and 19th centuries. Understanding the nature of the principal units under consideration will help me determine their independence, power, authority and status within the system. According to Weber (1947), Brownlie (1979), Tilly (1990), and Buzan and Little (2000), any territorially-based sovereign polity has (a) a defined territory, (b) a permanent population, (c) an effective government, and (d) independence and the right to enter into relations with other states. Consequently, a political unit must have both internal hierarchy and external sovereignty. It should also have compulsory jurisdiction, exercise continuous organization, claim a monopoly of force over its territory and population, and make decisions about war and peace.

Territorial spaces may have overlapped and shifted in the Gold Coast region in the 18th and 19th centuries (Tonah, 2007), yet most of the polities qualified as appropriate subjects for political analysis because they possessed the qualities of statehood noted above. As noted previously, the Asante Empire had the capability to mobilize offensive military force to support its expansionist ambitions. As will be demonstrated in Chapter 4, Asante's neighbours also had internal hierarchy and external sovereignty, and the capability to make decisions about war; and also formed defensive alliances to counteract Asante's expansionist threats. Consequently, in some measure, most polities in the Gold Coast region in the 18th and 19th centuries were decidedly real in the sense that European states were said to be. After all, the concepts of territorial boundaries and sovereignty are flexible (Crawford, 2006, p. 45; Glanville, 2013; Krasner, 1999). Since

statehood has different meanings and varies in different historical and social settings, for methodological purposes, Clapham (an Africanist) perceives statehood as a matter of 'degree' rather than present or absent (Clapham 1998, pp. 143-57). What I need for my analysis are equivalent, not identical measures (Moul, 1989, p. 103).

2.3.2.1. Defining the Status of the European Entities: It is difficult to define the status of the European entities on the Gold Coast that interacted with Asante and its neighbours in the 18th and 19th centuries. They were initially trading companies or merchants (not sovereign entities) that later interfered directly in the politics, diplomacy and war of the local African polities to maintain a position of dominance in the profitable trade on the Gold Coast. The Europeans first came to the Gold Coast as traders licensed by their home countries to trade and build relationships with the local kingdoms (Adu Boahen, 1974; Wilks, 1975; Bowdich, 1819; Fynn, 1971). They built fortified trading stations on the coast to protect their trade from other European competitors and hostile African polities. The Portuguese were the first to arrive in the 15th century, followed by the Dutch, and later the English, Danish, and Swedish. For example, the Dutch West India Company operated throughout most of the 18th century. The British African Company of Merchants, founded in 1750, was the successor of the other trading companies that left the Gold Coast (Adu Boahen, 1974; Fynn, 1971; Wilks, 1975). These European traders developed commercial alliances with African polities, but were often drawn into local conflicts and diplomatic manoeuvres with the local polities by the close of the 1800s. When public opinion turned against the inhumanity of the slave trade and abolished in the British Empire in 1807, the profitability of the European trading companies was crippled (Edgerton, 1995; McCarthy, 1983; Wilks, 1975). By 1821, the trading companies had been dissolved and

the British government was forced to take over the administration of the trading forts in the Gold Coast (Maxwell, 1985; McLaughlin & Owusu-Ansah, 1994; Strachan, 1997).

The representatives of the British government on the Gold Coast were eventually drawn into local conflicts as they maneuvered to hold on to the commercial alliances previously held by the trading companies with the local chiefs (Adu Boahen, 1974). For example, the British were drawn into the Asante-Fante conflict for most of the 19th century (Adu Boahen, 1974; Agbodeka, 1971; Fynn, 1971; Wilks, 1975). When drawn into local conflicts, a small garrison attached to the British administration on the Gold Coast joined forces with some local polities to fight the Asante. For example, at the end of March 1860, only about 306 British troops were attached to the British administration at the Gold Coast (Ekoko, 1984, p. 133).

It cannot be denied that the actions of the Europeans on the coast contributed to the 'anarchic state of nature' in the Gold Coast system, the 18th and 19th centuries. Although, the European settlers (both the trading companies and representatives of the British government) were not part of the international political system of the Gold Coast in any meaningful sense, their presence and trading activities reinforced the nature of great power politics on the Gold Coast. Their introduction of firearms and ammunitions in large quantities changed the nature of warfare and enabled some polities to maximize their military power to dominate others (Daaku, 1970). Besides, their introduction of the lucrative trans-Atlantic slave trade encouraged wars between rival polities to maintain a constant supply of slaves (Adamu, 1979; Anstey, 1975; Curtin, 1967, 1969; Daaku, 1970; Dantzig, 1975; Davidson, 1961; Lovejoy, 2000; Wilks, 1993). The thesis

does not treat the European settlers as principal actors of the Gold Coast system until the latter half of the 1800s, when they directly engaged in wars with the African polities and entered into formal political relations with the African polities.

2.4. Sources

Generally, African historiographical material is considered weak because literacy was absent from many parts of the sub-continent until well into the 20th century. Africans relied on oral tradition during the 18th and 19th centuries to preserve their history. This makes the African accounts of history during that period questionable (Fynn, 1971, p. xi; Lamphear, 2007, pp. xi-xvi; Lemke, 2003, pp. 114-138). John Fynn (1971) notes that since documentary evidence is overwhelmingly important to European and North American historians, there is the tendency to equate absence of written documents with absence of history (p. xi). The absence of documentary evidence would then effectively mean the absence of events worthy of historical study.

Colonial historiography, which prevailed in the first half of the 20th century, was written mostly by European traders, missionaries, explorers, and colonial administrators who were usually interested in the culture of the local population and in trade relations with that population (Fynn, 1971, p. xi; Lamphear, 2007, pp. xi-xvi). The writings of the traders and European administrators were typically simplistic, mostly depicting issues that reflected on the culture, politics and traditions of the local populations, as well as issues that affected their security and trade relations. References to warfare and security competitions often depicted the local populations as ethnic savages engaged in endless cycles of meaningless violence. Some of the writings did not have reliable chronological depth beyond a few generalizations (Bowdich, 1819;

Cruickshank, 1853). Historians note that the accounts of the Europeans in the 19th century provided little information on African weaponry and omitted reliable military and economic data from their writings (Fynn, 1971, p. xi; Lamphear, 2007, pp. xi-xvi).

The writings of the traders and colonial administrators may appear simplistic, depicting only trade relations and matters important to the authors, yet relevant information on militarization, power politics, and war are implicit in much of these writings. In spite of the limitations noted above, essays with reasonable military, political, and economic content have appeared since the mid-19th century. Essays in the 20th century have been able to fill in some gaps with documentary evidence from archival sources, notably those of the English Royal African Company (1672-1750), the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa (1684-1791), the Second Dutch West Indian Company (1674-1791), and the Danish West Indian and Guinea Company (1671-1754). They provided relevant material on military, political, and economic data on pre-colonial Asante history (Adjaye, 1984; Fynn, 1971; McCaskie, 1993; Wilks, 1975; Yorak, 1990). Later essays on Asante have restored some validity to pre-colonial African history. In fact, there is good documentation of the Asante using military power in terms of realist explanations in most of the publications on the Asante Empire in the 18th and 19th centuries (Arhin, 1967; Farwell, 2001; Fynn, 1973; Vandervort, 1998).

For the case study, I will draw upon multiple sources, including archival sources from the European traders, as well as earlier and later works by both European and African historians, anthropologists and archaeologist on the 18th and 19th century Gold Coast. These will include archival sources based on records from three European trading companies and settlers who were based in the Gold Coast in the 18th and 19th centuries

– the British Royal African Company, Danish West Indian, and Dutch West India Company. Most of the English records are preserved in the Public Record Office in London. Dutch records are located in the Royal Archives in The Hague, and the Danish records are located in the Royal Archives in Copenhagen. The records of the British Royal African Company and Danish West Indian Company are rather fragmentary. For example, the records of the British Royal African Company in the 18th and 19th centuries are mostly presented as summaries or excerpts rather than full original text. Most of the records consist almost entirely of commercial information and extracts of correspondence between the English traders on the Gold Coast and their company officials in London. Only a few files contain records on local politics. Besides, some records for certain periods are either missing or damaged because they were not preserved under good conditions (Law, 2001, p. vii). The Danish West Indian Company, on the other hand, interacted more with the southern polities (Ewes and Ga Adangbe) than the hinterland polities on the Gold Coast. As a consequence, some of their records on Asante and the hinterland states were based on speculations and rumors of war (Justesen, 2005; McCaskie, 2007). In contrast, the Dutch records for the same period are comprehensive. The Dutch West India Company was more strongly entrenched on the Gold Coast and had more trading posts than the English and Danish trading companies. In fact, the Dutch paid particular attention to the politics and inter-state relations on the Gold Coast (Carson, 1961, pp. 37-58; Feinberg 1969). Besides, the principal trading partners of the Dutch was the Asante Empire (Fynn, 1971). Therefore, I will use more of the Dutch archival sources for my case study.

In the archival sources cited in-text, N.B.K.G means the Netherland Possessions on the Coast of the Guinea, W.I.C. means Dutch West Indian Company, T70 indicates

abstracts of letters from the British Royal African Company, and D/G means Director General. The numbers are inventory or file numbers. For example, N.B.K.G. 82, W. Butler, Axim, to D/G Haring, Elmina, 20 January 1716 refers to Netherland Possessions on the Coast of the Guinea, file number 82. The note was sent by W. Butler (a Dutch operative) located in the city-state of Axim (a Dutch trading port) to the director general of the Dutch trading company located in the city-state of Elmina on 20 January 1716.

I will draw out discussions on anarchy, the pursuit of power, great power behaviour, coercion, war, and the pervasiveness of alliances that have been left implicit in much of these archival sources. Most of the archival materials have been digitized and are accessible on repository websites. Furthermore, most of the letters or writings of the traders and administrators have been compiled into books. Hence, most of the books with publication dates of the 1800s and early 1900s are personal detailed accounts of European traders and 'settlement' administrators. For example, a statistical account of Thomas Edward Bowdich, a British trader's mission from Cape Coast Castle (an European trading port on the coast) to Asante's capital in the interior was published in 1819. Another detailed account by Brodie Cruickshank on his eighteen years on the Gold Coast was published in 1853.

2.5. Conclusion and Plan of Study

How can a supposedly Western-developed theory on great power politics in international relations hold true when it comes to explaining power relations among traditional African polities, which are in a different political realm from that of the 'realist' international system? The next chapter, the theoretical chapter of the thesis, presents the causal logic or reasoning that underpin Mearsheimer's central claim on the

power maximizing behavior of states. To effectively test Mearsheimer's hypothesis against the Asante case I present his central claim and all reasoning associated with it as variables. This will lay the groundwork for testing Mearsheimer's claims against the empirical evidence examined later in the thesis.

Having established that pre-colonial Gold Coast's concept of anarchy is comparable (not identical) to that of the realist's, the next chapter expounds on the following: First, the distinctive features of Mearsheimer's anarchic system that generates fear, distrust and uncertainty; second, the principal response variable - the maximization of military power - that lead to intense security competition and likelihood of great power war; and third, other supporting response variables that follow from maximization of military power such as desperate balancing against a potential adversary and polarization the system. The chapter also identifies and defines some latent variables that also precipitate the principal response variable noted above. They are geographical proximity to a potential adversary, and significant sub-unit (domestic) factors such as nationalism (Mearsheimer, 1990, 2001). The chapter discusses alternative IR views where relevant, and raise useful questions that will help set the context to test Mearsheimer's hypothesis in the case study chapter

The primary purpose of the case study chapter is to determine whether Mearsheimer's argument that it makes good strategic sense for states to gain as much military power as possible and, pursue hegemony holds up as an explanation when applied to the Asante case in the 18th and 19th centuries. I will test the core explanatory variables that make Mearsheimer's states power maximizing revisionist states against the Asante case. If Mearsheimer's theory is to provide a good explanation of the Asante case, then

polities in the Gold Coast system did not stand idly by while others gained increasing increments of military power. Instead, they sought to contain potential threats by seeking additional increments of military power and engaged in desperate balancing against adversaries with the ultimate aim of becoming a hegemon. Additionally, latent factors including nationalism and geographical location strongly influenced their resolve to accumulate more military power. Consequently, this response by the polities in the anarchic Gold Coast and Asante states systems resulted in intense security competition, with the ever-present danger of great-power war hanging over them.

Chapter 3: Presenting Mearsheimer's Central Ideas as Variables

3.1. Introduction

To effectively test Mearsheimer's hypothesized causal factors against the Asante case, I have chosen to present his central ideas associated with the maximization of military power as variables. Before I proceed with the analysis of the case study, it is important to clearly identify and define the variables he uses to explain the phenomena observed in his political system. Following a causal sequence, I will start off with presenting the primary 'explanatory (independent) variable' – *anarchy* – which is the fundamental causal factor in Mearsheimer's political system, and follow up with the principal 'response (intervening)[16] variable' - maximization of military power, which precedes his 'dependent variable' - outcomes at the system level (security competition, war and ultimately regional hegemony). I will also discuss other supporting intervening

16 In statistics, a response variable is classified as a dependent variable. However, for the purpose of this study, I have classified the intervening variables – caused directly by the independent variable – as the direct response variable to the primary variable that causes change in the system (Independent variable – anarchy)

variables that ensue from the maximization of military power such as desperate balancing and polarization of the system, as well as other auxiliary variables that strongly influence the states' motivation to seek increasing increments of military power. The auxiliary variables include geographical location and significant socio-political sub-unit factors like nationalism (Mearsheimer, 1990, 2001). Ultimately, for Mearsheimer's hypothesis to hold against the Asante case, the maximization of military capability together with all supporting variables should intensify the security competition with a likelihood of war, and motivate all the leading polities in the Gold Coast system to pursue regional hegemony - 'dependent variable'.

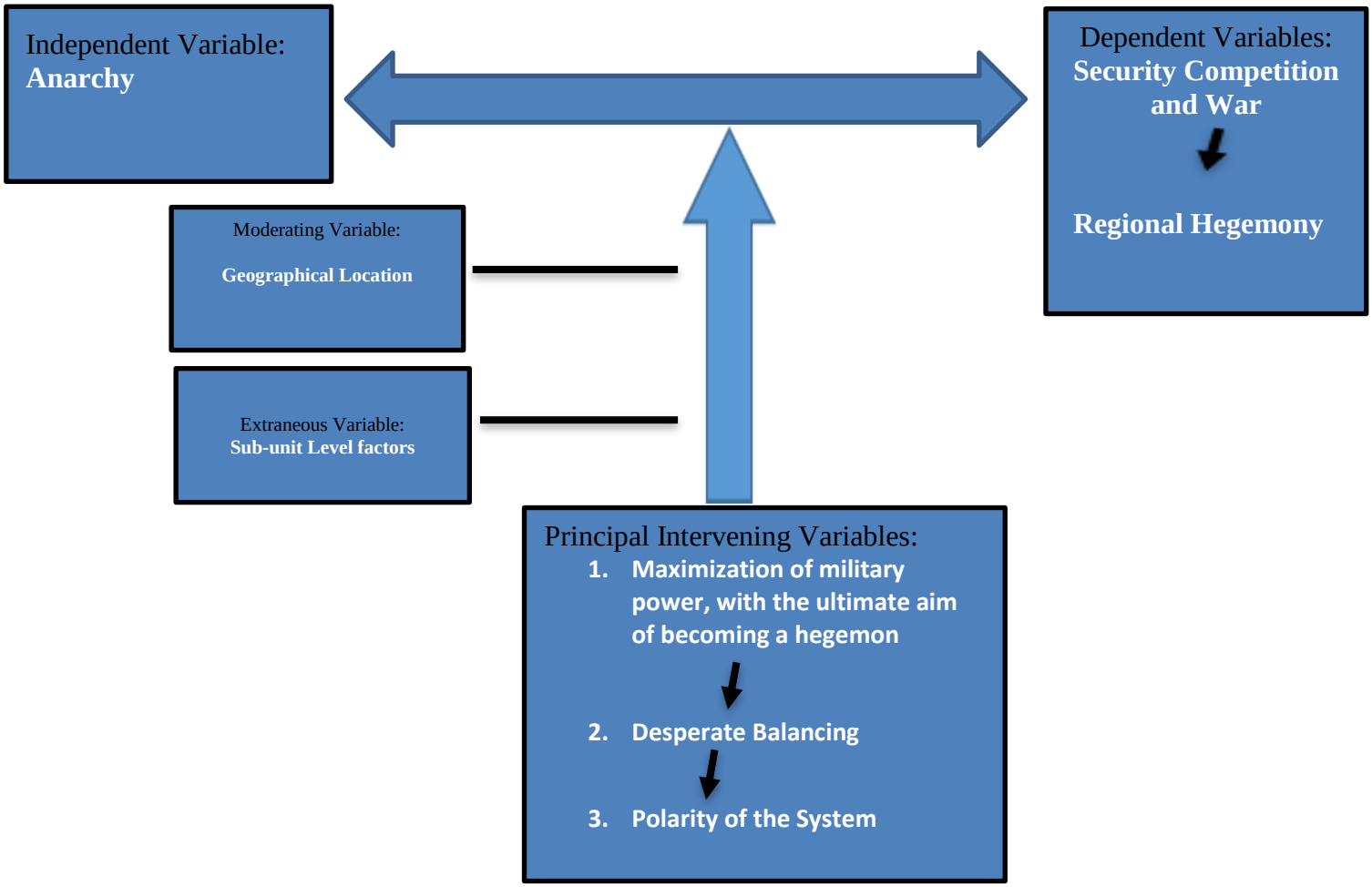
In my discussions, I will present alternative views held by other theories, where relevant. It should, however, be noted that some aspects of Mearsheimer's explanation strike as being extremely disputable; however, analysing this inherent problematics is beyond the scope of this thesis. I will begin by providing brief definitions of his variables before I get into an in-depth discussion to explain the logic underlying them.

3.2. Defining the Variables (see figure 1 below)

In this case, Mearsheimer's *independent variable* is the anarchic system – a system devoid of a central authority that regulates the interactions of its principal actors. Anarchy – the primary independent (explanatory) variable – in the Asante case should remain comparable (not necessarily identical) to the European classic system because the response variable will be expected to change if the independent variable is defined differently in the Asante case. In this sense, significant variations in the definition of the independent variable (anarchy) in the Asante case, when compared against Mearsheimer's theory would influence international relations in the Gold Coast system

differently. If not, I should be able to justify why the causal direction in the Asante case stays the same as observed in Mearsheimer's, despite the fact that anarchy is defined differently.

Fig. 1 Illustrative model of variables influencing security competition and the likelihood of war



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Response Variables

The *intervening variable* follows the independent variable but precedes the dependent variable in a causal sequence. It is used to explain causal links between the independent variable and the dependent variable (MacKinnon, 2008; Baron & Kenny, 1986). Mearsheimer's most important intervening (response) variable is 'the maximization of military power, with the ultimate aim of becoming a hegemon'. This principal response variable is the focus of the primary research question of this study.

It should, however, be noted that just because states maximize their military power, does not necessarily cause intense security competition in the system, leading them to war. To this end, Mearsheimer uses other *intervening (hypothetical) variables* to support his case, namely, 'desperate balancing' and 'polarization of the system' that results from the accumulation of military capability. When states maximize their military power, it generates fear among the other states in the system. This fear drives others to also maximize their military power through desperate balancing and other means, which, in turn, polarizes the system, and ultimately, causes intense security competition, drawing closer to reality, the danger of the great power war (Mearsheimer 2001).

Furthermore, I cannot discuss the principal response variable – maximization of military power - without factoring in some significant *latent variables* that, according to Mearsheimer, exert a strong influence on a state's resolve to accumulate military power. The latent factors are 'significant socio-political sub-unit level factors' and 'geographical location'. These latent factors are not correlated with the independent

variable (anarchy), but they certainly affect the strength of the relationship between the independent variable (anarchy) and the dependent variable (outcomes at the system level). Though they both stand as intervening variables between anarchy and outcomes at the system level; they also stand as independent variables that reinforce states' resolve to maximize their military power, which, as a result, produces desperate balancing and polarizes the system.

Geographical location acts as a *moderating variable* since it influences the strength of the relationship between the independent and response variables. In Mearsheimer's anarchic system, geographical proximity to an adversary determines the vigor of the resolve states may have to accumulate additional military power increments. For example, if you share a common border with a presumed adversary, the level of threat you are under becomes accentuated, and you would likely increase your military capability to attack or threaten your adversary. Consequently, your actions would shift the balance of power and polarize the system, which would eventually intensify security competition that threatens the likelihood of war. In the case study geographical proximity will be used to validate why some polities chose to maximize their military power.

Sub-unit level factors are variables unlikely to be considered by structural theorists. To structural theorists, sub-unit level factors are usually immeasurable and uncontrollable; and ideally, have little effect on structural analysis. However, Mearsheimer notes that some sub-unit level factors like nationalism could possibly have some effect on the outcomes at the system level, insofar as they do not conflict with the balance of power. For this reason, sub-unit level factors are *extraneous variables*, because they are

undesirable variables that could potentially influence the relationship between the independent variable and the principal response (intervening) variable. Structural theorists, therefore, prefer to control the effects of such extraneous variables (sub-unit factors) in their analysis. Such extraneous factors can suggest a correlation when, in fact, there is none, or they may even introduce bias. For example, there may be the tendency to overestimate or underestimate the presumed effects of sub-unit factors on the international relations of the Gold Coast. For this reason, controlling these confounding variables will prove to be a challenging task in this study. To deal with this difficulty, I have to be careful with what I identify as a possible confounding variable in the Asante case. Mearsheimer's propositions may not hold if the Asante case presents such extraneous variables differently from how they are featured in Mearsheimer's propositions.

To establish the context for the case study, the sections below will first present the distinctive features of Mearsheimer's anarchic system that generates exceptional aggressive behaviour (maximization of military power) by states. After establishing the distinct features of Mearsheimer's anarchic system, I will present Mearsheimer's response variables that will be tested in the case study chapter. The response variables discussed below are the following: (1) maximization of military power, with the ultimate aim of becoming a hegemon; (2) polarity of the system (the way power is distributed among the leading powers in the system) and balancing; (3) geographical location; and (4) significant socio-politically sub-unit factors (Mearsheimer, 1990, 2001).

3.3. The Distinctive Features of Mearsheimer's Anarchic System that Generate Aggressive Behavior

Chapter 2 has already elucidated upon the concept of anarchy in the pre-colonial Gold Coast and Asante states systems and how that compares to the realist concept of anarchy. The analysis below focuses on the distinctive nature of Mearsheimer's anarchic system that turn his political actors into power-maximizing revisionist states, with the ultimate aim of becoming a hegemon. As noted in Chapter 2, realists do not view "anarchy" as chaos, disorder, or conflict. Anarchy is rather understood simply as a reflection of the order or disposition of the system, where the system is devoid of a central authority and as a consequence the nature of the interaction among sovereign and autonomous actors is essentially conflicting. IR theory, including all the major strands of realism, also forwards that anarchy is an important feature of international relations. They maintain that the international system is anarchic because there is no central authority to regulate the interactions of its principal actors.

The assumption that the international system is anarchic because there is no central authority to regulate the interactions of its principal actors places Mearsheimer with other realists and IR theorists. However, Mearsheimer departs from them when he introduces an additional set of assumptions that he compounds with his view of anarchy. Mearsheimer's (2001) rationale underlying his argument for the 'anarchic state of nature' is supported by the assumption that the highest goal of states in an anarchic system is to survive because no state can ever be certain about the intentions of the other states, particularly future intentions (p.31). Consequently, states come up with reasonably sound strategies to maximize their prospects for survival by maximizing their military power, and aiming for hegemony (Mearsheimer 2001, p. 31).

The other strands of realism also claim that the quest for survival is the primary factor that influences states' behavior, and causes them to alter the balance of power in their favour (Pashakhanlou, 2013). However, Mearsheimer (2001) amplifies the importance of fear concerning the failure to survive and uncertainty about other's intentions as motivating forces in his anarchic system (p. 32). His argument is that in fear of losing one's power status, great powers anticipate danger and regard each other with suspicion; they worry that others may attack them any moment. Mearsheimer (2006) claims that within an anarchic system, there is no certainty that a state's benign intentions will not quickly change into malignant intentions and *vice versa* (pp. 73-74). According to Mearsheimer (2006), intentions are ultimately located in the heads of the policy-makers (p. 73). For example, manipulations and deceptions that underlie military build-ups or foreign policies cannot be measured with a high degree of certainty. For this reason, it can be quite difficult to distinguish between defensive and offensive intentions. In Mearsheimer's (2001) anarchic system, uncertainty about other states' intentions creates an irreducible level of fear among states (p. 43). Since security relates heavily to the question of survival in Mearsheimer's anarchic world, states can only accept absolute certainty (Pashakhanlou, 2017, p. 93).

Consequently, in Mearsheimer's anarchic system, security dilemma cannot be escaped because uncertainty about other states' intentions cannot be avoided. States in Mearsheimer's anarchic system, therefore, foster an acute sense of vulnerability, and they are, thus, strongly inclined toward employing any tactic or strategy that might enhance their security level (Mearsheimer, 2001, 2011). If states want to survive, they have to always expect the worst in regards to other states' intentions towards them.

Seemingly, the best guarantee of survival lies in becoming a hegemon, because no other state can effectively threaten a mighty power.

While not completely denying the "absence of an overarching authority", other IR theorists argue that constraints produced by the "absence of a world government" are exaggerated by (offensive) realism (Lebow, 2007, p. 55; Shimko, 1992, p. 293; Wendt, 1992, p. 391; Copeland, 2000, pp. 187–212). Richard Lebow (2007), for instance, argues that anarchy is a "permissive force", not a "causal" one (p. 55; see also Shimko, 1992, p. 293). Alexander Wendt (1992), a leading constructivist, for example, argues that "Anarchy is what states make of it", and thus, it is only a construct of the states in the system. He contends that structural realism misses the more determinant factor, which is the "intersubjectively shared ideas that shape behaviour by constituting the identities and interests of actors" (Wendt, 1992, p. 391; see also Copeland, 2000, pp. 187–212).

Liberal and social constructivist theorists maintain that it is possible for states to develop benign intentions toward each other. They opine that the way states behave with each other is not a function of the structure of the system or interactions between states, but is, instead, largely determined by how individuals think and talk about international politics (Hinsley, 1967; Wendt, 1999). Consequently, positive discourse can drive trust and cooperation among states as opposed to suspicion and hostility (Doyle, 1983, 1997). Liberalism believes that anarchy can be regulated with interdependence and cooperation (Dunne, 1997, p. 150; Graham, 1998/1999; Keohane, 1989, 1995, p.47; Keohane et al., 1995, p. 47; Lebow, 1994, p. 273).

Even Waltz, a leading proponent of structural realism, recognizes the limits of states' aggressive behaviour in the anarchic system. Waltz (1988) asserts that the ultimate concern of states is not to be excessively aggressive, but to seek the minimum level of power that is needed to attain and maintain their security or survival (p. 40; see also Grieco, 1997, p. 167). Arash Heydarian Pashakhanlou's (2013) examination of psychology literature on fear confirms that individuals tend to respond to fear with defensive behaviour, not offensive behaviour (p. 207; see also Öhman, 2008, p. 709). Therefore, it appears that Mearsheimer's states are not necessarily motivated by the fear to fall behind in the race to survive; rather they are motivated by their objective to dominate, control, and influence politics in their region of the world. It appears that the bid for hegemony that Mearsheimer posits contradicts his assumption that states, being rational entities, are primarily concerned with their survival. Knowing that the pursuit of war and hegemony is fraught with uncertainty, and hence, are rarely successful, why would it make sense for survival-minded states to try to amass as much power as possible, beyond what is necessary to sustain and maintain their security?

If we are to accept that Mearsheimer's anarchic system shared similarities with the Gold Coast and Asante state systems, then we must also agree that the polities in those 'states systems', especially the Asante Empire, pursued reckless and dangerous behavior just to ensure their survival in the system. For this case study, I will specifically be testing what Mearsheimer proposes as states' response to "anarchy". I am yet to determine if Asante and its neighbours acted as aggressors in order to augment their military power, leading themselves to embark on numerous wars of expansion. It would, however, be interesting to note if there were instances wherein

positive discourse and cooperation among the polities in the Gold Coast region dissipated the security dilemma for a while.

3.4. Maximization of Military Power, with the Ultimate Aim of Becoming a Hegemon

The crux of the analysis in this thesis revolves around Mearsheimer's principal response (intervening) variable - maximization of military power with the ultimate aim of becoming a hegemon. Mearsheimer posits that in an anarchic system, the desire to survive encourages states to behave aggressively. Since everyone wants safeguarding, the best means to ensure one's own survival is to possess ultimate power, that is, offensive military capability (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 33). Mearsheimer believes that offensive military capability is the only tool that determines how much power states wield within the international system (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 56).

In measuring military power, Mearsheimer considers the strategic resources (latent power) that go into building military power. Mearsheimer, (2001) posits that although there are a variety of resources, the size of a state's population (pp. 56, 57) and its wealth (p. 61-67) are the two most important societal components for generating military power. Mearsheimer (2001) maintains that great powers pay careful attention to how much latent power rival states control because rich and populous states usually have the capability and incentive to build powerful armies (pp. 45-46; see also Knorr, 1956, 1970).

The pursuit of military power with the prime intention to establish hegemony, determines the way power is distributed within a system (polarity of the system).

Consequently, the imbalance of military capability among the leading states in the system generates security competition, which occasionally leads to war. In Mearsheimer's anarchic system, the balance-of-power dynamics, security competition, and the likelihood of war are largely determined by whether military capability is distributed in a more-or-less even fashion or by whether the power held by the principal actors is sharply asymmetrical. According to Mearsheimer (2001), "[T]he configuration of power that generates the most fear is a multipolar system that contains a potential hegemon" (p. 44) — with formidable military assets (Chapters 4 and 8). In such a scenario, the potential hegemon has such an enhanced level of military capability, that it stands a good chance of dominating and controlling all the other great powers in its region of the world (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 44–45).

Since states live in a climate of uncertainty in Mearsheimer's anarchic system, typically, they assume others as having the worst intentions. They assume others are emboldening their military power. They also assume others may at any time, attempt to use arms against them. Consequently, they would seek to contain any such threats by amplifying their military capability, either through a balancing coalition or by building their own arsenals (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 39). Such a scenario undoubtedly leads to the creation of an unbalanced system (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp.44, 335, 338). In Mearsheimer's anarchic system, any imbalance in the military capability, in comparison to the existing balance of power, endangers the status quo and threatens war (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 337–341; see also Waltz, 1979, p. 118).

Mearsheimer, however, notes that the threat level is less acute when all the principal actors possess almost the same level of military capability (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 339).

Consequently, this would produce a balanced system, which would minimize the security competition and the likelihood of war (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 45). An evenly matched military threat encourages the principal poles to manage the level of threat to the system by limiting any potential violent conflict (George, 1988, p. 644; James, 1995, p. 186; Waltz, 1964). Approximate parity in military capability strengthens deterrence to war by ensuring that no state is tempted to use force to exploit a power advantage. According to Mearsheimer (2001), relative military balance between the two dominant poles during the Cold War, for instance, bolstered stability (pp. 338–346).

Mearsheimer (2001) observes, however, that such balanced systems are still likely to experience power asymmetries among their members, but such asymmetries are usually not as pronounced as the gaps created by the presence of a potential hegemon, which creates an unbalanced system (p. 45). Should one pole attempt to increase its military expenditure, build its arsenal, increase its military forces, or deploy forces in a manner that is perceived to be aggressive, the other dominant pole will reciprocate (James, 1995, p. 184; Gilpin, 1981, pp. 235–237). This is what often threatens and increases the likelihood of an arms race between very powerful poles (Copper, 1975; Deutsch & Singer, 1964; Mearsheimer, 2001; Rosecrance, 1966). Such an aggression generates a security paradox and an inescapable security competition (Booth & Wheeler, 2008). Taking a different approach, Jervis (1978) and Glaser (1997) however, claim that it is possible to marginalize or even do away with the security dilemma. In this sense, war can be prevented if defense gains an advantage over offense.

Contrary to Mearsheimer's view, some scholars argue that foreknowledge of the distribution of military capability in the system should serve as a deterrent against any potential conflict. This is because an adversary's overwhelming military capability should provide a good indicator of a potential war's outcome (Kugler & Domke, 1986, pp. 39–70; Kugler & Lemke, 1996; Organski & Kugler, 1980). Mearsheimer (2001) posits that foreknowledge of the costs of a potential war and the formidable capability of an opponent should deter warmongering states from initiating a war. States should, instead, be motivated to settle for the level of military power that can sustain their security and limit conflict (Blane, 1973; Fearon, 1995; George, 1988; James, 1995; Waltz, 1964). Furthermore, while Mearsheimer's worldview of the significance of military power is close to that of other realists (Morgenthau, 1948, 1956; Carr, 1964; Rose, 1998; Zakaria, 1992), the latter rather tend to consider how other power capabilities, such as economic power, relational power,[17] and soft power,[18] work together to influence system outcomes.

Additionally, Waltz (1979), for example, does not find states to be intrinsically aggressive. Waltz (1964, 1979) insists that aggression or the pursuit of military capability beyond what is needed to sustain the security of a state endangers the status quo in the system. In Waltz's assessment, great powers build military capability for defensive, not offensive, purposes, because the aggressive cementing of military power upsets the balance of power (Waltz, 1988, 1979). As Grieco (1993) argues, states are

17 Relational power is a nation's character, morale, and quality of governance and diplomacy, which some realists believe is a significant aspect of a nation's power (Morgenthau, 1956, p. 186).
18 Joseph S. Nye Jr. (1990) first coined the term "soft power" in his publication Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power. Soft power is the ability to affect others through the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading others, and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes (Nye Jr., 2004, 2011).

defensive positionalists because they are more concerned with maintaining their relative position of power in the system than maximizing military power, with the ultimate aim of becoming a hegemon.

A point of contention between Mearsheimer and other realists lies in his emphasis on the offensive stance of great powers. Mearsheimer (2001) insists that in realpolitik, states are inclined to formulate offensive strategies according to their competitor's measurable capabilities and indeterminable intentions. He however notes that this is a characteristic not of every state, but particularly of great powers. For great powers, "the best defense is a good offense" (Mearsheimer 2001, p. 36). In light of this, defensive strategies are usually intended to be for offensive purposes (to be used when necessary) (Mearsheimer, 1994/1995, 2001). Mearsheimer points out that any pursuit of military power be it for offensive or defensive purposes, aggravates tensions with other states and increases distrust among them (Mearsheimer, 1994, 2001). The problem lies in the fact that it is difficult for any state to increase its own chances of survival by accumulating military assets without threatening the survival of others (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 36). A potential hegemon, for example, does not have to do much to generate fear among the other states in the system. The hegemon's formidable military capabilities alone are likely to scare the neighbouring states into assuming the worst about its intentions (Mearsheimer, 2010, p. 345). Mearsheimer's anarchic world is, therefore, defined in terms of the threat, use, and control of military force. Consequently, Mearsheimer (2001) views the balance of power as being largely synonymous with the balance of military power (pp. 55–56).

As noted in Chapter 1, polities in the Gold Coast in the 18th and 19th centuries were obsessed with the possession of offensive military capabilities. Access to firearms on a large scale largely contributed to the perpetual warfare in the region (Bowdich 1891; Fynn, 1971; McCaskie, 1995; Vandervort, 1998). Yet, Mearsheimer's assumptions concerning offensive military capabilities may raise a number of questions when they are applied to the context of the Asante Empire in the 18th and 19th centuries. Did all the polities in the Gold Coast consider military capability to be the most important form of power? With limited accessible historical data, it may be difficult to assess how other forms of power influenced outcomes at the system level. However, it will be interesting to be able to determine if military capability was a special characteristic of all the polities in the region. Furthermore, one must also question if the accumulation of military assets by some polities threatened the survival of others and contributed to the heightened anarchic environment? In my analysis, I will be assessing if military capability was considered the most important form of power by the polities in the Gold Coast; and if the accumulation of excessive military assets by some polities threatened the survival of others and contributed to the heightened anarchic environment.

There is no usable historical data available to measure the military power against other forms of power. Additionally, I cannot accurately measure offensive military capability across states, because the following cannot be assessed: 1) the number of soldiers, 2) the quality of the soldiers, 3) the number of weapons, 4) the quality of the weaponry, and 5) how those soldiers and weapons were organized for war. Besides, I cannot also assess the strategies employed by various polities, such as battle-management systems and power-projection capabilities. I will also not be measuring the quality of military power across polities in the case study. Mearsheimer (2001) acknowledges that there is

no simple way to measure the quality of military power across states, mainly because the quality of military power depends on a variety of factors, all of which tend to vary from case to case. Mearsheimer notes that although a number of studies have attempted to measure the balance of military power in particular historical cases, no study available has systematically and carefully compared the measure of military power of different states over long periods of time (p. 134).

3.5. Polarity of the System (the way power is distributed in the system) and Balancing

As noted earlier, accumulation of military capability by a state should not necessarily generate security competition among states. However, what ensues from it – that is the way military power is distributed in the system among the leading actors polarizes the system, which, in turn, intensifies security competition and the likelihood of war. Mearsheimer (2001) forwards that political systems with a clear imbalance of power are more prone to heightened security competition and war than those in which a rough equilibrium prevails (p.44). According to Mearsheimer (2001), power in the international system is usually arranged in the following three different ways: bipolarity, balanced multipolarity, and unbalanced multipolarity (p. 335). Bipolarity is defined as a particular system of the world order in which military influence stands divided between two states. Multipolarity is a distribution of power in which more than three states have nearly equal amounts of military power (pp. 337-338). However, a balanced multipolar system contains no avenues for a potential hegemon, while an unbalanced multipolar system contains room for a potential hegemon (pp. 338, 344, 345).

Generally, offensive realists and other realist theorists are in agreement that a bipolar system is simpler to manage (Gaddis, 1986, 1987; Mearsheimer, 2001; Morgenthau & Thompson, 1985; Waltz, 1964, 1979). Ted Hopf (1991), for example, asserts that bipolar systems are considerably less prone to breaking into wars. A bipolar system has only two great powers, and therefore, there is only one conflict dyad that directly involves them. For example, the Soviet Union was the only great power that the United States could have fought during the Cold War (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 339). The two major poles have a relatively clear understanding about their limits (James, 1995, p. 185; Grieco, 1990; Waltz, 1964, 1979). Mearsheimer (1990) points out that during the first fifteen years of the Cold War, the rules of the game had not yet been established, giving rise to several serious crises. However, over time, each side gained a clear sense of how far it could push the other and what the other would simply not tolerate (p. 26). When two principal poles with their overwhelmingly dominant power remain in a bipolar system for a long period, they get time to manage their conflict without warring. Eventually, sets of written and unwritten rules developed over the course of time during the Cold War era (Mearsheimer 1990, pp. 26–27). Mearsheimer (2001) believes that the absence of serious crises during the period of 1963–90 was in part due to the development of such agreements on both sides. Additionally, in a system dominated by two militarily powerful states, others are too weak militarily to tip the balance of power. Mearsheimer (1990) argues that when great powers are fewer in number, the system is more rigid. As a result, less powerful states are hard-pressed to preserve their autonomy and not jeopardize the same by confronting a much more powerful state (p. 14; see also James, 1995 p. 184).

On the other hand, multipolar systems are more prone to war because they have multiple powers at play. Offensive realism and other strands of realism hold that in multipolar systems, dangers are diffused, responsibilities are unclear, and definitions of vital interests remain easily obscured (Haas, 1970; James, 1995, p. 185; Mearsheimer, 2001; Waltz, 1988, p. 46). This allows many potential conflict situations, because each pole carries potential for conflict. Conflict can erupt across poles as well involving major and minor powers, and escalate into a major conflict (Mearsheimer, 1990, p. 15). Differences on issues may result in shifts across coalitions or conflicts between former allies. In multipolar systems, especially, states can gang up to attack a third state (Mearsheimer, 1990, p. 15). According to Mearsheimer (2001), "alliances are only temporary marriages of convenience: today's alliance partner might be tomorrow's enemy, and today's enemy might be tomorrow's alliance partner" (p. 33). Mearsheimer points out that it pays to look out for your own self-interest, and be selfish in a self-help world (p. 33).

There is, however, a rough balance of power among the major states in a balanced multipolar system, because such a system has no potential hegemon. Nonetheless, it is still likely that there will be power asymmetries among states in such a balanced system, although the power asymmetries will not be as conspicuous as the rifts created when there is the presence of an aspiring hegemon (Mearsheimer 2001, p. 45). A multipolar system is more unstable and unbalanced when it contains a potential hegemon. Mearsheimer's position on this supports Organski and Kugler's (1980) arguments brought forth in *The War Ledger*. According to Organski and Kugler (1980), a state with a significantly increased military capability in a multipolar system frightens others and induces them to try to reverse the gain of that potential hegemon through war. The

reverse is also possible in that a state gaining power over an adversary will try to make its advantage permanent by reducing its rival's power position by the force of arms. Organski and Kugler argue that when large asymmetries become discernible in the distribution of power resources, the probability of war increases markedly. Consequently, balanced multipolarity is likely to generate less fear than unbalanced multipolarity (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 45).

Mearsheimer (2001) points out that one might think that a marked power asymmetry would decrease the prospects for war, since the potential hegemon is likely to be satisfied with the status quo. Besides, minor powers would not even attempt to initiate war because they would not have the military capability to challenge a great power (p. 334). Offensive realism maintains that potential hegemons are likely to not be satisfied with the balance of power irrespective of whether it is established in a bipolar or a multipolar system. They would rather aim to acquire more power, and eventually gain regional hegemony, because hegemony is the ultimate form of security, which would increase their prospects for survival in an anarchic system. Consequently, in Mearsheimer's world, aggression through accumulation of military power results in fear, which becomes endemic in the system (Mearsheimer 2001, p. 345).

Further, contrary to Mearsheimer's view on multipolarity, some scholars argue that multipolar systems allow for a greater number of interaction opportunities (Copper, 1975; Deutsch & Singer, 1964; James, 1995; Niou, Ordeshook, & Rose, 1989). In such a scenario, confrontation is less likely because each state directs a smaller share of its attention to others. Consequently, it is unlikely that hostility will find root in such a system. Scholars who argue for peaceful multipolar systems believe that they provide

opportunities for one or more powers to play the balancing role. Stability becomes more achievable if multiple powers control less than fifty percent of the total capabilities (James, 2002, p. 140). The threat ensued from the presence of a potential aggressor can lead others to align against the aggressor. The logic here is that at least coalitions can assist in the prevention of war. Alliances can at least provide temporary cooperation if not permanent stability (Copper, 1975, p. 415; Deutsch & Singer, 1964; James, 1995, p. 185; Niou, Ordeshook, & Rose, 1989, p. 78).

Mearsheimer (2001), however, insists that equilibrium can never be achieved in a power-balancing model, not even in a balanced bipolar or multipolar model. Robert Gilpin (1981) argues that equilibrium will only be achieved when no one has anything to gain from changing the system. This is because once equilibrium is achieved, its maintenance becomes unlikely, since the costs incurred by the dominant power for maintaining the status quo will rise faster than its capability to meet those costs. If the dominant power cannot resolve this developing disequilibrium by other means, it will try to change the distribution of power, usually through a war to establish hegemony (Gilpin, 1981; Mearsheimer, 2001).

For the case study, I am especially interested in knowing whether power was distributed more or less evenly among the polities in the Gold Coast states system in 18th and 19th centuries, or if there were large power asymmetries? How did a clear imbalance of power or a rough equilibrium influence security competition and the likelihood of war in the system? What strategies did Asante and its neighbours use to restore the equilibrium or check imbalances and concentrations of power in their international system? In particular, did the system contain a potential hegemon—a great power that

is considerably stronger than any of its adversaries in a (unbalanced) bipolar or (unbalance) multipolar system?

3.6. Geographical Proximity and the Likelihood of Conflict

Presumably, there is a linear causal relationship between the independent variable, anarchy, and the dependent variable, outcomes at the system level. Geographical proximity, acting as a moderating variable, alters the strength of the causal relationship between the independent and the dependent variables. This means that the geographical proximity of a state to its adversary can either diminish or intensify the level of threat. According to Mearsheimer's theory, the geographical arrangements of states, together with their measure of military power, greatly influence security competition and the likelihood of war. Geographical closeness to an enemy entity with an increased military capability determines whether the threatened state is vulnerable to an attack. In Mearsheimer's anarchic world, security competition is more intense and war is more likely when the aggressor and the threatened state share a common border (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 267; Possen, 1984, pp. 63–67; Wayman 1985). Mearsheimer (1990) argues that, for example, Germany's vulnerable location at the center of Europe, with relatively open borders on both sides, put it in a very offensive position (p. 25). In 1914, Germany worried about having enemies on two fronts, the east and west. Germany felt isolated and surrounded by enemies. Germany had formed the Triple Alliance with Italy and Austria-Hungary in 1882, in which the states pledged to defend each other if any one of them was attacked. However, Germany still felt encircled and threatened by the Triple Entente formed by France, Russia, and Great Britain in 1907. Mearsheimer insists that these geographic factors made Germany's security problems especially acute. This gave German elites a uniquely strong motive to mobilize their

public in favor of war, which they did by using nationalism as a propounding tool (Mearsheimer, 1990, p. 27; 2001, p. 181).

Mearsheimer (2001) maintains that geographical barriers can also limit power-projection capabilities, particularly those of the land forces. Opposing armies would only cross a large expanse of geographical hurdles just to attack one another if the prize tremendously outweighed the cost (pp. 83-84, 114). Mearsheimer believes that, for example, the "stopping power of water" explains to a large extent why the United Kingdom and the United States (since the latter became a great power in 1898) have never been invaded by another great power. It also explains why the United States has never tried to conquer territories in Europe or the Northeast Asia, and why the United Kingdom has never attempted to dominate the European continent (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 41, 44).

On the other hand, a considerable distance between a threatened state and its allies leaves it vulnerable to an attack from enemies within its proximity. Mearsheimer (2001) argues that balancing states with geographical barriers are sometimes prevented from putting meaningful pressure on their aggressors. For example, a state may not be able to put effective military pressure on a state threatening its ally because it is separated from its ally and the threatening state by a geographical barrier (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 44). However, when allies are in close geographical proximity to each other, they can easily balance against a close-by adversary. Even though balancing is not optimal, it is the rational response to check, deter, or confront aggression when the aggressor is near (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 271). Mearsheimer notes that between 1890 and 1894, and before and during World War 1, neither France nor Russia, for example, was strong

enough by itself to stand up to Germany's superior military strength, and both were geographically vulnerable because of their shared borders with Germany. So they had no option but to balance against Germany (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 10, 53, 186, 214).

Essentially, security competition and the frequency of war depend largely on the military capability of the aggressor and geographical nearness. Frank Wayman (1985) argues that geographic proximity can determine whether or not the potential for conflict will be high. Taking Mearsheimer's views into account, did the geographical arrangement of the states in the Gold Coast system in the 18th and 19th centuries greatly influence the security competition and likelihood of war? Did Greater Asante's geographical location at the heart of the Gold Coast (See Map 3 in Chapter 2), landlocked by other great powers like Wassa, Denkyira, Akyem, and Akwamu and cut off from the lucrative firearms trade routes to the south, make its security problems especially acute and give it a strong motive to mobilize its people for war?

3.7. Making a case for the significance of sub-unit level factors

It is also important to assess how unit-level variables are treated in a strictly structural explanation of international relations since doing so may prove useful for my analysis of the inter-state relations in the Gold Coast in the 18th and 19th centuries. As a structural realist, Mearsheimer pays little attention to how sub-unit level factors influence outcomes at the system level. However, he acknowledges that some unit and sub-unit level factors, such as hyper-nationalism can also influence foreign policy objectives (Mearsheimer, 2009, p. 246; Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 58, 182, 283, 289, 297, 298). Mearsheimer (2001) admits that states usually do not fight wars for security

reasons alone, and are sometimes driven in good part by nationalism and other domestic political calculations (p. 335).

Mearsheimer (2009) however points out that domestic calculations sometimes lead states to act foolishly. According to Mearsheimer (2009), "States often pursue misguided foreign policies because domestic politics intrude into the policy-making process and trump sound strategic logic. For example, a powerful interest group or an individual with an ill-advised agenda might have undue influence on a country's foreign policy" (p. 245; see also Waltz 1979). Snyder (1991) maintains that selfish interest groups in states, particularly in cartelized political systems can influence foreign policy (see also Posen, 1984; Rathbun, 2008; Van Evera, 1999). However, it is expected that states will act in strategically intelligent ways most of the time (Elman, 1996). Morgenthau (1948) acknowledges that domestic political factors serve a valuable theoretical function that helps us to construct an explanatory theory of behavior.

Mearsheimer (2001) finds nothing wrong with employing domestic calculations and foreign policy theory into his discussion as long as they do not conflict with the balance of power logic. Mearsheimer (1990, 2001, 2009) believes that strategic domestic calculations, like nationalism should not undermine sound strategic thinking, because it is the most powerful weapon that can motivate citizens to support a government's aggressive policy against a common adversary. Using the case of Bismarck's foreign policy between 1862 and 1870, Mearsheimer (2009) argues that Bismarck was motivated in a good part by nationalism – a unit-level ideology – to start three wars (1864, 1866, and 1870) that transformed Prussia into Germany. Bismarck's actions,

however, made good strategic sense, as the German state that emerged in 1871 was more powerful than the Prussian state it had replaced (p. 246).

Mearsheimer's work (1990, 2009, 2001) indicates that political ideologies of nationalism, the glorification of national unity and national security, are probably the most powerful unit-level variables with the potential to influence system-level outcomes. From Mearsheimer's (2001) perspective, nationalism, in particular as a non-structural variable, exerts a powerful influence on state behaviour, especially in wartime when leaders have to motivate citizens to take up arms against the common enemy (pp. 109, 282-283, 289, 335; also see Mearsheimer 1990, p. 12; Mearsheimer 2009, p.246). Nationalism is a potent force that can galvanize citizens over national security concerns that unite nations, and ultimately, carry the potential to start wars (Mearsheimer, 1990, pp. 20-2). In Mearsheimer's view, the presumed effect of nationalism on system outcomes should not violate the balance-of-power logic (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 289).

Waltz (1975), a leading proponent of structural realism, takes a stricter stance and insists that domestic calculations should have no impact at all on international outcomes. Waltz insists that system outcomes are rather produced by the interaction of its actors and through competition amongst them (Waltz, 1979, p. 74). Waltz's (1979) version of structural realism suggests that structural arrangements emerge spontaneously from the interactions among the political actors in the system, and that unit and sub-unit variables do not inform structural determinants (pp. 67, 72, 73, 121–123; see also Waltz, 1986, p. 340). For the same reason, Waltz (1979) rejects foreign

policy analysis as part of international relations theory because he takes foreign policy to be a theory of domestic politics.

Nominally, a unit-level variable should be useful for structural analysis if it affects how structural forces play out – whether by enhancing or diminishing security or relative power. Unfortunately, for structural theorists, the more such factors affect outcomes at the system level, the less dominant a role their structural features would play in any explanation. Structural theorists like Mearsheimer, who assume that some unit-level variables influence foreign policy objectives, would hope such variables, being contingent, are so variable and random that they do not exert significant influence upon outcomes at the system level. To Mearsheimer, insofar as the number of unit-level factors influencing foreign policy is minimal, structural theory should still hold (Mearsheimer, 2009, p. 246).

It should be noted that in spite of acknowledging the relevance of some unit-level factors, Mearsheimer still holds that structural variables are the most important variables when it comes to explaining systemic outcomes. Mearsheimer posits that the keys to war and peace lie more in the structure of the system than in the nature of the states (Mearsheimer, 1990, 2001, 2009). Waltz (1959) best explains this by stating that the sources of conflict may be found in the first and second images (that is, the sub-unit and unit levels); however, ultimately, interactions among states in the third image (that is, the system level) make conflict possible (pp. 16, 24, 39, 41). According to Waltz (1986), interactions among states transcend the characteristics of its units (p. 121; see also Mearsheimer, 2001; Gilpin, 1981; Waltz, 1979).

If this is indeed the case, it would be interesting to note if any sub-unit or unit-level variables influenced security competition and the outbreaks of wars in the Gold Coast context? For example, did nationalism or glorification of national unity play a role in the international relations of the Gold Coast in the 18th and 19th centuries? If so, in what ways? Were sub-unit factors more dominant or minimal in explaining outcomes at the system level?

Furthermore, although I will not be discussing how personal rule or personal power has a presumed effect on outcomes at the system level in this case study, it is imperative to mention it here because personal rule or personal power is a central facet of African politics (Jackson & Rosberg, 1984). Jackson and Rosberg in their seminal study on personal power in Africa described it as a system ordered less by institutions than by personal authority and power (Jackson & Rosberg, 1984). Mearsheimer (2001), however, insists that, it does not matter for theory-making whether Germany in 1905 was led by Bismarck, Kaiser Wilhelm, or Adolf Hitler, or whether Germany was democratic or autocratic. What matters from the point of view of theory-making is how much relative power a state possessed at the time. Yet, there are many instances where he indicates how Adolf Hitler, as a national leader, was better at practicing deception to build military capability. In his 2001 publication he mentions Hitler 130 times and Napoleon over 100 times. He talks about how Napoleon as a leader was instrumental in building armies and used strategic coalitions to shift the balance of power in France's favor. Comparably, the history of the Asante Empire and its neighbors in the 18th and 19th centuries, just like that observed in the history of other great powers, were dominated by strong political personalities. For example, the personalities of the Asante monarchs dominated the history of the Asante Empire in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The historical record on the Asante Empire, for example, focuses more on how instrumental strong Asante rulers like Osei Tutu (1695–1717), Opoku Ware I (1717–1750), Osei Kwadwo (1764–1777), and Osei Bonsu (1801–1824) were in creating elaborate military organizations and sophisticated centralized bureaucracies to facilitate Asantes' imperial ambitions (Wilks 1975; Fynn 1971; Adu Boahen & Ajayi; 1989).

3.8. Conclusion

According to Mearsheimer (2001), the configuration of power that generates the most fear is a system that contains a potential hegemon with formidable military assets. This makes the measure of power distributed among the leading states in the system the principal cause of intense security competition, and ultimately great power war. If Mearsheimer's hypothesis is to hold water, the increased access to military power (firearms) by some of the polities in the Gold Coast should have generated fear that led to heightened security competition.

While Mearsheimer argues in favor of maximization of military power, and possibly, hegemony, alternative theories argue for "positional survival", where states choose to settle for the level of military power that can sustain their security and limit conflict. I am working from the assumption that polities in the Gold Coast were survival-minded states, with the goal of sustaining and maintaining their statehood, sovereignty, and security. If so, did they all opt for "positional survival" where they settled for the level of military power that could sustain their security and limit conflict, or did they rather choose to maximize their military power, with the ultimate aim to become a hegemon.

As indicated in Chapter 1, the Asante Empire was a potential hegemon in the Gold Coast system. If Mearsheimer's hypothesis stands true, this marked power asymmetry should have frightened others to reverse Asante's dominant position by war. At the same time, Asante as the aspiring hegemon should have tried to make its advantage permanent by reducing its rival's power positions by applying force of arms. If alternative arguments by other scholars should hold, then Asante, as the potential hegemon, should have been satisfied with the status quo (Waltz, 1979). Additionally, some players in the system should have played balancing roles through alliances against the aggressor to provide temporary stability (Copper, 1975; Deutsch & Singer, 1964; James, 1995; Niou, Ordeshook, & Rose, 1989).

According to Mearsheimer, the geographical proximity to an adversary could either intensify or diminish the security competition in a system. Geographical proximity may also determine the power-projection capabilities of an adversary. Taking Mearsheimer's views into account, did geographical arrangements of states in the Gold Coast system in the 18th and 19th centuries greatly influence the security competition and the likelihood of war? Additionally, while unit- and sub-unit level factors are usually immeasurable, Mearsheimer acknowledges the fact that some strong socio-political factors like nationalism can possibly influence system outcomes. With limited information on the foreign policy objectives of the polities of the Gold Coast in the 18th and 19th centuries, I will not be in a position to accurately assess the presumed effects of sub-unit factors on the international relations of the Gold Coast. I will be faced with the difficult task of estimating what confounding variables in the Asante case strongly influenced the balance of power in the Gold Coast and Asante states systems.

In the next chapter, I will be looking at these and additional questions that will help answer the primary research question posed in Chapter 1. I will test Mearsheimer's assumptions and arguments against the historical data pertaining pre-colonial Asante and its neighbors in the 18th and 19th centuries. Whether Mearsheimer's assumptions about great power politics holds relevancy depends on how well they will be able to provide a good explanation of how structural and non-structural factors that caused the intense security competition and conflicts between Asante and its neighbours in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Chapter 4: Struggle of Power Among Asante and its Neighbors in the Gold Coast in the 18th and 19th Centuries

4.1. Introduction

This case study tests Mearsheimer's central proposition –'maximizing military power with the ultimate aim of becoming a hegemon is the logical solution in an anarchic environment' – against the international relations of Asante and its neighbors in the 18th and 19th centuries. Chapter 2 has already established that the realist concept of anarchy, as applied to European great power politics, is comparable (not identical) to the pre-colonial Gold Coast context, which is essential to testing Mearsheimer's hypothesis. The latter will be persuasive if offensive realism provides the best account of great-power behavior among Asante and its neighbors in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Ultimately, an account of the determination of the leading polities to maximize their military power, the intensity of security competition, number of wars as well as their motivation to pursue hegemony in the Gold Coast system should help to validate or weaken Mearsheimer's hypothesis.

To conduct this test, the case study must substantiate the following key factors associated with Mearsheimer's hypothesis regarding the maximization of military power:

1. First, the accumulation of military capability should be the central objective of the leading polities in the Gold Coast anarchic system;
2. Second, Asante and its neighbors should accumulate military capability with the ultimate aim of becoming a hegemon;
3. Third, with the determination to amass military power, equilibrium should never be achieved in the power-balancing model, and the dominant power (s) should try to change the distribution of power, usually through a war;
4. Fourth, power asymmetry in the system should frighten others to reverse the dominant power's position by war;
5. Fifth, geographical proximity to potential aggressors should intensify the climate of uncertainty and urge polities to accumulate additional military power;
6. Sixth, sub-unit factors, potent enough to influence outcomes at the system level, such as nationalism, should motivate the leading polities to maximize their military power, and mobilize their citizens for wars of expansion, and national consolidation;
7. Seventh, Asante and its neighbors should systematically engage in aggression as their military power increase;
8. Eighth, consequently the history of the Gold Coast in the 18th and 19th centuries should involve the clash of revisionist states[19] with immense military power;
9. Ninth, ultimately the political environment in the Gold Coast states system should revolve around an especially powerful state—a potential hegemon. Even if the political system does not contain a hegemon, one or more of its states

19 The term is used by A.F.K. Organski in his publication *World Politics* (1958) to describe states that are not satisfied with the status quo and strive for either political or economic hegemony.

> should be substantially more powerful than the rest, yet the latter must have sufficient military assets to resist it significantly in a war, possessing some reasonable prospect of turning a conflict into a war of attrition that cripple the potential hegemon, even if it ultimately wins the war (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 5).

Against this, other factors that can disprove Mearsheimer's hypothesis would be the case where Asante and its neighbors seek 'positional survival' – that is, the level of (military) power needed to attain and maintain their survival and limit conflict - rather than dominance over others, and pursue economic power and cooperation rather than aggression (Blane, 1973; Fearon, 1995; George, 1988; James, 1995; Waltz, 1964, 1979). Furthermore, a multipolar Gold Coast system should allow for greater balancing against any aggressor, and limit war (Copper, 1975; Deutsch & Singer, 1964; James, 1995; Niou, Ordeshook, & Rose, 1989). Additionally, sub-unit (domestic) factors should be the principal variables that explain outcomes at the international level; and the key to war and peace should rely more on domestic calculations than the structure of the system.

Each of the above points may not be explicitly evident in every significant phase of Asante's history; however, most aspects of it should be implicit in Asante's 200-year history to support or disprove Mearsheimer's hypothesis. Insofar as pre-colonial Asante and its neighbors seek and possess formidable military capabilities (according to their own standards), with the ultimate goal of hegemony, and balance against their adversaries in an apprehensive and polarized system, especially through wars and

threats of wars, then their behavior should resemble what Mearsheimer defines as 'the tragedy of great power politics' (Mearsheimer, 2001).

The historical data, especially on foreign policy, on pre-colonial Asante and its neighbors in the 18th and 19th centuries is not as rich or certain as that used for the analysis of European great power politics. In addition, the lack of well-documented historical data on offensive military capabilities across polities in the Gold Coast, hamper conclusions as to how those factors helped minimize or maximize power and war. In spite of these limitations, there is still some reliable information on militarization, power politics, and war in writings on pre-colonial Asante that enables this case study (Arhin, 1967; Farwell, 2001; Fynn, 1971, 1978; Vandervort, 1998; Bowdich, 1819; Reade, 1874; Meredith, 1812; Reindorf, 1898; Edgerton, 1995). I have identified cases with sufficient evidence to assess whether the motives behind the behavior of the polities in these cases were to maximize military power, with the ultimate aim of becoming a hegemon, or not.

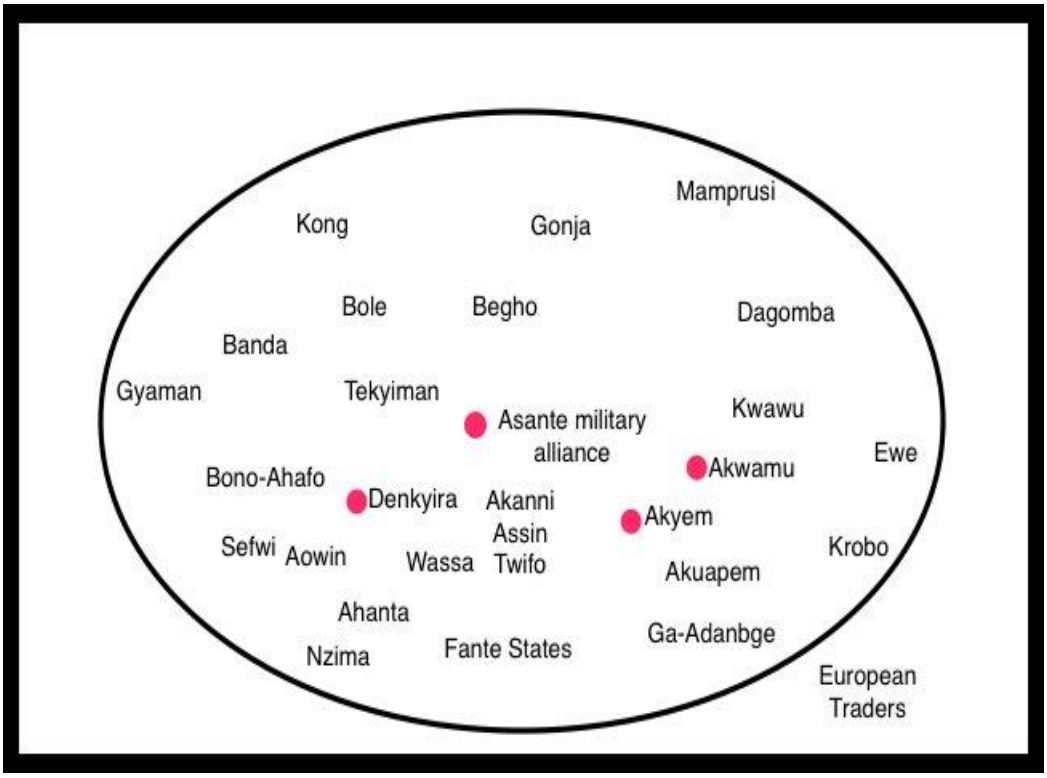
I focus on five periods of Asante's history: 1698-1717, 1718-1750, 1750-1764, 1764-1780, and 1780-1902. These periods coincide with distinct periods of Asante's history, delineating the rise, expansion and consolidation of the Asante Empire: 1698 to 1717 covers the establishment and rise of the Asante Empire, 1718 to 1750 is the period of its expansion, and 1750 to 1764 are the years of consolidation. The period from 1764 to 1780 covers Asante's urge to further expand its empire. The period from 1780 to 1902 covers Asante's final drive to hegemony, and an era when Asante's military power was challenged by another dominant entity, until its downfall in 1902. Although similar causal mechanisms were at work in all the mentioned periods, power variations in the

system structures influenced security competition and the frequency of war differently in different times. It should also be noted that some sections contain additional historical detail, so to reiterate the intricacies of the security competition in the system. Before I begin my analysis, I present an overview of the principal actors of the Gold Coast system by the beginning of the 18th and 19th century.

4.2. An Overview of the Principal Actors in the Gold Coast States System in the 18th and 19th Centuries

4.2.1. Principal Actors in the Gold Coast States System at the Beginning of the 18th Century: According to historians, by the beginning of the 18th century, the Gold Coast states system contained three powerful states - Denkyira, Akyem and Akwamu located in the hinterland. In addition to these three powerful states was the military alliance among 6 polities in the hinterland, referred to as the Asante military alliance (Chazan, 1988; McCaskie, 2007; Fynn, 1973, 1971). See Figure 2 below.

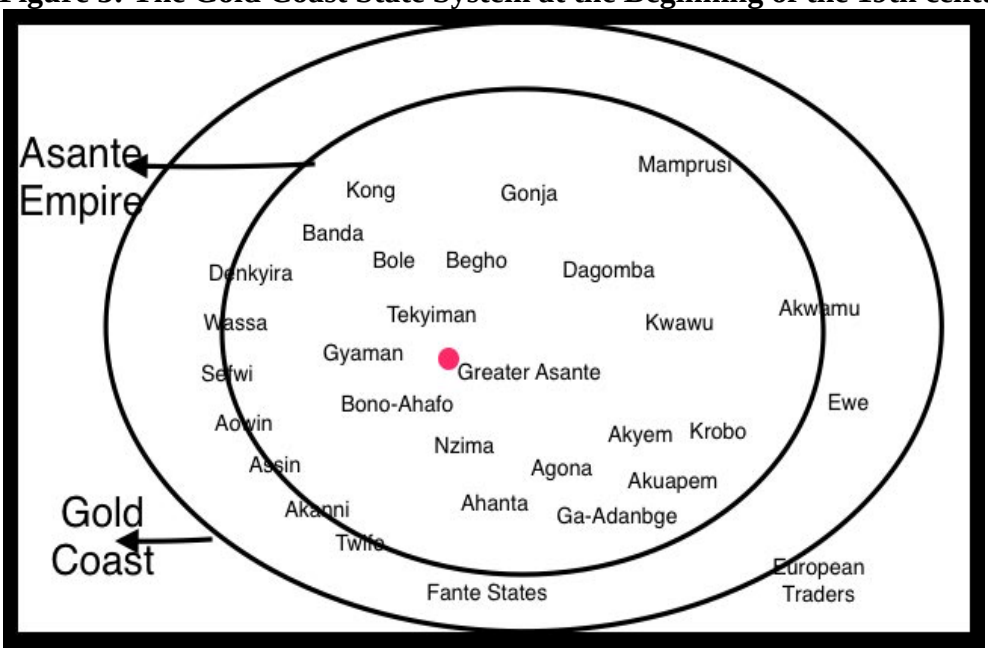
Figure 2: Principal Actors in the Gold Coast States System at the Beginning of the 18th Century



In addition to these principal actors were other polities who also wielded power in the Gold Coast system. The principal actors were determined by their association with the firearms, gold, slave, kola and ivory trade and the trade routes, while the power of the dominant states was measured by the extent of territory they controlled and their control over trade, especially the firearms trade (Fynn, 1973, p. 28; McCaskie, 2007, p. 1). Denkyira was particularly viewed as the most powerful state in the system because of its military capability (Fynn, 1973, p. 28). It is reported that Denkyira used its military power to subdue the polities in the hinterland and south, especially those on the key southwest trade routes including the Asantes (Eisenstadt, Abitbol, & Chazan, 1988; McCaskie, 2007). See Map 4 below for the trade routes and trade markets.

4.2.2. Principal Actors in the Gold Coast States System at the Beginning of the 19th Century: By the start of the 19th century, the 'one-states system' (Gold Coast system) had metamorphosed into a 'two-states system'. The 'principal states system', the Gold Coast, contained a notable 'sub-states system', the Asante Empire. Although in theory, the tributary states of the Asante Empire were subordinate to the Empire, they exercised substantial autonomy and fiercely resisted Asante's authority, as explained in Chapter 2. The subordinate states on the border in Figure 3 below shifted between the two states systems depending on their success in resisting Asante's authority during different periods in their history. Akwamu was also on the border of the Asante Empire, however, it was not a subordinate state but a dependent ally, and an Asante protectorate.

Figure 3: The Gold Coast State System at the Beginning of the 19th century.

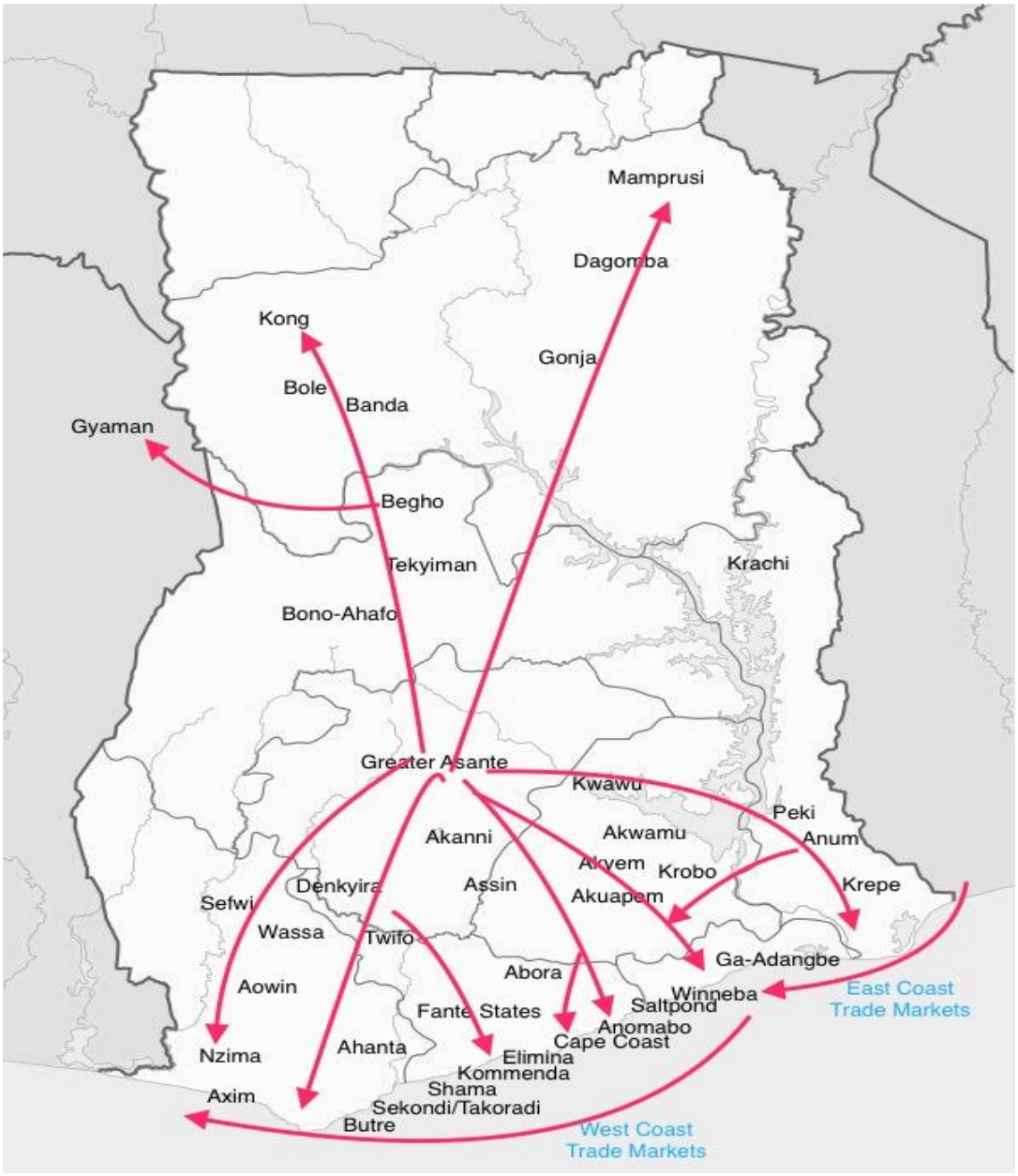


Box 1 below contains a list of the principal actors in the Asante Empire by 1800, and Map 4 indicates the location of the principal actors on the trade routes.

Box 1: Principal Actors within the Asante Empire by 1800		
Western & Southwestern Territories	**Eastern & Southeastern Territories**	**Northern Territories**
1. Denkyira 2. Sefwi 3. Wassa 4. Twifo 5. Akanni 6. Assin 7. Aowin	1. Akwamu* 2. Akyem 3. Akuapem 4. Krobo 5. Ga-Adanbge	1. Bono 2. Ahafo 3. Tekyiman 4. Begho 5. Bole 6. Kong 7. Dagomba 8. Gonja 9. Gyaman 10. Banda

Almost all the states located on the western and southwestern trade routes resisted Asante's authority because they were situated on the firearms trade routes and also had access to power (the firearms trade – military power - from over 12 trading markets on the southwest coast). See Map 4 below.

Illustrative Map 4: Major Trade Routes and Trade Markets in the Gold Coast at Beginning of the 19th century



Asante was more interested in the southwestern territories compared to the southeastern ones because besides being placed on the lucrative trade routes, all the territories in the southwest were gold producing states. Meanwhile, just a few territories in the east and southeast including Akyem were gold producing states. Besides, compared to the west coast, there were just a few European firearms trading markets on the east coast. The northern territories gave Asante access to the slave and kola nuts markets in the north and beyond.

By 1800, Asante controlled almost the entire area of the Gold Coast with the exception of the Fante territories[20] in the south and the Krepe territory in the far southeast. See Map 10 below (Aidoo, 1977, p. 1; Fynn, 1971; Hargrove, 2015; Johnson, 1965, pp. 33-58). Asante eventually conquered and absorbed the Fante states into its Empire in 1807, and invaded Krepe in 1869 (Johnson, 1965). Additionally, though the European traders were sometimes pulled into the local politics,[21] they could not be considered as principal actors in the Gold Coast states system until the second half of the 19th century (see explanation in Chapter 2). See Map 4 for the major trading routes Asante controlled by the start of 1800.

4.3. 1698-1717: The Establishment and Rise of the Asante Empire

The Asante state was initially founded as a military alliance among 6 polities in 1697,[22] in the enclave of the Pra and Offin river basin in the hinterland of the Gold Coast (Rattray, 1929; Fynn 1971; Collins and Burns, 2007). In their bid to consolidate the military alliance into a nation-state, they overran and absorbed all the smaller polities

20 The Fantes were part of several small independent polities (24 polities) on the Gold Coast who had a loose alliance. They have been in existence since the sixteenth century (Sanders 1979). Principal Fante states included Anomabo, Elimina, Abora, Cape Coast, Esikuma (Fynn, 1971).
21 For example, when the Dutch inherited the trading port at Elimina from the Portuguese and Butre port from the Swedes, they thought it beneficial to negotiate a treaty with the local polities in order to establish a peaceful long-term relationship in the area. In effect, the local territories where the European trading ports resided were their protectorates (Doortmont & Smit 2007; Doortmont & Benedetta, 2006; van Dantzig, 1981; Yarak, 1986; Feinberg, 1976)

22 The polities are Mampon, Kokofu, Kumawu, Dwaben, Bekwai, and Nsuta. All the polities with the exception of Mampon were from the same clan, the Oyoko clan.

within the river basin[23] to establish the Asante military union (Fynn, 1971, p. 29). See placement of the Asante military union within the Gold Coast state system in Map 5 below.

Illustrative Map 5: Placement of the Asante Military Union within the Gold Coast State System by 1700



Fynn posits that the overpopulation in the sub-region created an atmosphere of apprehension and uneasiness as polities fought with each other for territory to settle and farm (Fynn, 1971, p. 29). Scholars suggest that the quest for territorial integrity and survival, more than any desire to become a military power or dominate the trade routes, fundamentally drove the settlers in the Pra and Offin river basin to form the military alliance (Fuller, 1921, pp. 10-11; Fynn, 1971, p. 29; Rattray, 1929, pp. 169, 199, 235), because territorial spaces shifted easily through conquest (Fynn, 1971; Tonah, 2007).

23 The smaller polities include Domaa, Amakom, Atwima, Kwabiri, and Tafo. It is believed they were the first settlers in the area, migrating from the Mossi region of modern Burkina around 1000AD. The exact dates of the migrations are obscure (Fynn 1971).

Yet, it appears that Asante chose to establish a united military front to seek power beyond what was needed for its security and survival. Its name alone, 'Asa-nti', which translates as 'because of war', denotes aggression. If the apprehension in the sub-region was truly over territory to settle and farm as assumed by Fynn (1971, p. 29), then Asante could have opted for economic cooperation instead of overrunning its neighbors within the Pra-Offin-river basin. Apparently, Asante's actions in this case reinforces Mearsheimer's (2010) position that holds that in an anarchic system, it is likely that states react to mutual uncertainty by assuming that the other has the worst intentions (pp. 395-396). In assuming the worst, Asante maximized its military capability, and through war established the Asante military union.

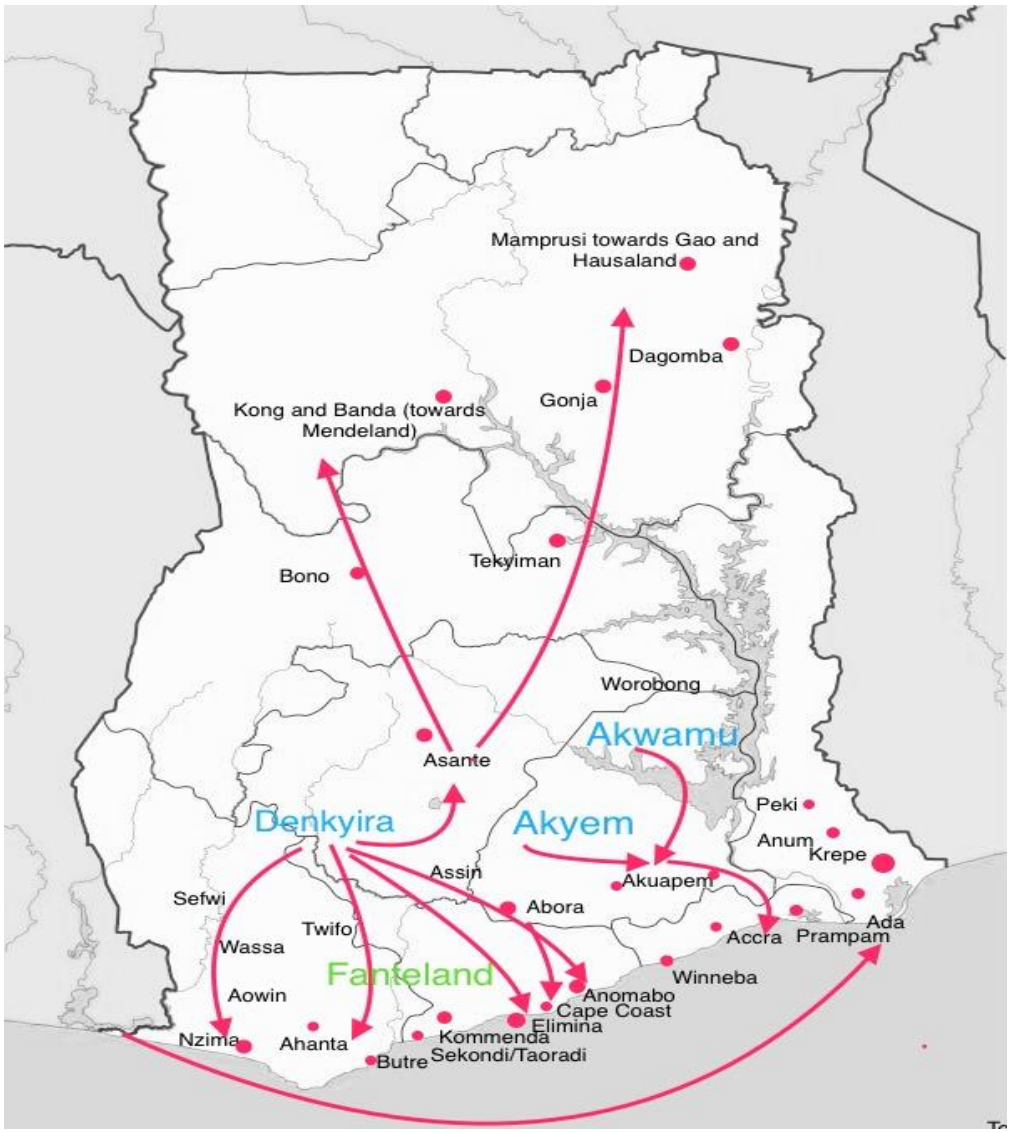
Moreover, the King of Asante at that time, King Osei Tutu, was considered to be an artful practitioner of realpolitik (Rattray, 1929; Fynn 1971; Wilks, 1961; Chazan, 1988). Scholars argue that he was motivated by nationalism as well as security concerns, and sought to strengthen the military bond by requiring all the divisions of the union to swear an oath to a sacred and mystical 'golden stool', which embodied the soul of the Asante nation and sanctioned the authority and power of the Asante king (Aidoo, 1977; Ajayi, 1998; Bosman, 1705; Bowdich, 1819; Smith, 1926; Busia, 1951; Daaku, 1970; Fynn, 1971; Rattray, 1929; Wilks, 1961). The Asantes allegiance to the mystical 'golden stool' gave them a sense of purpose and conviction. The myth of the golden stool and the sense of nationalism it symbolizes were central to Asante's power. Historical records indicate that Asante's sense of nationalism created a powerful effect on its foreign policy and became a mobilizing tool to maximize their military power and raise fighting forces from the divisional states (Bowdich, 1819, p. 281; Smith, 1926, Chapter 1; Rattray, 1929, Chapters XI-XXIV; Busia, 1951, p. 101; Fynn, 1971, p. 34).

For example, the Asante fighting forces took an oath to 'fight to death' for the Asante nation (Edgerton, 1995, pp. 54, 59; Fynn 1978, p. 27). In addition to the golden stool, the emblem on their national flag, the porcupine, was their symbol for warriors, strength and power. During wars, Asante warriors chanted the Asante war cry 'Asante kotoko; kum apem, apem beba' (Eisenstadt, Abitbol, & Chazan, 1988, 1988), which means, "we are the Asante, Asante porcupine, if you kill a thousand Asante warriors, a thousand more will replace us".

This brings up the realist's argument of how particular unit-level factors shape outcomes at the system level (Mearsheimer, 2001, 2009). According to Mearsheimer (2009), unit-level calculations usually do not have much effect on foreign policy-making, but when they do, "they do so in ways that are consistent with balance-of-power logic" (p. 246). As noted above, Asante's sense of nationalism was definitely a principal source of motivation, which encouraged it to relentlessly seek domination through war. After all, the strategic purpose underlying the institution of the mystical golden stool was to ensure that the Asantes had the resolve and courage to shift the balance of power in their favor (Chazan, 1988; Wilks, 1975).

By 1700, the new Asante military union had to contend with three powerful states already occupying the hinterland of the Gold Coast: Denkyira, Akyem and Akwamu (Fynn, 1973, p. 28; McCaskie, 2007, p. 1). The Denkyira state dominated the southwestern trade routes to the European traders on the coast, while Akyem competed with Akwamu for control of the southeastern trade routes to the coast (Fynn, 1971, 1973; Chazan, 1988; Fynn, 1973; McCaskie, 2007). See Map 6 below.

Illustrative Map 6: Major Trade Routes and Trading Markets in the Gold Coast in 1700



As illustrated in Map 6 above, Akwamu and Akyem competed for access to the trading markets to the Ga-Adanbge region on the southeastern coastline, and hardly had any control of the trade markets in the Far East such as Peki, Krepe and Anum (Fynn, 1971). Meanwhile, Denkyira had access not only to most of the major trade routes in the southwest but access to the rich-gold territories of the southwest and over 12 trading markets from Winneba to Nzimaland on the west coast (Also see Map 5 above). Denkyira also exercised overlordship and control over the trading activities of the

Dutch traders in Elimina and territories to its west[24] (see Map 6), and thus had access to enormous quantity of guns and munitions, which made it the most powerful state in the hinterland during that period (Daaku, 1970, p. 159; Van Dantzig, 1980, p. 130). Denkyira used its military power to suppress all polities on the trade routes in the southwest and hinterland, including Asante (see Map 6) (McCaskie, 2007, pp. 1-2).

The African traders supplied gold, ivory and slaves to the Dutch, English and Danes on the coast in exchange for guns, munitions, textiles, metal goods and other manufactured goods. Guns and munitions were the most sought after products, because the local polities needed guns and ammunitions to build their military to either hold on to their territories or support their expansionist ambitions in the anarchic system (Fynn, 1971; Van Dantzig, 1980).

Unfortunately for Asante, not only did it lie on a major trade route to trading markets to the North, it also stood at the center of the hinterland, surrounded by potential adversaries, with few natural defensive barriers, making it vulnerable to incursions from all sides (See Map 5 and 6). Apparently, this adverse strategic position drove them toward the aggressive behavior pattern suggested by Mearsheimer. Evidently, straightforward power calculations drove Asante's decision to build a formidable army to challenge the status quo in the hinterland (Bowdich, 1819; Busia, 1951; Fuller, 1921; Fynn, 1971; Rattray, 1929). In line with Mearsheimer's (2001) view that a state's potential power is based on its military organization (pp. 83-137), Asante's actions hereafter suggest that they aspired to have a powerful military organization, because

24 The Dutch at the trading port in Elimina paid tribute to Denkyira who were the dominant power in the region. (Yarak, 1986, pp. 363-382).

they knew that the stronger they were, the less likely would other states threaten their survival.

Mearsheimer's (2001) analysis indicates that war by itself is not an effective instrument in politics in an anarchic world without an efficient military organization (pp. 33, 55, 137). Thus, military power is not measured just by the number of soldiers, the quality of the soldiers, the number of weapons, and the quality of the weaponry, but also by how the soldiers and weapons are organized for winning a war (Mearsheimer 2001, pp. 83 - 137). In line with Mearsheimer's (2001) thinking, Asante put together an effective military organization that could win wars.

Military organization was central to Asante's military power. Between 1697 and 1700, it organized its military organization into six strategic divisions: (1) the scouts, (2) the advance guard, (3) the main body, (4) the personal bodyguards, (5) the rear guards, and (6) the two wings (the left and the right) (Arhin, 1980, p. 24; Busia, 1951, p. 90; Fuller, 1921, pp. 12-25; Fynn, 1973, p. 33; Cornevin, 1963, p. 437; Rattray, 1929, pp. xi-xxiii, 76, 77, 120, 272, 273; Shillington, 2005, p. 190). The king of Asante was the supreme commander over these six divisions (Arhin, 1980, p. 24; Busia, 1951, p. 90; Fuller, 1921, pp. 12-25; Fynn, 1973, p. 33; Rattray, 1929, pp. xi-xxiii). Since the Asante central government did not have the capacity to maintain large armies, it relied largely on military reserves mobilized from its extended territories for specific campaigns. All divisions of the Asante union were required to supply a quota of men for war campaigns (Bowdich, 1819; Reade, 1874; Fuller, 1921, pp. 12-25; Rattray, 1929, Chapters XI-XXIII). Armies were raised locally and fought as bands from their home areas under

territorial chiefs (or under the leadership of the divisional states), in a similar fashion to that of feudal Europe (Vandervort, 1998, p. 4).

As the heavily forested terrain of the hinterland did not accommodate land warfare in open areas, it necessitated a military organization that involved smaller tactical sub-units, ambushes, constant movement, and more dispersed strikes and counter-strikes (Arhin, 1980; Fynn, 1971, 1978; Vandervort, 1998, pp. 90-103). This required a military that incorporated scouts who carried out pursuit operations; advance guards who served as initial storm troops or bait troops that enticed the enemy to reveal its position and strength; a main body of troops, which served as the bulk of the army's striking power; a rear guard that pursued retreating enemy troops and also served as a reserve echelon; and two wings whose role was to carry out encirclement of the enemy, and also strike at the rear (Low, 1878, pp. 57-176; Vandervort, 1998, pp. 16-37).

In Asante's campaigns, its forward units carried out the fighting and coaxed the opposition forces deep into Asante-controlled territory, where a strong defensive position laid waiting. There, the enemy was pinned in place while the left and right wing of the Asante army outflanked them, and cut off any means to their retreat (Edgerton, 1995, p. 51; Vandervort, 1998, p. 97; also see Callwell 1896).[25] Thus, with the help of these strategies, the Asante army was able to either capture or kill the enemy's commanders and capture the enemy forces as slaves.[26] Moreover, when the enemy was stalled from making a retreat, the Asante army was able to enter the enemy's

25 Asante's war strategy was observed in the numerous successful wars it fought during the 18th and 19th centuries.

26 For example, when Asante attacked its immediate neighbors in the Pra-Offin river basin, it killed its chiefs. It is especially important to kill the leaders, chiefs, or commanders of the enemy because normally, after a defeat the enemy moves away to other places to establish new dynasties that may later become a threat (Fynn, 1971, pp. 28, 39).

country and plunder its resources.[27] Fynn (1971) notes that Asante's military organization laid the foundation for the invincibility of its military power in the 18th and 19th century.

By 1698, it was already apparent that Asante was bent on controlling large portions of the hinterland, by invading and incorporating all the territories within the Pra-Offin river basin into its union. Asante's actions thereafter indicate that it was mainly concerned about having direct access to the trade routes, especially to the firearms trade with the European traders (Fynn 1971; Daaku, 1970). Since Denkyira controlled almost all the trade routes to the south, breaking Denkyira's dominance in the hinterland would give Asante direct access to the firearms trade. Asante, however, did not have sufficient military capability at the time to challenge the Denkyira state, so it sought an alliance with Denkyira's traditional enemy, Akwamu, who had access to the firearms trade with the European traders on the east coast via the southeastern trade routes (Fynn, 1971, pp. 37-38; McCaskie, 2007; Reindorf, 1898). Asante needed Akwamu not just for manpower support but for the supply of firearms as well. Denkyira, alarmed by Asante's growing power within the Pra-Offin river basin, and its alliance with Akwamu, decided to invade Asante before Asante's military capability surpassed their own (Fynn, 1971, pp. 37-38, 1973; McCaskie, 2007; Ward, 1958; Wilks, 1961; Reindorf, 1898).

The Asante-Denkyira war began in 1698 (W.I.C. 97, D/G Jan van Serehuysen, Elmina, 1 March 1699; see also Arhin, 1980; McCaskie, 2007, p. 2). Akyem assisted Denkyira,

27 For example, when the Asante eventually defeated the Denkyira, they entered Denkyira's capital, plundered its resources, and took large numbers of the people as prisoners (slaves) (Bosman, 1705, p. 77; W.I.C. 97. D/G Jan van Serenhuysen, Elimina, 30 May 1701, 16 November 1701).

and Akwamu supported the Asante union to counterbalance the military power of Denkyira and Akyem, which had always acted against Akwamu's interest[28] (Fynn, 1973, p. 59). After a long battle, the Asantes ambushed the Denkyira troops in the town of Feyiase and decisively defeated and eliminated it from the ranks of dominant powers in the region in 1701 (Bosman, 1705, p. 77; W.I.C. 97, D/G Jan van Serehuysen, Elmina, 1 March 1699, 30 May 1701, 16 November 1701; McCaskie, 2007, p. 3).

During the conflict, some of Denkyira's tributary states in the south—Akanni, Twifo, Wassa, and Aowin—on realizing that they could not break Denkyira's domination by themselves, exploited the situation to cut off Denkyira's access to firearms from the European traders. They seized guns, gunpowder, iron, lead, and pewter on their way to Denkyira, and ultimately stifled Denkyira's military power (Fynn, 1971, p. 39; McCaskie, 2007, pp. 2-3). Meanwhile, Akwamu's military alliance became instrumental in Asante's victory because Asante received appreciable quantities of guns and gunpowder through Akwamu from the European traders through the southeasten trade routes (Fynn, 1971; McCaskie, 2007; Reindorf, 1898, p. 53; Wilks, 1961, p. 54).

Given the close proximity of the polities in the hinterland, the Denkyira tributary states could not afford to remain on the sidelines of the Asante-Denkyira war, but had to indirectly support Asante to dismantle Denkyira's power in the hinterland (W.I.C. 97, D/G Jan van Serehuysen, Elmina, 30 May 1701). Although their interference may have fallen short of the use of force on the war field, they, nevertheless, used coercion, and

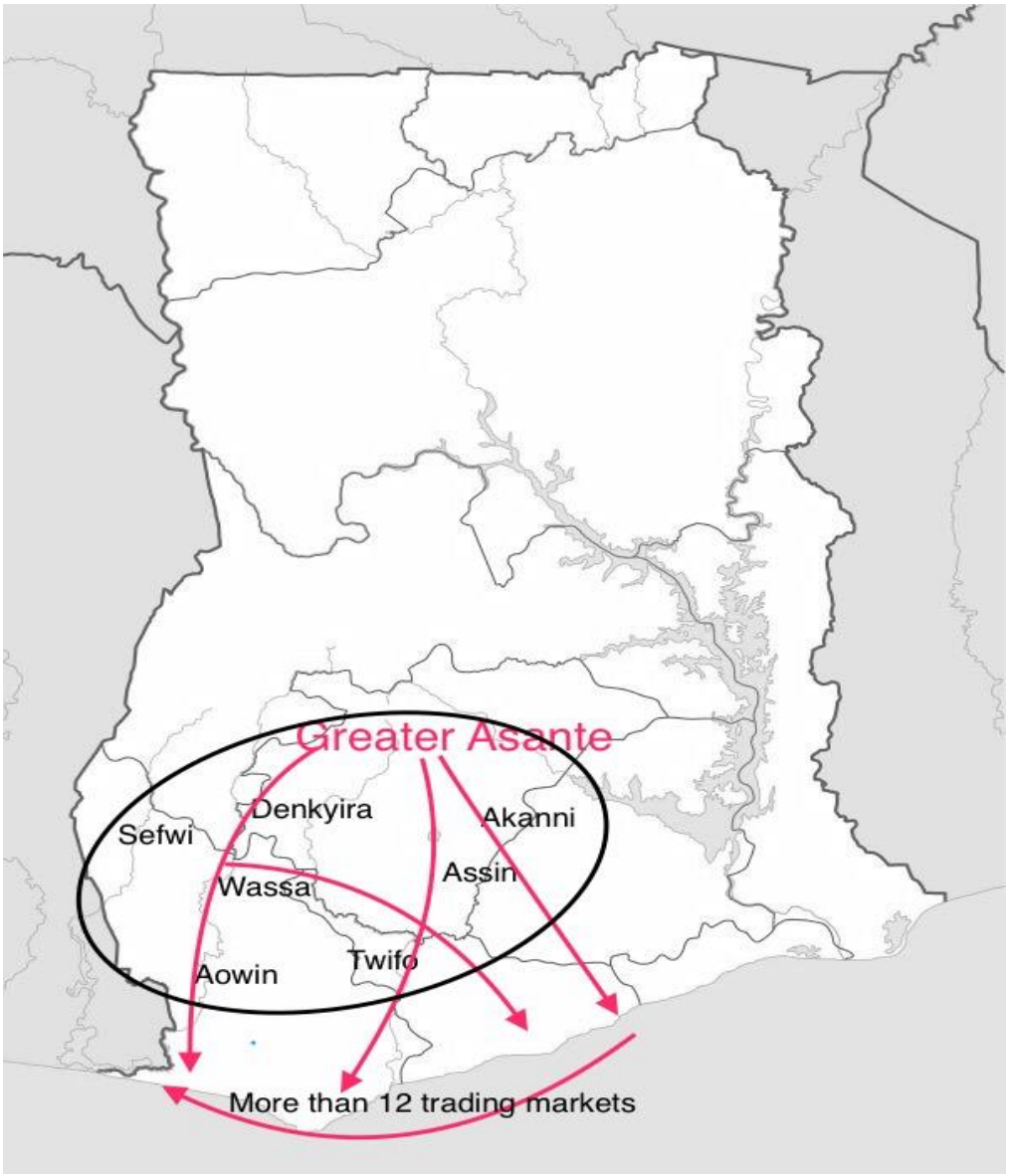
28 It is alleged that Denkyira and Akyem were sister states because Akyem was founded by a member of the Denkyira royal family (McCaskie 2007). History has it that Denkyira and Akyem always acted against the interest of Akwamu. It is against this background that Akwamu supported the Asante Union to counterbalance the military power of its traditional enemies, Denkyira and Akyem

sometimes violence to actively interfere in the Asante-Denkyira war by intercepting the flow of firearms from the Europeans in the south to Denkyira (Fynn, 1971, 1973; McCaskie, 2007). In this case, though not active participants in the war, they still acted as per Mearsheimer's prediction. Mearsheimer's theory does not clearly explain such balancing, but the behavior of Denkyira's tributary states would be favored when threatened states do not have the capacity to directly confront an aggressor within its immediate proximity (Mearsheimer 2001, pp. 271–272).

With the defeat of Denkyira in 1701, Asante broke Denkyira's dominance in the Gold Coast. As per 'Akan'[29] traditional customs, the victor was expected to take over the tributary states of the defeated (Butcher & Griffiths, 2015; Fynn, 1971, 1973; McCaskie, 2007). Having been under Denkyira's despotic power for years, the southwestern states (former tributary states of Denkyira) resisted the overlordship of another dominant power. Faced with resistance, Asante forcibly assumed power over Denkyira's former tributary states, making them provincial states of the Asante Empire, and assuming monopoly over the southwestern gold-rich territories on the four main trade routes to the over 12 trading markets on the coast (see Map, 5, 6 and 7) (Fynn, 1971, pp. 40-41, 120).

Illustrative Map 7: Provincial States of Asante by 1702

29 There were about eight major ethnic groups in the Gold Coast. This constituted the Akan ethnic group (which included Asante, Denkyira, Akyem, Akwamu, all the polities on the southwestern trade routes, the Fante states, Brono-Ahafo region (including Tekyiman), Nzima, and other smaller polities) which represented about 50% of the population in the Gold Coast; the Mole-Dagbani, the Gurma, Grusi, Mando Busanga and other smaller polities (in the northern territories) representing about 25% of the population; the Ewe in the east and southeast representing about 12%; Ga-Adangbe on the east coast representing about 8%; and the Guan scattered around the east to the winneba area on the east coast representing about 5% of the of the Gold Coast population (Tonah 2007; Ametewee, 2007). The Akans in particular dominated and defined the Gold Coast political landscape.



There were numerous polities in the western and southwestern region but the only polities that mattered to Asante were those on the key trade routes to the trading markets on the coast in the south. Guns and munitions were the most important trading commodities to the African traders, while gold and slaves were the important trading commodities to the European traders (Bean 1974, pp. 351-356). To this end, an Asante law stipulated that the Asante king controlled the gold and slave trade in its empire; and guns and munitions were not supposed to be sold beyond the Asante capital. This was to ensure that no polity within the empire became (militarily) powerful and rich enough to challenge Asante's authority (Aidoo, 1977, pp. 11-12; Boaten 1970). Apparently,

access to the southwestern trade routes, and in turn, to over 12 firearms trading markets, made Asante the most powerful (military) state in the hinterland.

Asante, however, did not have the manpower to keep an occupation force in its provincial states. The provincial states were, therefore, allowed to maintain their own government. Nonetheless, they were required to pay tributes and taxes, and also to supply the Asante government with troops as and when required. Asante appointed resident governors in some cases, roaming ambassadors, and trade wardens to oversee the collection of tributes and taxes, and to particularly oversee the firearms trade on the trade routes (Bowdich, 1819, p. 355; Claridge, 1915, pp. 228-229; Dupius, 1824, p. 1; Rattray, 1929, p. 111; Ward, 1958, pp. 141-142).

Since the southwestern states located on the trade routes had access to firearms (military power), they could confidently resist Asante's authority over them. According to historical records, they rarely heeded to the mandatory requirements imposed upon them by Greater Asante. The Asante government had to continually negotiate with the provincial states for troop support, and sometimes, it had to coerce them to pay tributes and taxes (Buah, 1980*;* Eisenstadt, Abitbol, & Chazan, 1988; McCaskie, 2007). The provincial states often resisted Asante's authority by blocking its access to the trade routes, especially the firearms trade, by forcefully seizing, harassing and kidnapping Asante merchants on the trade routes[30] (Fynn, 1971; McCaskie, 2007; T70/1464, Baillie's Commenda Diary, 6 April 1715; W.I.C. 101, D/G Haring, Elmina, 15 August 1712; W.I.C. 99, Extract of Resolutions by D/G William de la Palma and Council,

30 Akanni for example seized the Twifo and Denkyira trade routes and robbed Asante merchants, while Twifo kidnaped and sold Asante traders into slavery. Aowin even moved up north to seize strategic slave markets

Elmina, 1 May 1703; see also Fynn, 1971, pp. 41-42; Fynn, 1971, p. 43; N.B.K.G. 82, William Butler, Axim, to D/G Haring, Elmina, 8 August 1715).

Fynn (1971) thinks Asante's acquisition of these territories proved more of a liability than an asset. The subordinate states of the Asante Empire between 1701 and 1720 turned out to be its principal rivals. Evidently, the defiance of the provincial states posed a serious threat to the balance of power. The difficulties in governing these distant lands posed a threat to Asante's expansionist ambitions. Though Mearsheimer (2001) admits that attempts at domination are challenging because the costs of occupying distant territories sometimes outweigh the benefits (p. 210), he still does not see pursuit of hegemony as self-defeating, and would rather find Asante's hold on these distant lands especially on the firearms trade routes as a "calculated risk" (pp. 37-42, 212). Mearsheimer (2001) believes "expansion sometimes pays big dividends" (p. 210). In Asante's case, control of the key trade routes and access to the over 12 firearms trading markets in the south were paramount to any ambitions Asante may have had of becoming a hegemon.

In the face of powerful opposition from six principal rivals (the tributary states), Asante should have been less inclined to consider offensive action and more concerned with defending the existing balance of power by just holding on to the rich, gold territory of Denkyira, which it had conquered in 1701. Besides, though Asante had the incentive to hold on to these troublesome distant lands on the trade routes, it did not have a marked power advantage over these rivals. It had assumed control over the trade routes but had no direct access to the firearms trade yet, because of the stiff opposition from the

polities on the trade routes. Yet, Asante did whatever possible to maintain its dominance.

As proposed by Mearsheimer (2001), the selfish behaviour of states does not preclude them from forming temporary alliances of convenience (p. 33). In line with Mearsheimer's arguments, Asante went into a temporary alliance with some of its own principal rivals to defeat the more defiant adversaries. It sought military support from Wassa, to invade Twifo in 1713 (Fynn, 1973, p. 63), and with additional military support from Twifo, defeated Aowin in 1716[31] (N.B.K.G. 82, H. Blenke, Sekondi, to D/G Haring, Elmina, 24 January 1715; T70/381, Accounts and Journals, entry for 31 December 1714; Daaku, 1970; N.B.K.G. 82, W. Butler and N. Heyman, Axim, 3 November 1715, 10 December 1715; T70/1464, Baillie's Commenda Diary, 29 September 1715).

With the defeat of the last of the rebellious provincial states (Aowin), Asante turned its attention to the slave and kola trading territories on its northern frontier, by invading territories including Begho, Inkassa, Nsoko and Gyaman (Dupuis, 1824, p. 230; Fynn, 1971, pp. 44-45; Wilks, 1961, p. 17).

At this stage, it was not clear whether Asante's actions were motivated by security, or the desire to become the mightiest military power and a hegemon. The northern territories (slave and kola trading markets) were not an immediate security threat to Asante's survival. The Asantes had peacefully co-existed with its northern territories

31 Aowin sought support from the southern states of Abrambo, Adom, and Axim to put up a stiff resistance against the Asante, Wassa and Twifo alliance (T70/1464, Baillie's Commenda Diary, 29 September 1715).

and traded with them for centuries (Fynn, 1971, pp. 2-13). Mearsheimer's (2001) logic is straightforward: "more profound the fear is, the more intense is the security competition, and the more likely is war" (pp. 42-43). If fear at the center of security considerations is the main driving force behind a state's aggressive behavior, then why did Asante decide to overrun the northern territories? This brings forth Mearsheimer's central hypothesis: great powers just aspire to have the mightiest military power in their region of the world. Slaves were the most important commercial commodity for European traders, so Asante needed to control the slave trade in order to ensure that it acquired immense military capability to become the greatest military power in the Gold Coast. Asante's intentions were further reinforced by their decision to invade Akyem[32] in 1716 (Fynn, 1971, pp. 42-45; W.I.C. 103, D/G Engelgraaf Robertz and Council, Elmina, February 1717). Akyem, with the support of its traditional ally Denkyira, put up a stiff offense, killing the Asante king while he was retreating from the war field in 1717 (Bowdich, 1819, p. 233; Dupuis, 1824, pp. 231-233; Fynn, 1971, pp. 47-48), yet no one on both sides won the war.

Summary: The Gold Coast state system between 1698 and 1720 fit Mearsheimer's (2001) anarchic system. The principal actors lived in a climate of uncertainty and defended their positions through aggression and war. Access to firearms became the primary objective, and was one of the main defining terms of power, not just for Asante, but also for Akyem and all the principal actors on the southwestern and southeastern trade routes who felt their survival was at stake. War was an integral part of the foreign policy of Asante and its neighbors during this period. Regarding the motives of Asante

32 With Asante's defeat of Denkyira, Asante, Akyem, and Akwamu became the most powerful states in the hinterland. Akwamu had become Asante's traditional ally because it had helped Asante defeat Denkyira. This left Akyem as a potential rival to Asante.

and its neighbors during this period, it is not clear whether their intention was to secure the trade routes for economic gain, to become a military power or to have access to the firearms trade so as to achieve hegemony. However, it can be concluded that security (or rather insecurity) because of geography was the primary concern behind their aggressive and aberrant behavior. Besides the fact that all the principal actors in this period were located on key trade routes, their proximity to each other with few natural defensive barriers made them all vulnerable to invasion. Consequently, they (especially Asante) were always on the lookout for opportunities to gain military power and enhance their prospects for survival, whatever that means.

Mearsheimer (2001) maintains that "security competition is endemic in [the anarchic system], but war is not. Only occasionally does security competition give way to war" (p. 334). Yet it appears that both war and security competition was endemic in the Gold Coast system between 1701 and 1717. Essentially, Asante was in a state of perpetual war with its immediate neighbors for sixteen years. Asante went to war with Denkyira, Twifo, Aowin, Abrambo, Adom, Axim, Akyem and Inkassa, Nsoko, Begho and Gyaman. There is no question that the security competition in the Gold Coast anarchic system was a deep cause for the Asante wars from 1701 to 1717, but that alone did not account for the perpetual state of war. One of the core arguments of Mearsheimer (2001) is that unbalanced multipolar systems with a potential hegemon (s) are the most prone to deadly conflict (pp. 338-341). In this case, Asante—the strong man—became hard to deter in this unbalanced system because it had increased capability to win wars, and to make matters worse, Asante's adversaries believed they also had the capability to reverse the dominant power's position by war, and change the distribution of power. Definitely, the political system during this period contained a potential hegemon, the

Asante Empire, with credible balancers like Akyem and the southwestern provincial states on the trade routes to check Asante's imperial ambitions. In the following sections, I will proceed to assess whether Asante and its neighbors continued to engage in aggression, what strategies they used to check imbalances and concentration of power, and if the ultimate goal of Asante and its neighbors was to acquire immense military power with the ultimate aim of becoming a hegemon, or with the ultimate aim of maintaining the status quo – their control of the trade routes in their region of the world.

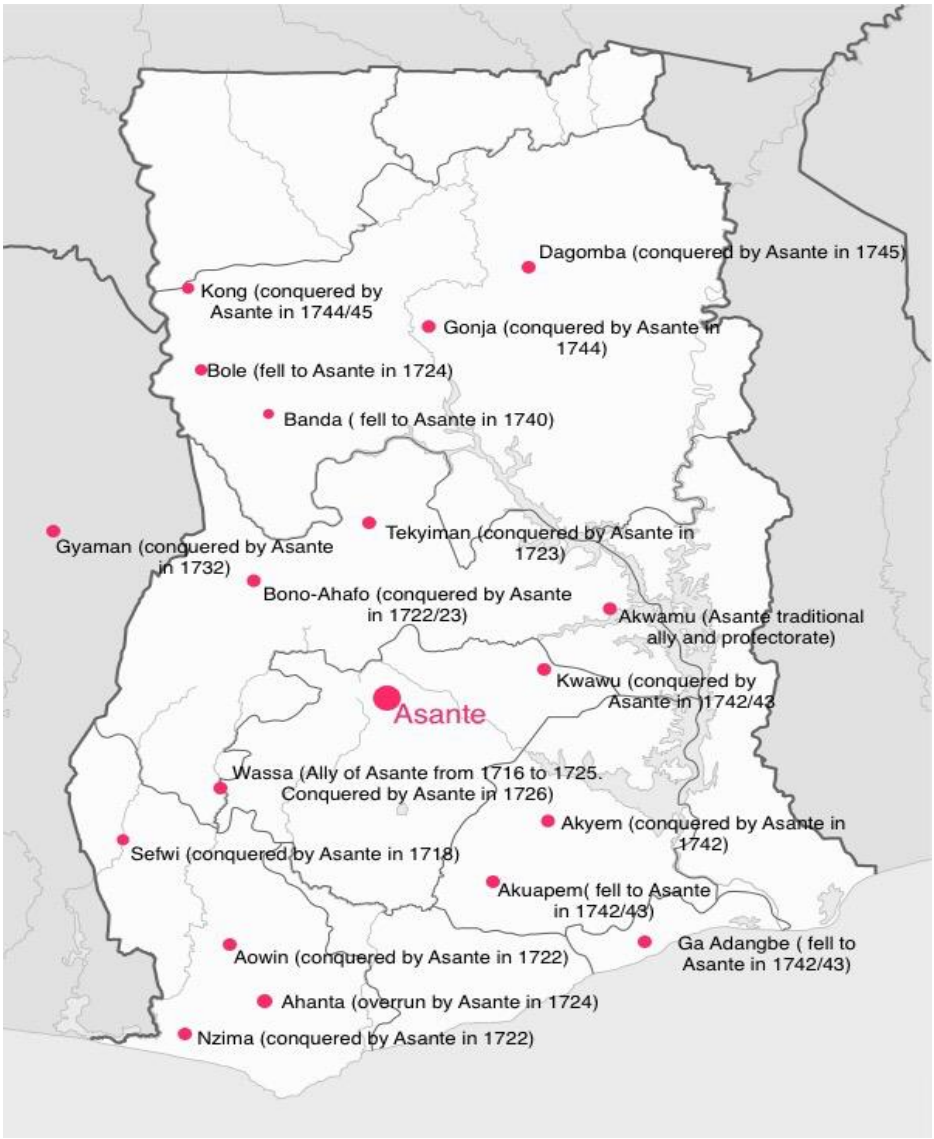
4.4. 1718-1750: The Expansion of the Asante Empire

For a period of about 32 years, the Gold Coast state system became more predatory and prone to conflict than before. This was a period when the new king of Asante, King Opoku Ware, expanded and consolidated upon what King Osei Tutu had secured from 1701 to 1717. During this period, Asante, in particular, embarked upon an expansionist policy (Fynn, 1971, pp. 57-83). By 1720, it had become apparent that the expansion of Asante followed the direction of the trade (Oliver, 1975, p. 189). The targets of Asante's expansionist strategy reinforce the fact that the means to access firearms, and direct access to the firearms trade was Asante's paramount political objective (See Map 7 & 8), and it employed war not just to expand its territory but to sustain and maintain its continuous access to immense military capability (Adu Boahen, Ajayi, & Tidy, 1986; Wilks, 1975). The Dutch traders reported that Asante's immense military power and expansionist policy caused much apprehension all over the Gold Coast (W.I.C. 106, D/G Pieter Valckenier, Elmina, 11 July 1725, 16 Jan 1726). During this period, Asante's aggressive behaviour increased commensurately with its military power.

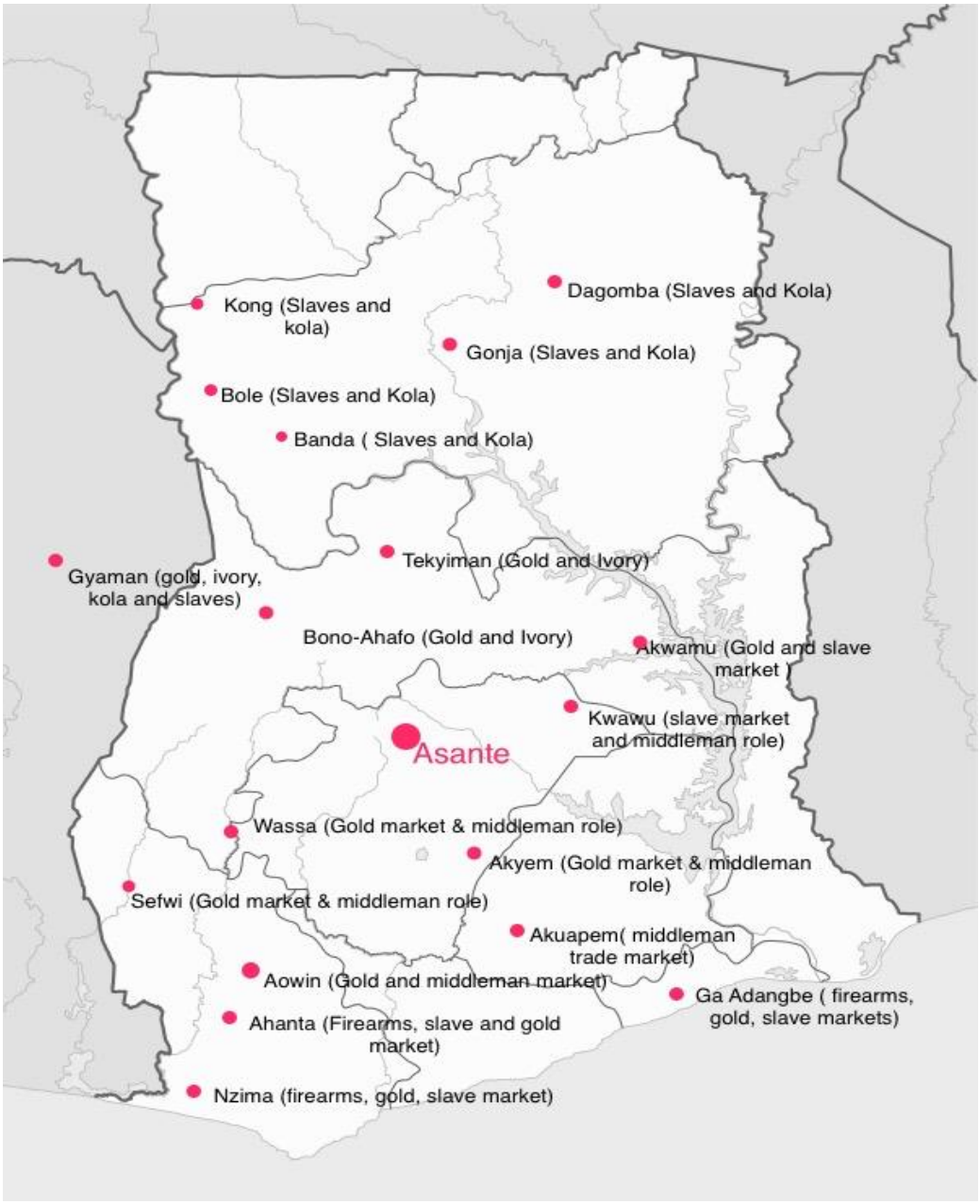
Asante bought more sophisticated weaponry such as the long-barrel muskets, which were more accurate and gave it an advantage over its adversaries (Lovejoy, 1983, p. 56; Northrup, 2002, p. 93).

4.4.1. Targets of Asante's Expansion: Asante's actions during this period indicate that it was principally concerned with controlling all the major trade routes to the firearms trading markets with the Europeans, and the slave and gold trade markets in the hinterland and north of the Gold Coast. The southwestern trade routes were its primary target because they gave access to more than 12 (firearms) trading markets (see Map 6, 7 and 8). The Akyem trade routes (see Map 6) on the southeastern front were of less relevance and a more distant threat than the southwestern trade routes, but they were still an important concern, because Akyem (a dominant power in the region since the 1690s) had the potential to dominate the hinterland if it ever got its military organization together and chose to move beyond the status quo and maximize its share of world power. With regard to Asante's interest in the gold and slave markets, it has been already indicated in the previous section that gold and slaves were the critical commodities Asante used to buy firearms from the Europeans. Asante, therefore, relied on the trade in gold and slaves for its military power. See targets of Asante's expansion in Map 8 and 9 below.

Illustrative Map 8: Targets of Asante's Expansion in Gold Coast, 1718-1750



Illustraive Map 9: Principal Trading Commodities of Targets of Asante's Expansion in the Gold Coast, 1718-1750



Indeed, the maximization of military power and the trade in slaves and gold were inseparable (Boaten, 1970). It can be argued that many wars are waged to gain or preserve wealth, but after Asante's defeat of Denkyira and the takeover of its extensive gold-rich territories on the southwestern trade routes, Asante should have been economically satisfied and rather concentrated on sustaining and maintaining its new extended wealth. Mearsheimer (2001) claims that great powers are strategic calculators capable of figuring out reasonably smart strategies on how to survive in an anarchic

system (pp. 31, 147-152; Mearsheimer, 2009, pp. 244-246). Knowing that bids for hegemony are so risky and so rarely successful, it did not make sense for a rational, survival-minded state like Asante to aggressively extend its reach to the north and east. Mearsheimer, however, would find Asante's actions to be rational because he argues that wealth is the foundation of military power, and wealthy states can afford powerful military forces, which enhance a state's prospects for survival (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 55-82). Besides, two key factors made most of the states in the Gold coast state system (especially Asante) vulnerable to incursions from others: First, the geographical proximity of all the states in the system and few natural defensive barriers, and second, most states controlled or possessed highly demanded resources (slaves and gold). (See Map 9).

This brings in Mearsheimer's (2001) proposition that no state would stand by idly while its neighbor gained increasing increments of power, especially if they are in close proximity to each other (p. 271). After all, no state in Mearsheimer's world can discern with a high degree of certainty the future intentions of other states in an anarchic system (Mearsheimer 2001, p. 345). Mearsheimer (1994/1995, 2001) maintains that no state can be sure that another state will not use its offensive military capability to attack it first.

Between 1718 and 1745, Asante displayed its offensive ambitions by launching a series of wars over polities on the trade routes in the east, southeast, west, southwest and north of the Gold Coast (Aidoo, 1977; Bowdich, 1891; Fynn, 1971; Wilks, 1961). Though Asante had the incentive to first attack its adversaries, interestingly, in most of these cases, Asante was not the aggressor. For instance, the southwestern trade routes states

of Sefwi, Aowin, and Twifo started off by provoking Asante by plundering its villages (Fuller, 1921, pp. 26-27; Fynn, 1971, pp. 60-61; Reindorf, 1898, pp. 81-82). Certainly, these states were not sure that Asante will not use its offensive military capability to attack them first, so they decided to rather attack Asante first.

Asante, with military support from Wassa, launched a series of battles against the rebellious provincial states between 1718 and 1724 and subdued them (W.I.C. 105, D/G W. Butler, Elmina, November 1721, 8 May 1722). With the defeat of the provincial states, Asante moved quickly to overrun and annex all the territories they held, including the gold and ivory rich territory of Bono-Ahafo region on the northwestern frontier of Asante (W.I.C. 104, D/G W. Butler and Council, Elmina, 27 March 1719; Fuller, 1921, pp. 26-27; Fynn, 1971, pp. 60-61; Reindorf, 1898, pp. 81-82). After annexing Bono-Ahafo, Asante moved quickly to consolidate its gains by invading the gold-rich territory of Tekyiman, bordering the Bono-Ahafo region in 1724[33] (Fynn, 1971, pp. 62-63; N.B.K.G. 83, D/G Pieter Valckenier, Elmina, to Jacob Let, Kormantse, 5 May 1726; W.I.C. 105, L. Beuns, Elmina, 8 January 1724). Evidently, Asante had its sights on a number of the firearms trade markets on the coast, and it got the opportunity to achieve that goal when it used the excuse of going after the allies of its rebellious provincial state of Aowin by invading Axim and the surrounding territories in Nzimaland in the southwestern corner of the Gold Coast in 1723 (Atkins, 1737, p. 188; Fynn, 1971, pp. 42-43). This gave Asante direct access to Dutch firearms' and slave market in Fort Santo Antonio in Axim.[34]

33 Tekyiman controlled the gold and ivory trade in the Bono-Ahafo region and in the north.
34 Fort Santo Antonio was a fort built by the Portuguese in 1515 near the town of Axim. In 1642, the Dutch captured the fort and subsequently made it part of the Dutch Gold Coast.

It is not clear whether the new territories that Asante annexed posed a direct threat to Asante; nevertheless, they were still strategic acquisitions. For example, Bono-Ahafo and Tekyiman were not only major trading markets but also at the crossroads for the slave, gold, ivory and kola trade needed to buy firearms from the European traders. Meanwhile, access to Axim and the surrounding territories in Nzimaland gave Asante direct access to the Dutch traders in the southwest. This falls in line with realist thinking that holds that states are not irrational expansionists who act foolishly. Every move improves their strategic position in the process, and helps them gain advantage over their rivals (Mearsheimer 2001).

In 1724, Asante continued its offensive ways when it entered the war on the side of Ahantaland on the southwestern coast against Wassa and its Fante allies who were major firearms, gold and slave trading markets on the Coast.[35] Wassa, which bordered the Ahanta region, went into alliance with some Fante states to take advantage of a power gap on the coast.[36] The German's had abandoned their Brandenburg trading fort in Ahantaland in 1716, and there was the fear that the Dutch or Asante would forcefully take over the Brandenburg fort. Moreover, the Fante states, well aware of Asante's expansionist ambitions and military capability, were willing to support Wassa to take over the Brandenburg fort. Wassa's opposition to Asante is rather ironic since it had previously supported Asante in defeating Aowin and Twifo. Asante sought military alliance from Twifo to invade Wassa (Fynn, 1971, p. 63; Briggs, 2010, p. 205). To balance Asante's military might, Wassa sought military assistance from the Dutch

35 The Fante allies were Abrambo, Eguafo, Fetu, Akanni, and Elmina.
36 Wassa had a dispute (over money and favour owed) with a chief of Ahanta who had sought support from Wassa to help him retain the Brandenburg trading fort in Ahantaland after it was abandoned by the Germans in 1716. Konny had given Wassa money to buy firearms from the Dutch and British traders, and Wassa failed to uphold its side of the bargain. Konny feared that the Dutch would try to take the fort by force (Briggs, 2010, p. 205).

traders,[37] with regards to the arms supply (Fynn, 1971, p. 63; W.I.C. 106, D/G, Pieter Valckenier, Elmina, 8 and 9 May 1724, 25 October 1724). Asante moved quickly to sabotage the partnership between the Dutch and Wassa because it feared the supply of guns and gunpowder to Wassa may shift the balance of power in Wassa's favour. Asante sent a request to the Dutch to withdraw their support for Wassa. Considering their valuable trade relations with Asante, the Dutch complied. Asante moved its troops against Wassa in 1726 and quickly overran it, pursuing it into Twifo and then into the Fante state of Abrambo (Fynn, 1971, p. 64-65; Valsecchi, 2011).

The Fante states and the European traders on the coast were threatened by Asante's military presence in Abrambo. They, therefore, tried to gain some leverage with Asante by offering to mediate in the conflict. The Fantes feared that Asante would invade Abrambo, where Wassa had taken refuge, and use that to invade the rest of the Fante states. Whereas the Dutch and the British traders sought to limit each other's influence with the Asantes, since it was the principal merchant in the gold and slave trade (Fynn, 1971, pp. 65-66).

By 1729, no settlement had been reached between Asante and Wassa. Meanwhile, Wassa attacked Twifo in 1730 for offering support to Asante in 1724 (T70/4, Braithwaite and Cruickshank to R.A.C, 30 October 1730, 11 March 1731). In response, Asante swiftly attacked and defeated Wassa in 1731 (W.I.C. 109, D/G, Jan Pranger, Elmina, 30 October 1730, 11 March 1731). Wassa still resilient even in its defeat, and used its position on the border of Abrambo to prevent guns and gunpowder from

37 Waasa threatened the Dutch that if they did not provide support, it would seek the support of their trading rival, the British.

reaching Asanteland. For example, Wassa harassed and kidnapped Asante traders on the trade routes to prevent them from reaching the European traders on the coast (Priestly, 1961, p. 36; W.I.C. 109, D/G Jan Pranger, Elmina, 11 August 1731, 21 March 1733).

While Asante was pursuing Wassa in 1730, Akyem attacked Asante's traditional ally and protectorate, Akwamu, and annexed all its territories on the southeast trade routes to the south, including Ga Adanbge (Affrifah, 2000; Fynn, 1971, 1973). With Akyem controlling the eastern and southeastern trade routes, and Asante controlling the western and southwestern trade routes, the Gold Coast system was now, more or less, a bipolar system. Without statistical information on the military capability of the two states, it is quite difficult to determine if this was a balanced or unbalanced bipolar system. Although power asymmetries between Akyem and Asante states were not as pronounced as that in the early 1700s, this bipolar system still generated intense apprehension in the Gold Coast. The build-up of Akyem's power, especially its control of all the firearms trade with the British and Danish traders in the southeast, alarmed Asante (Fynn, 1971; Reindorf, 1898; Wilks, 1961). As per the realist's theory, the matched power in the region should have encouraged Asante and Akyem to manage the level of threat to the system. Approximate parity in military capability should have deterred both sides from initiating war, since they both could have equally matched each other's military capability (George, 1988, p. 644; James, 1995, p. 186; Waltz, 1964). Although a balanced system is more likely to produce deterrence than an imbalance of power, Mearsheimer holds that balanced systems do not guarantee deterrence. He insists that equilibrium can never be achieved even in a balanced model (Mearsheimer 2001, p. 342; Mearsheimer 1983, chapter 2.). Gilpin (1981) argues that

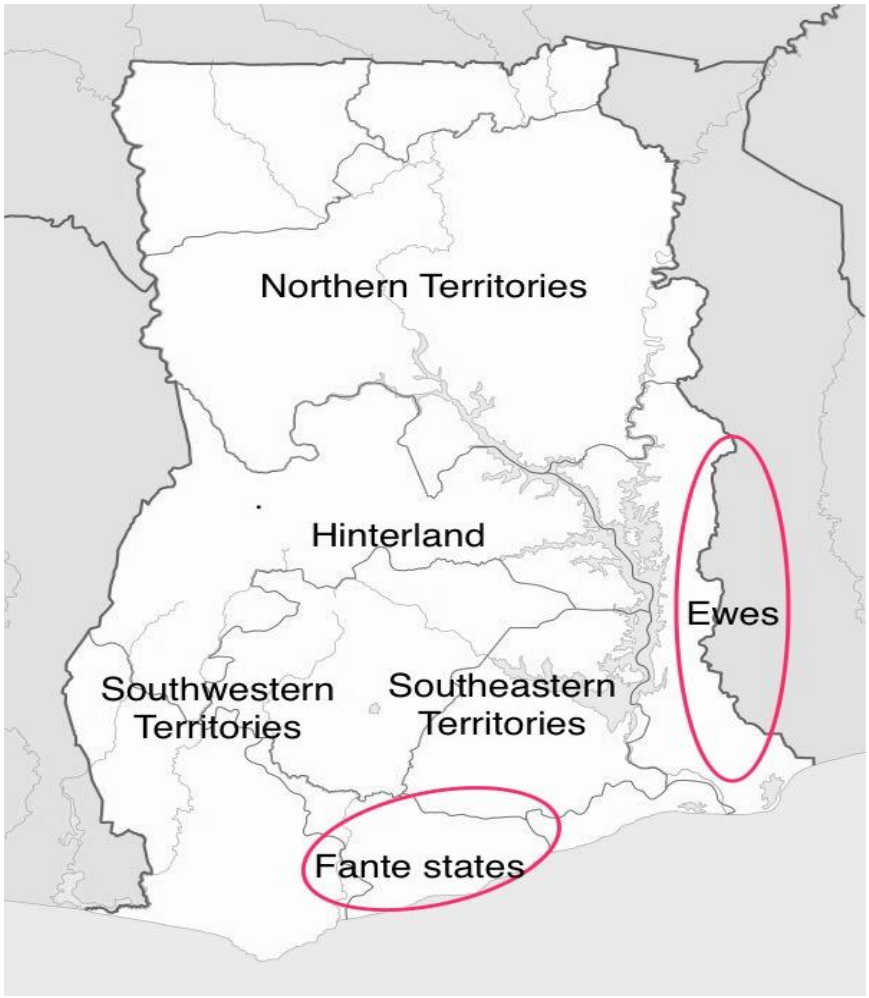
equilibrium will only be achieved when no one has anything to gain from changing the system (Chapters 1–5). Asante had a lot to gain from overtaking Akyem and its territories on the southeastern trade routes. Asante's actions thus far indicate that it was prepared to change the distribution of power through war to establish hegemony.

As Mearsheimer's theory predicts, Akyem, still distrustful of Asante's intentions, saw the need to build up its arsenal, and prepare its military forces for a potential conflict. Danish records indicate that in 1740, Akyem imported six thousand pounds of gunpowder, two thousand pieces of flint, and large quantities of firearms from them (N.B.K.G. 85, Kuijl, Accra, 16 September 1741; V.G.K., Governor E.N. Boris, Accra, 25 May 1740). Akyem's fears were justified because in 1742, Asante attacked and defeated Akyem. After defeating Akyem, the Asante army marched to the coastal settlements of European traders to formally announce its victory. The Asante demanded that the British, Dutch, and Danish forts in the coastal city-state of Accra (in the southeast) pay their ground rent to the Asante king. The Europeans obliged and sent special gifts to the Asante king. Thereafter, Asante assumed control over all the territories in the east and southeast, which were formerly under Akwamu and Akyem's authority (Affrifah, 2000; Fynn, 1973, 1971).

After overrunning Akyem and the southeastern trade routes, Asante turned its attention to the trade routes and slave trade markets in the north. Apparently, with access to the firearms trade markets via both the southwest and southeast trade routes, Asante needed to consolidate its gains by dominating the slave trade. Asantes needed slaves to work in the gold mines in the hinterland, and also to acquire firearms and other manufactured commodities at the coast (Rattray, 1929, p. 110; Bowdich, 1819, p. 333). According to

Ludewig Ferdinand Rømer, a Danish merchant associated with the Danish trading fort in the southeast, a Danish trade broker known only as Noi who accompanied Asante on its war campaign to the north reported that between 1744 and 1745 Asante invaded Gonja and Kong in the north, with a military strength of about 300,000. According to the report, while the Asante wielded muskets, the northern armies, who had limited access to the firearms trade from the south, fought with spears and sabres (Roemer, 1760, pp. 218-22). Asante's campaign lasted for eight months, and its victory gave it control over extensive territories as well as the kola nut, slave, gold, and the ivory trade (Fage et al., 1975; Fynn, 1971; Wilks, 1975). With the subjugation of the southwestern states, hinterland, northern states, and the defeat of Akyem in the east and annexation of its territories in the southeast, the only territories left for Asante to overtake in the Gold Coast were the Fante states in the south and other distant territories in the Far East (See Map 10). Accordingly, the Fantes became worried that they could be Asante's next target for conquest (Roemer, 1760, pp. 221-222).

Illustrative Map 10: Territories that Asante Controlled by 1745



Historical records indicate that in 1745, Asante chose to concentrate on internal reforms to curb civil tensions within the governance system in Greater Asante (Dupuis, 1824, p. 235). It is reported that the southwestern states like Denkyira, Akyem, Wassa, and Twifo took advantage of this internal rift to partner with the Fantes against the Asante. This alliance, (hereafter referred to as the Grand Alliance) was determined to end the political and economic domination of the Asante by cutting off its access to guns, gunpowder, lead, and pewter (Fynn, 1971, pp. 80, 85-87; Shillington, 2005, p. 61).

Summary: By the end of 1750, however, Asante had conquered more territory than during any other time in its history. The Asante Empire occupied the territories in the

north, east, southeast, west and southwest, and especially the trade routes and trade markets. However, it faced stiff resistance, particularly from its southwestern provinces like Wassa, Denkyira, Sefwi, Assin, Aowin, and Twifo, although, technically, they were still subordinate states of the Asante Empire. The Asante had even extended its influence into the southwestern coastal territories of Nzima and Ahantaland. The only territories not under Asante's control in the Gold Coast at this time were the Fante states on the coast and Ewe territories in the Far East (Fynn, 1971; McCaskie, 2007; Rattray, 1929; Shillington, 2005). Although the Asante Empire had expanded considerably, the flexible governance policy it exercised over its provincial and annexed territories made it politically vulnerable (Fynn, 1971, p. 55). Yet, Asante wielded the strongest military capability, as compared to the other states that were militarily weak to balance against it.

This 'state of nature,' however, brings up an interesting observation not addressed by Mearsheimer or defensive realists. Almost all the states in the system adopted an offensive military strategy to deter their adversaries. Evidently, with the exception of Asante, the ultimate goal of the other polities in the Gold Coast system was not to be the hegemon. However, they all wished to become militarily powerful, just to maintain the status quo, that is, their control on the trade routes in their region of the world. This is inconsistent with the views of defensive realists whose states do not opt for offensive actions to sustain their security and to limit conflict (Blane, 1973; Fearon, 1995; George, 1988; James, 1995; Waltz, 1964). Defensive realists hold that states are inclined to seek the minimum level of power that is needed to attain and maintain their security, survival, and balance against aggressive powers (Grieco, 1997; Waltz 1979). While Mearsheimer's offensive realism holds that his states are inherently offensive,

even when they achieve status quo standing. The basic logic, however, is that tactical offensive and strategic defensive actions can coincide, and indeed the former can be essential for the latter.

The behaviour of the Asante Empire, in particular, provides a strong support to Mearsheimer's theory. Asante was almost always looking for opportunities to expand through conquest, and when it saw an opening, it jumped at it. In fact, Asante aggressively sought regional hegemony, and fought wars in pursuit of that goal. Though there is limited information on Asante's foreign policy objectives, its actions underscore the fact that its ultimate aim was to do whatever it took to gain access to firearms.

This period also presents some complexities that Mearsheimer's account of systems is inadequate to deal with. The Asante case presents two overlapping systems. As Asante extended its control and absorbed more polities into its Empire, it became a potential hegemon within an unbalanced multipolar Gold Coast system. Yet, within the Asante Empire itself, Greater Asante contested within another unbalanced multipolar system, to the extent that other polities in the Asante state system remained autonomous and challenged Greater Asante.

Additionally, Asante's behavior in the later years of King Opoku Ware's reign (1745 to 1750) raises questions on how sub-unit level factors influence outcomes at the system level. The Asante case contradicts the explanation provided by neorealism. Internal disorder within Greater Asante (domestic affairs) inhibited external aggression. In 1745, King Opoku Ware halted his offensive military campaign to concentrate instead

on domestic reform. Structural realism prefers to assume that systemic incentives trump domestic imperatives (Mearsheimer 2001; Waltz 1979). However, during this period of Asante's history, domestic incentives trumped systemic imperatives. As it will become evident in the next phase of Asante's history, war or external aggression is a complex interplay of domestic and external considerations (Der Derian, 2001).

4.5. 1750-1764: Years of Consolidation

King Kusi Obodum succeeded King Opoku Ware in 1750. By this time Greater Asante was already burdened with internal strife[38], and as a result, Asante's external aggression had been tempered (Fynn, 1971, p. 84). Consequently, this internal strife had an adverse effect on Asante's external relations and the structural dynamics within the Asante and the Gold Coast state systems. This raises the question as to how pressures at the unit level can significantly determine international outcomes. Mearsheimer (2009) maintains that unit-level calculations that matter to systemic outcomes should rather advance a state's strategic military power position at the international level, and not undermine or violate the balance-of-power logic (p. 246). It appears that the Asante case contradicts Mearsheimer's thinking. Unlike Asante's sense of nationalism, this particular unit-level factor mattered to systemic outcomes, yet it did not advance the empire's strategic position; it in fact worked against the Asante by creating a powerful incentive for other polities to fight against Asante.

38 The internal conflict in Greater Asante arose when some members of the royal household and some heads of divisional states disagreed with King Opoku Ware's extension of the powers of sub-chiefs within the royal household. This change was introduced to make the union stronger and counterbalance defection (Bowdich, 1819, p. 235; Fynn, 1971, p. 84).

During this period, it appears the Gold Coast and Asante states systems were both unbalanced multipolar systems that revolved around a potential hegemon – the Asante. Realism asserts that states in multipolar systems have no other option but to work together through alliances to balance against a likely adversary (Mearsheimer, 1990, p. 15). In 1745, the southern provincial states of Twifo, Denkyira, and Akyem had ganged up with the Fante states and Wassa[39] to break Asante's domination (Cruickshank, 1853, p. 52; Dupuis, 1824, p. 235). In line with realism's logic, Wassa, Fante, Twifo, Denkyira, and Akyem sought to balance against Asante by building up their own military capabilities and aggregating their capabilities with those of other units in alliances. More importantly, they acted together to cut off Asante's access to the firearms trade.[40] Balancing against Asante's military power was important to them because, after all, offensive realism views balance of power as largely synonymous with the balance of military power (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 55-56).

The blockade by the alliance was so effective that trading activities between the hinterland and the coastal states halted for over a decade (Fynn, 1971). Wassa, Fante, Twifo, Denkyira, and Akyem may not have effectively balanced out Asante's power, but for a while, they were able to temper off Asante's aggression. A director general of the Dutch settlement in Elmina on the Gold Coast pointed out that unless the powerful alliance between Fante, Wassa, Twifo, Akyem, and Denkyira disintegrated, there was no way Asante could regain its military power (W.I.C. 115, D/G., J. P. T. Huydecooper,

39 Wassa was supposedly under Asante's control, but its opposition to Asante's domination and its resilience sometimes shifted it from the Asante state system to the Gold Coast state system.
40 Note that Mearsheimer's ideas about balancing are usually related to realism's broader concepts in alliance theory.

Elmina, 15 October 1764; W.I.C. 490, Fiscal Dadelbeck, Elmina, to the Presidial Chamber, Amsterdam, 16 September 1751).

If Mearsheimer's offensive realism is to hold, Asante, as a rising power in the region, should have invaded the southern states and forced its way to the European trading ports. As per Mearsheimer's logic, it did not make any strategic sense to hold off an offensive campaign against the Grand Alliance. Probably, the Asante king was preoccupied with settling a severely fractured internal system. Some historians, on the other hand, consider the king of Asante during this period, King Kusi Obodum, as an elderly mediocrity, who did not particularly have a forceful character (Fuller, 1921, p. 31; Priestley, 1961, pp.41-42; Priestley & Wilks, 1960). European traders also assumed that the king feared that the disgruntled factions within Greater Asante would dethrone him in absentia if he left Asante to campaign in foreign lands (W.I.C. 114, J.P.T. Heydecooper, Elmina, 1 May 1750). On the contrary, Asante may not have had the military capability to put up a serious fight against five states simultaneously. Asante's military power was based on conscription from the divisional and the subordinate states, so dissension within Greater Asante and revolt by the subordinate states became a handicap (Fynn, 1971, p. 32; Roemer, 1760, pp. 218-222). In the absence of manpower and formidable military assets, the central government had no dependable army, and any attempt at war would have been very costly. If Asante had possessed a formidable army during this period, it almost certainly would have used it—or threatened to use it—to gain territory for the Empire. Mearsheimer advocates for obsessive aggression but not at one's demise. According to Mearsheimer (2001), if the costs and risks of trying to launch an attack are too great, great powers are forced to

wait for more favourable circumstances, but this does not mean that their desire for more power goes away (p. 2).

In accordance with the balance of power logic, it was in Fante's interest to prevent any peer competitor from jeopardizing their power in their sub-region. For that reason, the Fantes were prepared to further undermine Asante's control over its subordinate states (Roemer, 1760, pp. 221-222). However, by 1750, the Fantes realized that the continuous blockade greatly hampered trade because the Asante, who were the principal traders in gold, ivory, and slaves, hardly had any access to the trade in the south. In 1753, the Fantes, with the support of the British, initiated a peace deal between Asante and its rebellious provincial states. The Dutch traders, also seeking leverage in a possible peace deal, joined the peace party in 1754 (Fynn, 1971, pp. 89-90; T70/30, T. Melvil, Cape Coast Castle, 11 November 1753). The Fante, Dutch, and English sent peace envoys from 1754 to 1758 to the Asante capital to discuss the terms of a peace deal (Fynn, 1971).

Asante promised to accept the peace offer provided the defected provinces agreed to pay a fine and release the Asante hostages they were holding. They demanded that the rebellious states move their military camp from Assinland and stop pressuring loyal provincial states like Assin, Sefwi, and Kawu to defect. Furthermore, they demanded that all individuals under the special protection of Asante, living in or outside the defected states, should be kept safe, and all cases regarding Asante's debtors, criminals, deserters, and runaway slaves should be handed over to Asante authorities. It also stipulated that Asante traders should be given unhindered passage to the European traders and be allowed to trade in foodstuffs with other African polities. Asante

threatened war if their conditions were not met (Fynn, 1971, pp. 89-91; T70/30, T. Melvil, Cape Coast Castle, 11 November 1753).

Asante's response was certainly not a response from a passive actor. Apparently, Asante's existing offensive military capability paved the way for assertive diplomacy. Asante's demands indicated that it was certainly still a revisionist state determined to uphold its expansionist ambitions and crush any rebellion. The stalemate had not tempered its offensive proclivities. Asante probably agreed to consider the diplomatic deal because, like Mearsheimer's great powers, it was not ready to charge headlong into a losing war. Mearsheimer holds that revisionist states are not irrational aggressors. They think carefully about the balance of power and weigh the costs and risks of their actions (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 37).

Asante's adversaries objected to the peace arrangement because the monetary fine was too high and they were not ready to shift their military camp from Assinland. They alleged that they had occupied Assin because Assin had wronged them[41], and indicated that they had no intention of leaving without adequate compensation (Fynn, 1971, p. 91). Since Asante had threatened war if its terms were not met, the allies were convinced that it would launch an offensive campaign against them. They, therefore, prepared for a potential conflict by tightening the blockade to the trade routes to the south and cutting off Asante's access to firearms. They also harassed the Asante traders on both the southwestern and southeastern trade routes, robbing them, killing them, or selling them into slavery (Fynn, 1971, p. 92). Asante did not immediately launch an attack on the rebellious provincial states. Possibly recognizing the weakness of its

41 The nature of these wrongs is unknown.

military organization, Asante hoped to hold off until the alliance among its provincial states disintegrated and its internal difficulties were resolved.

The blockade of the southwestern trade routes had greatly affected Fante's position as middlemen (Fynn, 1971, p. 93), so in 1759, the Fante state withdrew from the Grand Alliance, disappointed that its allies had rejected the peace deal, and thus, undermined Fante's economic interest (Fynn, 1971, p. 93). Fante secretly made an arrangement with Asante to support them in crushing the rebellion (Fynn, 1971, p. 73). Fante's conflicting motive in this case was not a misreading of the situation at hand. Their actions may have been foolhardy, and at odds with realists' thinking because they removed any checks to Asante's power, but certainly, this was in line with Mearsheimer's line of thinking. In Mearsheimer's (2001) anarchic system, "states operating in a self-help world almost always act according to their own self-interest and do not subordinate their interests to the interests of other states … (most certainly) it pays to be selfish in a self-help world" (p. 33). It certainly paid for the Fantes to be selfish in the self-help world of the Gold Coast state system, because in the short term, their actions served their economic and political interests.

The coalition further disintegrated with the defection of Denkyira. According to Fynn (1971), Denkyira had urged the Grand Alliance to resume the negotiations with Asante because the continued dispute was detrimental to its economy as well (pp. 94-95). Suspecting that Denkyira might defect, the rest of the allied states conspired to attack it. When Denkyira found out about the conspiracy, it launched a surprise attack on the

allied camp in Assin (Fynn, 1971, p. 94-95). Denkyira then bandwagoned[42] with Asante, disclosed the military secrets of its former allies, and signed a separate peace treaty, promising to support Asante in crushing Wassa, Akyem, and Twifo (Fynn, 1971, pp. 94-95). In this case, Denkyira abandoned hope of liberating itself from Asante's domination, and instead, for its survival in this uncertain environment, conceded power to Asante and joined forces with it.

The defection of Fante and Denkyira from the Grand Alliance supports Mearsheimer's (2001) argument that alliances are only temporary marriages of convenience: today's alliance partner might be tomorrow's enemy, and today's enemy might be tomorrow's alliance partner (p. 33). Critics of offensive policies claim that balancing coalitions are formed to defeat aspiring hegemons, but Asante's history shows that such coalitions can also easily break up because states will always be distrustful of each other. Mearsheimer (2001) believes that the difficulty of constructing effective defensive alliances sometimes provides powerful states with opportunities for aggression.

By 1760, the formidable Grand Alliance of five major powers had dissolved into just three states: Wassa, Akyem, and Twifo. At this stage, the alliance was at the point of collapse. The British traders, therefore, urged the remaining allies to reopen the trade routes to the Gold Coast (Fynn, 1971). However, in 1760, the remaining allied states took their revenge against Fante for its desertion, and Wassa invaded Abromba, a principal Fante trading city-state (Fynn, 1971, p. 94).

42 Mearsheimer (2001) uses the term "bandwagoning" to describe situations in which a threatened state that is unable to fend off an aggressor joins forces with a dangerous foe to get at least some small portion of the spoils of war (p. 139). It is a strategy employed by weak states, not great powers.

Meanwhile, the Asante war council persuaded the Asante king and his advisors in 1764 to invade the allies and subdue them. Akyem, suspecting that war was imminent and knowing that what was left of the Grand Alliance could not defeat the Asante Empire, sought the support of the Yoruba state of Oyo.[43] Fynn (1971) argues that Oyo was jealous of the rapid build-up of Asante's power and saw this as an opportunity to break Asante's dominance over the slave trade with the Europeans (p. 96; see also Akinjogbin, 1967; Adu Boahen, 1966, Chapters 15, 16; Fage, 1956, pp. 88-91). In 1765, the Asante division of Dwaben, fighting on behalf of the Asante Empire, launched an offensive against the Akyem. Asante carried its offensive campaign to the southeast against Akyem's allies, a combined force of Oyo and Dahomey troops,[44] but were ambushed and defeated as they retreated across the Volta River (Akinjogbin, 1967; Fynn, 1971).

Summary: By the end of the 1760s, the Asante Empire was still in a fragile state. The civil war within Greater Asante was still ongoing, and the Asante had not been able to crush the revolt of Wassa, Twifo, and Akyem. Furthermore, Asante's access to the trade routes to the Europeans was still limited. Unit-level variables may have disrupted Asante's offensive intentions for a period, but Asante was still bent on pursing its hegemonic ambitions.

43 See Map 1 in the introductory chapter for the position of the Oyo Empire. The Oyo Empire, just like the Asante Empire, was a great power in the hinterland of what is today the country of Nigeria. Oyo had overrun Dahomey in 1747 (Thornton, 1999). Mearsheimer (2001) argues that no state has the military wherewithal to achieve hegemony over a large space, especially with geographical boundaries.

44 See Map 1 in the introductory chapter for the positions of the Oyo and Dahomey empires. These states were not interested in occupying or absorbing the Asante state into their own empires. They were just interested in breaking Asante's hold on the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

The behaviour of all the states in this case indicates that none of them were motivated by the desire to achieve peace or cooperation, as would be assumed by some IR scholars (Axelrod & Keohane, 1995; Keohane, 1985, 1989). Liberal theorists believe states can widen the perception of their self-interest through economic cooperation. They stress on the fact that the balance-of-power logic constrains power-maximizing behavior and makes states content once they have enough power to be secure. Mearsheimer (1990) does not deny that states desire peace and cooperation, but he argues that when security is scarce, states are cautious about cooperation (p. 44). Fante, Wassa, Twifo, and Akyem depended on trade with the Asante[45], yet they closed the trade routes, hampering trade in the region. They were willing to forgo absolute gains for fear that Asante might convert its economic gain into military strength. During this period, Wassa, Twifo, and Akyem, just like Mearsheimer's states, were more concerned about "who will gain more" from the trade with the Europeans (Mearsheimer, 1990, p. 44).

Mearsheimer (1990) notes that cooperation would be much easier to achieve if states worried only about absolute gains so every state would benefit from economic cooperation and interdependence (p. 45). However, security was scarce in both the Gold Coast and the Asante state systems. The primary concern of all the polities was survival. Uncertainty about the intentions of others generates distrust among the leading states, who assume the worst about the intentions of a likely adversary (Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 395-396). Mearsheimer (1990) points out that in such an anarchic system, states do not ask, "Will both of us gain?", but instead, "Who will gain more?" (p. 44; see also Greico, 1988, 1990; Waltz, 1979). Wassa, Twifo, and Akyem were justified in asking,

45 Asantes were the principal traders in the slave and gold trade, who the Europeans desperately sought, and the middle man role these provincial states played on the trade routes was very lucrative. Usually the middle men deflated the prices of the slaves and sold it off to the Europeans for profit. There was also the risk that they could sell defected firearms to Asante (Fynn, 1971, p. 93).

"Who will gain more from the trade with the Europeans?" After all, Asante was the principal trader in slaves and gold, so they had abundant resources to exchange for firearms.

Further, Asante's agreeing to consider the peace deal moderated by the Fante and the Europeans was not a mark of a 'positional survival' stance. Asante possibly took this position because it would have undermined its already weakening military organization, and in turn, its prospects for hegemony. Mearsheimer (2001) argues that states sit tight and wait for a more propitious moment before taking an action. This propitious moment for the Asante Empire presented itself during the period between the late 1760s and the 1780s.

4.6. 1764-1780: Upholding the Asante Empire

By the end of King Kusi Obodum's reign in 1764, the Asante Empire was still grappling with the rebellion of the provincial states, especially the southwestern states that were determined to regain their economic and political independence. While Asante controlled the trading activities in the north with ease, its control of the trading activities in the south was in a state of constant flux. The next king, Osei Kwadwo (1764-1777), and his administration were determined to subdue the rebellious states and reinstate its control over the trade routes to the south. Asante's intent was to restore its control of the trade routes so as to sustain its military might.

Although the Grand Alliance had collapsed by 1764, the remaining rebellious states were still buying large quantities of firearms in preparation for a potential attack from Asante (T70/31, William Mutter, Cape Coast, 25 January 1765, 10 February 1765, 25

April 1765; W.I.C. 116, D/G J.P.T. Huydecooper, Elmina, 8 March 1765, 26 June 1765). It should, however, be noted that though these provincial states and the Fante states had access to substantial military assets and exhibited offensive behaviour, they were concerned with maintaining the status quo— that is their control over the trade routes in their region of the world (T70/31, William Mutter, Cape Coast Castle, 25 January 1765, 10 February 1765, 20 July 1765; W.I.C. 116, D/G J.P.T. Huydecooper, Elmina, 8 March 1765, 26 June 1765), and this contradicts the predictions of both defensive and offensive realism.

The balancing behaviour they adopted, however, lines up with realism's broader concepts in alliance theory. As noted earlier, the principal intention of the Fante states was driven mainly by strategic economic calculations. So to reinvigorate their economy, the Fantes were ready to partner with the enemy, Asante, to crush the rebellion that had stagnated trading activities on the coast. The rebellious provincial states, Akyem, Wassa and Twifo, were particularly alarmed by an Asante- Fante alliance, since Fante had previously been in a coalition with them. The Asantes camped their forces in the Fante city-state of Abora to prepare for war against the rebellious provincial states[46]. Fante found the presence of Asante in Fanteland unsettling as they were never certain about Asante's future intentions. The Asante were aware of this apprehension so, to demonstrate their peaceful intentions, they swore an oath to live in harmony with the Fante and sealed their oath with the exchange of hostages (T70/1022, Cape Coast Day Books, 1965, 18 June 1765).

46 Wassa and Twifo armies fearful of the potential military capability of Asante fled, leaving Akyem alone to confront Asante. After a series of targeted attacks, Akyem was defeated in 1765 (Fynn, 1971, p. 100; see also W.I.C. 116, D/G J.P.T. Huydecooper, Elmina, 8 May 1765).

The pervasive alliances observed thus far are in accordance with Mearsheimer's (2001) views on the transience of alliances (p. 33). States, particularly the Fantes, flip-flopped between enemies and allies effortlessly. The pervasiveness of the alliances in this case supports the view that self-help encourages states to form alliances even with their enemies. As mentioned previously, according to Mearsheimer (2001), states, being selfish actors, almost always act according to their own self-interest and do not subordinate their interests to those of other states. In essence, the balancing strategies were based on selfish motives in a self-help world.

Propelled by its selfish interest, Fante did not want to maintain its alliance with Asante because its objective of overrunning the provincial states and re-opening the trade routes had been achieved. Fante broke the oath and went on the offensive against Asante. They captured about 4,000 Asantes and had them killed or sold into slavery (Fynn, 1971, p. 100-101; T70/31, William Mutter, Cape Coast Castle, 20 July 1765). Asante was surprised by Fante's behaviour and sent a peace envoy, including four chiefs, to Fanteland to resolve the problem, but the Fantes detained this peace envoy (T70/31, William Mutter, Cape Coast Castle, 20 July 1765). Fante's defiance led to sporadic fighting with the Asante in 1765, and the Asante moved their forces from Fanteland (T70/31, William Mutter, Cape Coast Castle, 20 July 1765; T70/1022, Cape Coast Day Books, 27 June 1765, 14 August 1765, 18 August, 1765; W.I.C. 116, D/G J.P.T Huydecooper, Elmina, 27 June 1765). The Fantes entered into another alliance against Asante with Wassa, Twifo, and Nzima in 1766 (Fynn, 1971, p. 104; Shillington, 2005, p. 61) to prevent Asante from advancing to the coast (Fynn, 1971, p. 105; T70/31, John Hippisley, Cape Coast Castle, 20 March 1766; T70/1022, Cape Coast Castle Day Books, 9 and 23 November 1765). The allied parties established a law prohibiting the

sale of guns, gunpowder, iron bars, lead, and pewter to the Asantes. Anyone who broke this law was awarded the death penalty

Conclusions drawn from Mearsheimer's offensive realism would lead one to assume that Asante, as a power-maximizing revisionist state, will not continue to pursue diplomatic considerations in the face of blatant defiance. However, a number of scholars maintain that Asante did not enter into wars precipitously. Diplomacy and negotiation were favored over combat. Only when these failed were military options considered (Chazan, 1988, p. 78; Dupius 1824, pp. 225-226; Adjaye 1984). Yet the use of force and threats of force was always a necessary instrument of its diplomacy (Dupuis, 1824, pp. 225-226).

Mearsheimer (2001) may refer to this particular case as 'clever diplomacy'. He uses the term 'clever diplomacy' in circumstances where one's military capability against that of its adversary is diminishing. In this case, states are willing to signed nonaggression treaties and use accommodating language. Yet, they are still committed to their expansionist ambitions and would use force—or threaten to use it—if they possessed a formidable army at the time (Mearsheimer 2001, p.p. 189-190). In this case, Asante may have suspected an attack on the Fantes[47] may draw the Europeans (probably with immense military capability) into the war on the side of Fante. After all, the local territories where the European trading ports resided were in effect their protectorates because the European traders on the Gold Coast found it beneficial to negotiate a treaty with the local polities in order to establish a peaceful long-term relationship (Doortmont

47 The European traders resided on the territories of the Asante states

& Smit 2007; Doortmont & Benedetta, 2006; van Dantzig, 1981; Yarak, 1986; Feinberg, 1976).

Fante's behaviour towards the peace envoy and its defiance of Asante's diplomatic efforts go against conventional wisdom. Asante's adversaries did not heed to its attempts at diplomacy and peace. Fante's behaviour and actions towards a dominant power despite attempts at diplomacy by the dominant power is something Mearsheimer does not address. Conventional wisdom will dictate that force and threats of force, especially by a dominant power with overwhelming military capability, will be an essential instrument of its diplomacy and have a role to play its foreign policy directions. Mearsheimer argues that in balancing, the great power can send "clear signals to its adversary through diplomatic channels … that it is firmly committed to maintaining the balance of power, even if it means going to war. The emphasis in the balancer's message is on confrontation, not conciliation. In effect, the balancer draws a line in the sand and warns the aggressor not to cross it" (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 156). Asante as the most powerful state in the Gold Coast at this period, with overwhelming military capabilities, should not have repeatedly experienced great difficulty in employing the strategies of deterrence and coercive diplomacy to persuade its adversaries to forgo or stop actions that are against its interests.

Though Fante's actions appear to fall outside Mearsheimer's offensive realism, the logic behind Fante's actions fall within Mearsheimer's 'rational choice' thesis. The question is not just about the potency or credibility of the threat of force by the most dominant power, but the resolution of the adversary that assumes it has sufficient military capability to resist the dominant power significantly in a war, and even reverse

the dominant power's position by war. Presumably, the power of the gun overrides reason. In this case, both the revisionist and the status quo states found accumulation of military capability and offensive campaigns as an important tool that determined their power in the international system (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 56).

In spite of the reasoning above, Fante's aggressive behaviour towards a dominant power with overwhelming military capability still contradicts both the offensive and defensive realism's line of thinking. Fante's actions during prior years suggest that their single most important objective was economic gain and holding on to its middleman role in the slave and firearms trade, not hegemony. If the Fante's primary concern was to maintain the status quo, then it was irrational and self-defeating on their part to have behaved aggressively toward a power-maximizing revisionist state like Asante. Even if Asante was not a revisionist state, their actions were still misguided. Fante would have been more secure if it had concentrated on cooperating with Asante, by not attempting to alter the balance of power by force. After all, Asante made a peace offering to the Fantes. This self-defeating behaviour of the Fantes cannot be explained by strategic logic, but instead the result of some misguided foreign policy unknown to us. At the same time, Fante's behavior may substantiate Mearsheimer's proposition that states are led to assume the worst intentions about others in an anarchic system. They assume others may, at any time, attempt to use arms against them. Consequently, they counteract by first acting aggressively (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 337–341). Yet, Mearsheimer (2001) himself admits that such foolish behavior invariably has negative consequences.

The hostilities between the Fantes and the Asantes continued to have adverse effects on trade on the coast. For their own economic interest, the English[48] and the Dutch traders, though not yet principal actors in the Gold Coast system, tried to broker peace between the warring states (T70/31, W. Mutter, Cape Coast Castle, 20 July 1965; T70/1022, Cape Coast Castle Day Books, 27 June 1765; W.I.C. 116, D/G J.P.T. Huydecooper, Elmina, 27 June 1765). It is rather ironic that the European traders attempted to bring peace to the coast, while their insatiable demand for human exports and the massive influx of firearms significantly increased the incidence of warfare, hastening the breakdown of political order and insecurity in the Gold Coast in the 18th and 19th centuries (Daaku, 1970, pp. 5, 19 & 152)

No formal peace agreement was concluded over this conflict, yet, the provincial states of Denkyira, Wassa, and Twifo reaffirmed their allegiance to Asante and promised to keep their trade routes open (Fynn 1971, pp. 115, 124). Thereafter, Asante's relations with its southwestern neighbors became less turbulent. However, the Fantes continued to tighten their ban on the import of firearms into Asanteland (Afrifa, 2000; T70/31, Gilbert Petrie, Cape Coast Castle, 28 August 1967; Fynn, 1971, p. 108; W.I.C. 166, D/G J.P.T. Huydecooper, Elmina, 1 February 1767). Akyem, together with Akuapem and Krobo, in the southeast also prevented the Asantes from receiving firearms from the Europeans (Fynn, 1971, p. 109). Though Asante still struggled to hold on to its provincial and annexed territories, by the close of the century, Asante was still the only

48 The Europeans tried not to interfere in a war between Fante and Asante. For example, the British Board of Trade and Plantations in London insisted that they "were only tenants in the soil which they held at the goodwill of the natives". They promised to protect the Fantes if they were driven into the European forts for shelter (T70/152, Minutes of the Council at Cape Coast Castle, 11 August 1772; see also Fynn, 1971, pp. 113-114). This reveals that although the British claimed to be neutral, they were willing to support Fante.

potential hegemon in the multipolar system of the Gold Coast, facing a formidable adversary on the coast, the Fantes (Fynn, 1971).

Summary: The Fantes always had a deep-seated and long-standing fear that their territory was vulnerable to invasion by the Asantes because more than 12 firearms trading markets resided in their territories. Fear of Asante was the main driving force behind their thinking and actions. According to Mearsheimer, fear is the single most important factor that drives others to maximize their military power through desperate balancing and other means, which, in turn, polarizes the system, and ultimately, causes intense security competition, drawing closer the danger of the great power war (Mearsheimer 2001, pp. 345-346,). Mearsheimer (2001) holds that a potential hegemon does not have to do much to generate fear among the other states in the system. True to this fact, Asante did not have to do much to instil fear in the Fantes. Its formidable capabilities alone scared them to pursue riskier policies. Mearsheimer's reasoning for this behaviour is that "state's intentions are difficult to discern, and because they can change quickly, rival powers will be inclined to assume the worst about the potential hegemon's intentions, further reinforcing the threatened states' incentive to contain it and maybe even weaken it if the opportunity presents itself" (p. 345).

In addition, the fear the Fantes held was compounded by its geographical proximity to the Asante Empire. Asante's suppression of the southwestern provincial states bordering Fanteland put Asante right at the doorsteps of the Fante territories. Since they shared a common border with Asante, Asante was certainly well-positioned to strike the Fante territory whenever they saw it fit to form a balancing coalition. But they did not, mainly because the Asantes were aware of a resolution passed by the

British in 1772 to protect the Fantes if they were driven into the European forts by war (T70/152, Minutes of the Council at Cape Coast Castle, 11 August 1772).

Although aggression, threats of war, and wars were rife, this period was not characterized by the clash of revisionist states with immense military power. Asante's neighbours appeared to be especially motivated by economic gain, particularly the control of the trade. On the contrary, Asante, since its inception, appeared to have been motivated by the desire to be the only great power (military power) in the system. The Asante Empire was the only polity that exhibited characteristics of Mearsheimer's revisionist states. Thus, this period saw a clash between a revisionist state and status quo states with immense military power. While trying to consolidate its gains, Asante, the revisionist state, made its final drive to establish itself as a hegemon in the Gold Coast.

4.7. 1780-1902: Asante's Final Drive to Establish Itself as a Hegemon in the Gold Coast Region of West Africa

Indeed, the Asante Empire as it appeared at the close of the 18th century was the product of nearly a century of continuous expansion. Asante's actions since 1700 indicate that it was concerned mainly with becoming the mightiest military and economic power that dominated the entire region of the Gold Coast. Until the 19th century, Asante's principal adversaries were African polities. By the turn of the century, the European entities had become its main adversaries, especially, the British settlement on the Gold Coast, with which it competed for power to dominate the southern states, and later the Gold Coast.

Faced with internal strife in 1780, Asante had to concentrate instead on consolidating their rule at home (Bowdich, 1819, p. 239; Fynn, 1971, pp. 125-126). Some provincial states took advantage of the situation to break Asante's domination (Fynn, 1971, p. 126). For example, Wassa persuaded the Fantes to place an embargo yet again on firearms going through their territories to Asanteland. Thereafter, Wassa entered into an alliance with Nzima with the intention of invading Asante (T70/911, Anomabo Day Books, 10 May 1785; T70/1126, Kommenda Fort Day Books, 13 May 1785, 20 June 1785)[49].

The internal strife within Greater Asante, however, had not tempered Asante's appetite for power and influence. Asante quickly rebutted by launching an offensive attack on Wassa. With its substantial military capability, Asante forced its way to the southwestern coast, crushing Wassa and Nzima in the process. After regaining access to the firearms trade on the southwestern coast, Asante amplified its military might with the intention to further expand its Empire into the Fante region and regain control of its territories in the west and southwestern regions (Fynn, 1971, p. 126).

Meanwhile, the Fantes, apprehensive of Asante's imperial ambitions, took actions that were bound to cause more tensions. In 1805, the Fantes intervened in a conflict between two Asante provinces in the southeast, the Akuapem and Accra[50] (Fynn, 1971, pp. 141-142; Reindorf, 1898, p. 135)[51]. In 1806, the Fantes interfered again in Asante's internal

49 The embargo was so effective that in 1789, the British governor reported that the Asante traders could not reach anywhere near the Fante territories and trade had stagnated (T70/33, Governor and Council, Cape Coast Castle, 26 Jan 1789; see also T70/34, Dalzel, Cape Coast Castle, 13 October 1800)

50 Asante considered its provinces as its protectorates, so any interference amounted to interference in its internal affairs. Asante feared that Fante's influence on its territories on east coast would jeopardize its trade with the Europeans there.

51 Akyem a fierce enemy of Asante entered the war on the side of Akuapem.

affairs again by hosting two Asante fugitives. Instead of launching an attack on the Fantes immediately, Asante rather chose to send a special request to the Fantes to release the two fugitives (Meredith, 1812, p. 134; T70/35, George Torrane, Cape Coast Castle, 20 July 1807; Wilks, 1975; Claridge, 1915, p. 241). When the Fantes rejected Asante's request, the latter launched an attack on Fanteland in 1806, and after several battles between 1806 and 1807, the Asante overran Fanteland, while also attacking a British fort in Anomabo, and fatally wounding one of the British settlers[52] (Meredith, 1812, pp. 132-135; Meredith, 1812, pp. 132-163; see also Claridge, 1915; Ellis, 1893; Fynn, 1971; Wilks, 1975). The British governor of Cape Coast noted in his report in June 1807 that "The King of Ashantee with a most powerful army invaded the country. He has made rapid progress and actually cut his way through the heart of the Fantee country" (T70/35, George Torrane, Cape Coast Castle, 12 June 1807; see also V.G.K., The Guinea Journal No. 1217, C. Schioning, Accra, 5 June 1811). In its pursuit of the fugitives, Asante overran the whole coastal region from the east to the west coast (V.G.K., The Guinea Journal No. 1123, C. Schioning, Accra, 5 June 1811; see also Meredith, 1812, p. 161).

It is puzzling that Fante once again adopted a self-defeating behaviour. Mearsheimer (2001) posits that states do whatever is necessary to survive, and Fante was no exception in this regard. Yet, this irrational move by Fante cannot be explained even by the logic of offensive realism. This nonstrategic behavior of Fante was a prescription for national suicide. According to Mearsheimer (2001), the best way to determine whether the aggressor was engaged in a self-defeating behavior is to focus on its

52 In fact, the Fante army fled and the Asante refugees were harboured in by the British at the their fort in Cape Coast. The Asante attacked the fort for several hours as the British defended with cannons and muskets. The Asante eventually withdrew with numerous casualties on the side of the Asante and Fante (Claridge, 1915, p. 241).

decision-making process that led it to initiate war, and not on the outcome of the conflict (pp. 209-213). Historical evidence thus far indicates that the Fantes had no intention to become a hegemon, and without detailed data on Fante's foreign policy objectives, it is difficult to determine what its intentions were. Yet the evidence available suggests that Fante's decision was definitely not prompted by the imperatives of the Gold Coast international system. Conventional wisdom dictates that it would have been wiser for the Fantes to have maintained their status quo goal by pursuing policies of "positional survival" rather than a "revisionist agenda". The Fantes should have been careful not to provoke Asante, the most powerful state in the Gold Coast, into moving against it and threatening its survival.

Asante's conquest of the Fantes in 1807 significantly altered international politics of the Gold Coast in the 19th century. The Asante's victory in Fanteland made them overlords of Fanteland and the other coastal states and gave them access to the entire coastline of the Gold Coast. The defeat of Fanteland also earned Asante the rights to the lands of the European settlers in Fanteland (Hargrove, 2015, p. 85; Osei Kwadwo, 1994, p. 19).[53] Asante appointed resident commissioners or governors to a number of Fante city-states, including Abora, Cape Coast, and Elmina, imposing taxes on these city-states as they did with their provincial territories (Fynn, 1971, pp. 147-148). The British, who had cautiously remained on the sidelines of the Gold Coast politics to protect their economic interests, were forced to interfere in the Asante-Fante conflict because the conflict on the coast potentially jeopardized their economic interests. Existing rivalry between the British and Dutch traders caused the British to fear that

53 The Asante already had the rights to the lands of the Dutch settlements on the southeastern coast (Elmina, Axim, and Dixcove) after they defeated Denkyira, and they gained the rights to the Danish settlements in Accra on the southeastern coast after they defeated the Akyem.

allowing Asante to take over the Fante territory would only help the Dutch. The Asantes had closer ties to the Dutch traders because Asante had overlordship over the Dutch trading forts on the southeastern coast (Elmina, Axim, and Dixcove), and they paid ground rent to them (Fynn 1971, pp. 23-24).

Anticipating such a threat, the British had promised to protect the Fantes in 1772 (T70/152, Minutes of the Council at Cape Coast Castle, 11 August 1772); however, they realized that the military attaché to their trading fort did not possess the offensive military capability to take on the Asante military power. So, they attempted to broker a peace deal that would be acceptable to both the Fantes and Asantes. As part of the peace deal, the British governor on the coast handed over the Asante fugitives to them (T70/152, Minutes of the Council at Cape Coast Castle, 11 August 1772; Fynn, 1971, p. 144). Thereafter, Asante-British relations appeared to remain steady but tense.

During that same year of 1807, the British government in England outlawed the slave trade, which posed a threat to Asante's revisionist agenda, because it was the only resource, above all else, that gave it the capital to buy immense and sophisticated weaponry (in addition to the economic gain it got from the slave trade) (Fynn, 1971; Metcalfe, 1962; Bowdich, 1819; Collins, 1962; Hargrove, 2015; Reade, 1874). However, the British government was committed to stopping the slave trade. The Abolition of the Slave Trade Act of 1807 made it illegal for British subjects to engage in the slave trade, but the Asantes were not British subjects at that time, so they were not bound by the Act. The British were, therefore, concerned that the Asante would continue to trade in slaves with other Europeans like the Danes and the Dutch, who had not yet outlawed the trade. As a result, the British government signed treaties with its

African trading partners (that is the Fantes, and southwestern and south eastern African traders who happened to be provincial states of Asante) on the Gold Coast to stop the trade (Collins, 1962, p. 92). This action by the British was one of the important steps they took to limit the power base of the Asante, especially on the coast.

Since Asante had assumed authority over the southern and coastal states after the 1806-1807 conflict, there was bound to be some tension with the British over who controlled Fanteland and the neigboring southern territories. In 1810, Asante imposed a trade blockade on the British for refusing to pay the ground rent for their coastal forts and for encouraging the Fantes to suspend tributes to the Asante central government (Edgerton, 1995, p. 50; Stapleton, 2013, p. 93). As a consequence, the British trading forts did not receive gold from the hinterland, because Asante was the principal trader in gold trade. In 1811, the Fante sought to avenge their defeat in the 1806-1807 conflicts by attacking two Asante protectorates in the south, Accra and Elmina. In response, the Asante sent armies to both Elmina and Accra to defend them.

Akyem, a provincial state of Asante, was instructed to join the Asante contingent marching towards the Fante state of Elmina. The Akyem refused to comply and instead killed the Asante messengers sent to give them the orders. Asante sent an army to avenge Akyem's actions, and the Akyem sought the support of Akuapem, another provincial state of Asante. A series of battles followed, with Asante winning the initial battle. The Asantes were forced to retreat when the Akyem-Akuapem alliance withdrew into the Akuapem hills and adopted guerrilla-fighting tactics in a terrain the Akuapem were familiar with (Bowdich, 1819, p. 241; Fynn, 1971, p. 151; Meredith, 1812; Reindorf, 1898; W.I.C., D/G, H.W. Daendels, Elmina, to Huydecooper, 24 May 1816).

Akyem continued to defy Asante's authority by refusing to pay its taxes and attacking Asante traders on the trade routes to the coast. In 1814, Asante sent another military force to get the kings of Akyem and Akuapem to submit to Asante's authority. After a series of battles, in 1816, Asante defeated the Akyem-Akwapim alliance and the Akyem and Akuapem kings fled and took refuge with the Fantes. The Fantes, fearing an Asante invasion, drove the fugitives from their land. The Akyem and Akuapem kings were eventually captured and killed in January 1817 (Bowdich, 1819; V.G.K., The Guinea Journal No. 1833, Svanikiaer, Accra).

To follow up with its intention to resolve the insecurity and stabilize the region, the British sent a diplomatic mission to Asante's capital in 1817. In 1820, the British African Company signed a treaty of friendship with the Asantes, recognizing Asante's claims to sovereignty over much of the coastal territories (McLaughlin & Owusu-Ansah, 1994).[54] With this treaty, the balance of power shifted decisively in Asante's favour. Hegemony had now become a reality for Asante. Asante had become the strongest power in the Gold Coast, its power and influence extending over an area almost the size of modern Ghana,[55] with a population of about three to four million (Aidoo, 1977, p. 1; Fynn, 1971). See Map. 11.

Illustrative Map 11: The Boundary of the Asante Empire by 1820

54 The British, still unwilling to cede the territory, signed but refused to ratify the treaty (Ward, 1966, pp. 11-59)

55 Modern Ghana's total area (land and water) is 238,533 square kilometers. This means the Asante Empire likely occupied an area of 477,066 square kilometers, which is almost like Denmark, Switzerland, Netherlands, Belgium, and Austria put together.



Most scholars strongly attribute the wealth, power, and expansionist ambitions of the Asante Empire to the lucrative transatlantic slave trade (Bortolot, 2000; Hogendorn & Marion, 1986; Herbert 1999). It cannot be denied that the slave trade was responsible for the emergence of a number of large and powerful polities in the Gold Coast from the 17th to the 19th centuries. However, the slave trade was not the principal factor that caused Asante, in particular, to maximize its military power and embark on wars of conquest. The lucrative slave trade that generated enormous wealth and power for the African polities rather reflected their 'latent power' - the critical resource that goes into building powerful military organizations. According to Mearsheimer (2001), there are two important societal resources – wealth and population – that are essential ingredients of military power (p. 55). However, wealth is a critical latent power because it is crucial

to building formidable military forces. A state cannot build a powerful military if it does not have the wealth to acquire the weapons to equip its army (Mearsheimer 2001, pp. 55, 60-63). Asante, for example, took a lot of slaves in wars, and engaged slave labor on its vast gold pits, which brought in great wealth it used to buy guns and munitions. Asante also traded the rest of the slaves with the Europeans for guns, cloth, metal goods and cowry shells. It should, however, be noted that the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 did not tamper Asante's expansionist ambitions or its military power as the Asante Empire reached its peak in 1820s, that is, over 15 years after the abolition. This was due to the fact that the trade in slaves and gold gave Asante the wealth it needed to build its military power and pursue hegemony.

4.7.1. Confrontation between two potential hegemons (the British Crown and Asante): In 1821, an Act of Parliament dissolved the British trading company in the Gold Coast, and the British government took over their forts (Reade, 1874, p. 54). The implication was that the British trading company had now been replaced by the British government who could potentially prove to be a challenge to Asante's military power in the region. The representatives of the British Crown on the Gold Coast did not uphold the 1820 treaty ceding the Fante territories to Asante (Reade, 1874, p. 55). Consequently, relations with Asante were low, and the British did not help the situation by ignoring an Asante diplomatic envoy and refusing to send a courtesy message to the Asante king (Ward, 1966). Declining trade relations caused by disputes over who controlled the Fanteland and the coastal states led to the Anglo-Asante warfare in 1823, 1826, 1863, 1874, and 1896[56], resulting in the final suppression of the Asante Empire

56 The Asante won the first war, there was no decisive winner in the second, the third war ended in stalemate and the British won the last two wars.

in 1900, before the British claimed Asante as its colony in 1901 (Vandervort, 1998, pp. 16-37).

In the late 1823, the British governor general, Charles MacCarthy, determined to upset the status quo and restore British influence on the Coast, took advantage of the disagreement between the Fantes and the Asantes to declare war on Asante (Reade, 1874, p. 55; Freeman, 1898, pp. 462-463). In this case, the British were the aggressors. In a clash in 1824, the Asantes handily defeated the British force,[57] with MacCarthy being captured and decapitated (Alan, 1964, pp. 39–53; Vandervort, 1998, pp. 84, 85; Reade, 1874, pp. 55-56; Edgerton, 1995, pp. 77-79; Raugh, 2004, pp. 33-34). Apparently, the British had underestimated the military power of Asante.

Thereafter, Asante, worried about the British's intentions on the Gold Coast, was determined to break Britain's influence in the Gold Coast once and for all. Soon after defeating the British, the Asantes sent a message to the new British governor, John Hope Smith, threatening to overtake the British fort in Cape Coast (Reade, 1874, p. 58). In response, Britain joined forces with Denkyira, Akyem, and other traditional enemies of the Asante to check Asante's threat (Raugh, 2004, p. 34; Reade, 1874, pp. 58-59). This time, Asante was the aggressor. Asante's strategic plan was not to directly attack the British administrative capital in Cape Coast, located in the central region of the coast, but to launch an offensive from the east coast through to the west coast[58]. In

57 The British force—the Royal African Colonial Corps—were made up of a regiment of Europeans and some native allies, including Fante, Denkyira, and Wassa (Reade, 1874, pp. 55-56). The British force consisted of about 3,000 men, divided into two groups, with the governor in the first, smaller group of about 500 men that faced the Asantes who had about 10,000 men (Vandervort, 1998, pp. 84, 85). Besides, the British forces were lightly supplied, and reinforcements came in late (Edgerton, 1995, pp. 77-79).

58 The British also had a trading port on the east coast in Accra.

August 1824, the Asantes overran the British in their initial engagement on the east coast, but was pushed back when they reached the British central command in Cape Coast. Leaving behind thousands of casualties, the Asantes retreated back to their capital to reorganize, enlarge and reequip their army (Lloyd, 1964, pp. 39-53). They were back at war again almost immediately, and by 1826, the war was over with no decisive winner (Reade, 1874, p. 60). This time, the British fought the Asantes with better weaponry like the Congreve rockets, which had a significant impact on the Asantes who fled upon seeing them (Lloyd, 1964; Reade, 1874)

In the aftermath of these battles, the British decided to abandon the Gold Coast, so a group of merchants temporarily took over the forts. However in 1831, a peace treaty was signed between the British crown and Asante (Edgerton, 1995, pp. 76-88; Fynn, 29-3). According to Reade (1874), it was the Fantes who pushed for the peace deal because it was in their economic interest to see the British and Asante on good terms (p. 60). As part of the peace deal in 1831, Asante recognized the independence of the coastal states and agreed to refer all future disputes with Fante to the British for adjudication. In return, the Fante states promised to allow the Asantes to engage in trade on the coast (Farwell, 2001, p. 56; Low, 1878, pp. 57–176; Vandervort, 1998, pp. 90-103). Subsequently, there was no conflict for the next 30 years (Fynn, 1971).

After signing the peace treaty with Asante in 1831, the British saw the need to increase their influence in the southern region by signing a political agreement for "protection", known as the Bond of 1844, with the southern states, including the Fante states and some Asante's provincial states like Denkyira and Assin. British power in Fanteland strengthened with the Bond of 1844, which gave Britain the right to play an active role

in law making and the judicial system. This agreement extended British protection to Fante and the other southern states and gave Britain a degree of authority over them (Danquah, 1957). Britain begun to show signs of a potential hegemon after signing the Bond of 1844.

Like all great powers, Britain had good strategic reasons for wanting to expand its influence in the Gold Coast. However, the main driving force behind its intentions in the Gold Coast was economic power and not military might (Bowdich, 1817; Reade, 1874; Fynn, 1971; Bond of 1844, 6th March 1844). British intentions in this case points to an anomaly within offensive realism. According to Mearsheimer (2001), a state's primary concern is to maximize its military power, with the ultimate goal of becoming a hegemon, since no other state can seriously threaten such a mighty military power. Economic power only factored in as latent power—one of the most important ingredients for building military power. In this particular case of the British, economic power was the end goal; military capability was the means to realize that goal.

The Asante, on realizing that it was losing grip on its southern provinces, launched an offensive against Assin (a signatory of the 1844 bond) in 1853, which was particularly unruly on the trade routes to the south (Reade, 1874; Wilks, 1975). The British considering Asante's actions as a threat to their power in the south marched towards Asante on the Pra River (Metcalfe, 1962, p.237; Wilks, 1975, pp.215-8). Fearing that the British might be approaching with better military reinforcements, the Asantes retreated to their capital (Reade, 1874, p. 68). The British however still remained suspicious of Asante's intentions to expel them from the Gold Coast (Reade, 1874, pp. 68-69). Although British relations with Asante were tense, relative peace remained until

1863.

The two sides came to war again in 1863, this time over the issue of returning two fugitives to Asante. The British refused Asante's demand to return the fugitives because they believed that they had the manpower to stop Asante and finally break its domination in the Gold Coast (Reade, 1874, pp. 70-71). In anticipation of an attack by Asante, the governor requested 2,000 troops from England (Brackenbury, 1874). His request was denied, and sickness forced the British to withdraw their West Indian troops from the war. In 1864, the war ended in a stalemate (Agbodeka, 1971; Reade, 1874, p. 72; Edgerton, 1995, pp. 92-94; Fynn, 1978, 34-5). In light of this defeat, the British Crown held-off any plans to formally annex territories in West Africa, as it had intended to and planned to hand over their settlements to the natives as soon as they were able to govern themselves (Reade, 1874, p. 73). No peace treaty was concluded between the Asantes and the English after the 1863 conflict.

Tensions between the British and Asante flared up again in 1871 over the British purchase of the Dutch trading posts on the Gold Coast. The Danes had sold their forts to the English and left the Gold Coast in 1850 (Reade, 1874), so with the acquisition of the Dutch posts, the British became the only European power left on the Gold Coast. Consequently, Asante lost not only the ground rent it had been receiving from the Dutch settlements in Elmina, Shamah, and Axim since Denkyira's defeat in 1701,[59] but also direct access to the firearms trade market on the southeast coast (Fynn, 1971; Reade, 1874; Wilks, 1975). When the British took over Elmina and other Dutch trading posts,

59 The settlements where the Dutch settled were former tributary states of Denkyira. So Asante demanded ground rent from them after Denkyira's defeat in 1701. In addition, the Asante also received most of their arms and ammunition from the Dutch (Reade, 1874, 84 or 74).

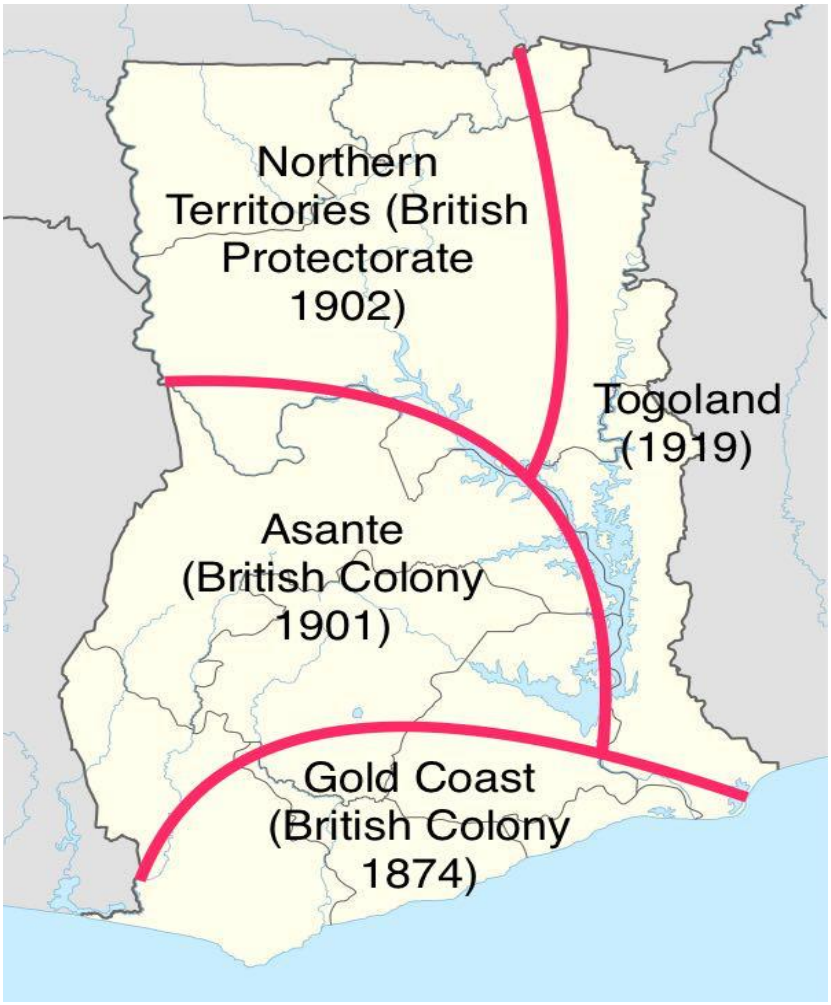
the Asante demanded ground rent because it claimed that those territories were protectorates of the Asante Empire (Reade, 1874).

The systematic consolidation of British power on the coast alarmed the Asantes. In a desperate attempt to hold on to its empire and control the trade routes, Asante attacked Fante in 1873, plundering and burning a number of Fante villages (Reade, 1874, pp. 100-106; Vandervort, 1998, pp. 100-101; 1995, pp. 96-101; Fynn, 1978, 36-7.). After its initial success, the Asantes were forced to retreat in 1874 because the British had superior weapons, like the cannon that fired directly on the Asante front lines (Edgerton, 1995, 137-45; Fynn, 1978, 40-1). The British rejected an attempt to negotiate a peace deal, and in January 1874, British troops consisting of West Indians (and Africans) marched to the Asante capital and burnt it down. The two sides signed a peace treaty in 1874. The Asante were to pay an indemnity of 50,000 ounces of gold and renounce claims to Elmina and lands occupied by British Crown. They were also to terminate their authority over their provincial and annexed states. In addition, they were to withdraw their troops from the coast and keep the trade routes open (Edgerton, 1995, pp. 150-163; Fynn, 1978, 41-2; Alan, 1964; Vandervort, 1998). The British's victory over Asante and subsequent demands from the Asante clearly indicated that a new era had dawned on the Gold Coast, and Asante's military power had been overtaken by a stronger power.

Asante never recovered from its defeat in 1874; the British had crushed its hegemony ambitions. In 1896, the British declared Asante as a protectorate, and exiled the king, his immediate family, and several of his close advisers to the Seychelles Islands (Agbodeka, 1971; Edgerton, 1995; McLaughlin & Owusu-Ansah, 1994; Raugh, 2004).

The British left a small force in the Asante capital to hold the fort. From 1899 to 1900, the British tried to take possession of the Asante's mythical golden stool, because the stories they heard about the stool made them believe that Asante's pledge to the stool is what held the Asante nation together and gave them the resilience resist them and still aspire for greatness. Asante launched an armed rebellion in 1900 and laid siege to the Kumasi fort, where the British governor and his party had sought refuge (Edgerton, 1995; Gray, 2005; McLeod, 1981). The British reinforced their fighting force, and after severe fighting in Kumasi, suppressed the Asantes. On January 1, 1902, Asante was formally declared a British crown colony (see Map 12). The same year, the former northern provinces of Asante were also made a protectorate of the British Crown (Hallett, 1970, p. 281). Thus, Britain became the sole power in the political and economic affairs of the Gold Coast (McLaughlin & Owusu-Ansah, 1994).

Illustrative Map 12: British Gold Coast Colony by the End of the 19th Century



Summary: The interference of the British Crown in Gold Coast politics caused a major shift in the distribution of power. Both the British and Asante strived to be the only great power in the Gold Coast system. There is no question that the power of these dominant actors was understood in terms of its military capabilities and the territories they controlled. Although the British had some initial set-backs, eventually they gained a significant advantage in military power over Asante. Evidently, security (survival) considerations were the main driving force behind their aggressive behaviour. The African polities in the Gold Coast (with the exception of Asante) could make an argument for their economic security and survival. However, for revisionist actors like

the British and Asante, security had little to do with why they wanted power or pursued hegemony, and went beyond the reasonable requirement of security.

Initially, it appeared the British were just interested in their residential status on the coast and economic interests, but with time, they became more and more aggressive. Their aggression was most likely informed by domestic politics in Britain. British records indicate that they always had plans to formally annex the Gold Coast (Reade, 1874, p. 73; Brantlinger, 1985, pp. 166-203). Mearsheimer acknowledges that some unit and sub-unit -level factors influence foreign policy objectives (Mearsheimer, 2009, p. 246; Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 58, 182, 283, 289, 297, 298). The opportune moment came for Britain in 1874 when they defeated the Asante with superior weapons. Unlike the Fante states and the provincial states of Asante, the British and Asante did not seek security by deterrence and equilibrium but by dominance and hegemony.

The British hegemonic status in the Gold Coast in 1902 perhaps eliminated the security dilemma. Defensive realists may disagree with this logic because they profess that seeking more power than is needed provokes power balancing and the risk of war (Waltz 1979). However, this particular case of the British Crown in the Gold Coast in 1902 captures the logic of offensive realism because British military power was unchallenged by the time it assumed control of the Gold Coast. Asante or other states could have moved to resolve this developing disequilibrium through war but they did not have the military capability to challenge Britain's military might. At this stage, the British can be referred to as Mearsheimer's status quo power in the Gold Coast system because it had no challenger, and was content with the distribution of power in the system, and had no incentive to change it (Mearsheimer 2001, p.2).

4.8. Conclusion

This case study is a good test case for Mearsheimer's theory as it clearly revolves around an especially powerful state – the Asante state – who eventually achieved hegemonic status by 1820. As Mearsheimer (2001) argues, the most fundamental question that the hegemon faces is how to remain one. Power distribution within the state system is always changing. Consequently the hegemon has to calculate and recalculate how it is going to project its power in the region, and preserve its dominant position. Evidently, Asante could not hold on to its dominant position. Though its neighbors, especially the African polities, could not balance out its powerful military capability, they possessed substantial military might to reasonably challenge and weaken its power (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 5).

The Asante case also substantiates Mearsheimer's argument about geographical location and the likelihood of war. According to Mearsheimer, the crucial issue regarding geography is whether the threatened state shares a border with the aggressor, or whether a barrier separates them. Evidently, common borders incite aggression and promote balancing. Unfortunately for Asante and its neighbours they shared common borders, with few natural defensive barriers, which made them vulnerable to incursions from their adversaries. Consequently, the geographical arrangements in the Gold Coast greatly influenced the security competition and the likelihood of war. Asante, for example, located at the center of the hinterland, with relatively open borders on all sides, was surrounded by four of its rivals: Denkyira, Wassa, Twifo and Assin. This greatly influenced Asante's resolve to increase its military capability, and aim for hegemony because no one could possibly challenge a military superpower.

In line with Mearsheimer's theory, accumulation of weapons was the paramount objective of all the polities. Firearms or military resources became the central instrument that helped them achieve their ultimate goal. Since access to firearms was critical to achieving their goal, the states maximized their long-term odds on survival by keeping a check on their adversaries' accumulation of military power. For example, the provincial states and Fante states continually blocked Asante's access to the firearms trade. To this end, they balanced Asante's military power by building up their own military capabilities and/or aggregating their capabilities with those of others in alliances, against the prospective hegemon. As their military power increased, they became more aggressive, because they assumed that others suspicious of their intentions may choose to attack them first. The indiscriminate accumulation of military capability created a sharp power asymmetry among the principal actors, which polarized the system, and generated distrust and fear, causing intense security competition, and threat of a great power war.

By the time Asante achieved hegemony in 1820 it was the most powerful (military) state in the Gold Coast, feared and respected even by the British settlers, because of their tactical military organization and sophisticated weaponry. Mearsheimer (2001) notes that the quality of military assets and how the military forces and weapons are organized for war are good indicators of the quality of military power (Chapter 3). For example, Asante easily overran the northern territories in 1744/1745 because while the Asantes wielded muskets, the northern armies fought with spears and sabres (Roemer, 1760, pp. 218-22).

Unfortunately, the British were also able to eventually overcome Asante's military power in 1875 because of disparity in military technology. At the start of the 19th century, the British and Asante possessed similar muskets. As the century progressed, however, a technological disparity developed between the two armies. The British used rifles that were more accurate and efficient than the muskets of the Asantes, and the British also possessed advanced artillery and machine guns (Edgerton, 1995, pp. 66-67).

The Asante case supports Mearsheimer's position that great powers are rarely content with the current distribution of power, so constantly strategize to change it in their favor. After Asante established its control over the southern trade routes in 1820, there was no need to further pursue the Fantes to the doorsteps of the English settlers, who were potentially more powerful than them. Asante was a rich gold-territory, and controlled almost all the gold-rich territories in the hinterland. It also controlled the slave markets to the north. It was still the most principal merchant in the Gold Coast (Fynn 1971; Boaten 1970; Rattray, 1929, p. 109). It therefore made no sense for Asante to jeopardize its strategic position by confronting the British who were the source of its military power. Mearsheimer admits that at times, costs of conquest are high and the expected benefits may be small but some states foolishly pursue hegemony till their demise. Of course, Asante foolishly pursued hegemony in a system that contained another potential hegemon with superior military power. But the pressing question here is: what was the ultimate aim of this indiscriminate accumulation of military capability? Evidence in this case study indicates that while Asante took to arms to become the mightiest military power, Asante's neighbours (particularly the African polities) took to arms to defend their status quo, that is, their control of the trade routes. This

behaviour of Asante's neighbors (African polities) contradicts the predictions of offensive realism. Further, the history of the Gold Coast in the 18th and 19th centuries did not involve the clash of revisionist states with immense military power. All the polities behaved aggressively, yet only Asante (and Britain in the latter part of the 19th century) exhibited revisionist tendencies. The history of the Gold Coast in the 18th and 19th centuries rather involved the clash of revisionist and status quo states with immense military capability. The behaviour of the states in the anarchic Gold Coast and the Asante states system establishes the fact that uncertainty in an anarchic system may breed offensive attitudes and aggressive behaviour, but this does not necessarily result in revisionism.

Furthermore, sub-unit-level factors are important to Mearsheimer if they *do not* undermine a state's power advantage in the system. From Mearsheimer's perspective, nationalism, in particular, as a non-structural variable, exerts a powerful influence on a state's behaviour, especially when it comes to matters concerning a state's survival. Nationalism tends to foster close ties between political leaders and their populations, especially in wartime, when all concerned face a powerful external threat (Mearsheimer, 2001). The Asante case substantiates this line of thinking. The Asante army gained an important qualitative advantage over its adversaries partly because of its pledge to the 'mystical golden stool' and commitment to Asante nationalism. The pledge to the golden stool infused patriotism in their political leaders and the population. The military was made up of individuals who were motivated to fight and die for Asante. For example, Asante officers took an oath of death to hold their ground rather than retreat from a war (Edgerton, 1995, pp. 54, 59; Fynn 1978, p. 27). As per historical records, Asante's rivals usually fled when faced with intimidation. To

Mearsheimer's credit, nationalism, sub-unit factor eschewed aggression that tilted the balance of power in Asante's favour. Yet, this case challenges neorealist's general line of argument that sub-unit level factors matter only when it does not violate the balance of power logic, because civil strife within Greater Asante deterred external aggression.

Mearsheimer's theory has been useful in explaining why accumulation of military capability was a central objective of the leading polities in the Gold Coast anarchic system. However it cannot account for why Asante's neighbours accumulated firearms and embarked upon wars just to maintain the status quo. Furthermore, Mearsheimer's theory also has little to say about why Asante a revisionist states was revisionist. It appears Asante's revisionism somehow emerged from its patriotism and allegiance to the 'mystical goldern stool'. To answer the question on revisionism it may be necessary to consider how sub-unit factors like 'collective identity' (glorification of the nation) explain why some states expand beyond their objective security, and seek hegemony.

Chapter 5: Thesis Conclusion

I set out to investigate whether Mearsheimer's central proposition, which asserts that maximizing military power with the ultimate aim of becoming a hegemon is a logical solution in an anarchic environment, holds up when applied to the case of Asante and

its neighbors in the 18th and 19th centuries. To this end, I make a case for academic inquiry into great power politics of pre-colonial Africa that hitherto has been studied little by Africanists and the realist school of thought. Underlying this question is the larger issue of whether some concepts of realism can be applied successfully in non-European settings, though the world is more subtle than realism's models.

I started off by hypothesizing that if pre-colonial Asante and its neighbors in the 18th and 19th centuries had formidable military capabilities (according to their own standards) and engaged in shifting alliances and wars of conquest to alter the balance of power with the ultimate goal of hegemony, then it is most likely that their behavior resembled what Mearsheimer defines as "great power politics" (realpolitik of the classic European states system). After careful analysis of the historical record, I conclude that Mearsheimer's theory does not provide precise explanations for every question that arises in pre-colonial Gold Coast international relations.

Although it is useful in explaining how structural factors such as anarchy and the distribution of military power strongly shaped the behavior of the polities in the Gold Coast, it has little to say about how non-structural factors can directly influence systemic outcomes. Besides, the Asante case study disproves a critical foundation of neorealist theory that assumes that great powers are either all revisionists (Mearsheimer, 2001) or all status quo players (Waltz, 1979). The Asante case testifies to the fact that no state fits into a rigid dichotomy of status quo or revisionist orientation. In some cases, some states are rather located on a continuum that develops over time as their military power increases and some specific domestic agendas change.

The Asante case would have been the most-likely case to fit Mearsheimer's theory, provided Mearsheimer's predictions were relatively precise and the measurement error was low (Levy, 2008, pp. 12-13; Eckstein, 1975; George & Bennett, 2005). Admittedly, there is some scope for error, because detailed data on foreign policy objectives (intricacies and indirect connections at unit level) of the African polities are scant. Although I had some reliable data that enabled me to conduct this study, I cannot conclude with certainty that Mearsheimer's theory explains the relations between Asante and its neighbors with precision.

Although Mearsheimer's theory did not illuminate every nook and cranny of great power behaviour in pre-colonial Gold Coast, it helped shed some light on the following important historical puzzles: (1) Why Asante and its neighbours maximized their military capability and embarked on wars of conquest with no clear end in sight for almost two centuries; (2) What made Asante especially aggressive, with the ultimate aim of becoming a hegemon in the Gold Coast region; (3) What accounted for the periods of relative peace from 1750 to 1764; (4) Why Asante's neighbours, who were potentially credible balancers, failed to organize an effective alliance to contain Asante; and (5) Why the lucrative transatlantic slave trade was not the principal explanation for Asante's wealth and expansionist ambitions.

More importantly, the Asante case provides evidence that supports the fact that realism can possibly be applied to alternative states systems besides the European model.

Besides, the case study corroborates Mearsheimer's argument that accumulation of military capability and aggregating such capabilities with those of others in alliances, against a prospective adversary is the central objective of the leading states in an anarchic system. Furthermore, analysis from the case study reiterates the pressing arguments by some strand of realism as well as alternative theories that sub-unit level variables play a fundamental role in systemic outcomes. In addition, the discussion on the relevance of unit-level factors to structural theory validates Mearsheimer's argument on how 'nationalism' influences systemic outcomes, and opens up the theoretical space to reassess what actually makes revisionist states revisionist. This advances on realists' understanding of how complex intricacies at the sub-unit level such as 'collective identity' (glorification of the nation) influence state behaviour and revisionism. In this case, the sub-unit factors do not contradict structural theory; they supplement it.

To begin with, the Asante case provides the opportunity for offensive realism (including realism in general) to advance its analysis on alternative states systems besides the European model. John Keegan and other scholars argue that non-Western systems could provide a different perceptive to international relations because they usually incorporate cultural infrastructure of states to their understanding of state behaviour and revisionism (Van Creveld, 1991; Keegan, 1993; Arreguı́n-Toft, 2005). Notably, the Asante case reaffirms the fact that state systems vary. Some systems may overlap, whereas some may not have a clear-cut distinction between anarchy and hierarchy, and consequently, variations in system structure may influence security competition and the frequency of war differently. In addition, not all states fit into a

rigid dichotomy of status quo or revisionist orientation. Some states shift from status quo to revisionist disposition depending on structural and non-structural factors.

Other fields of study have already advanced their analysis on alternative states systems. It may equally benefit realism to look into non-Western ways of thinking, which incorporates domestic variables to understand how that influences international relations. Non-Western systems could potentially advance on how structural realism incorporates unit and sub-unit variables into its explanation of international relations without undermining the relevance of structural theory.

Furthermore, available evidence from the Asante case study indicates that military capability was a central ingredient in the power factor of most of the principal actors in the Gold Coast states system, including the Asante, Denkyira, Akwamu, Akyem, Aowin, Wassa, Twifo, the Fante states, and the British (in the latter part of the 19th century). Accordingly, (aggressively) controlling the firearms trade became their paramount political objective (Adu Boahen, Ajayi, & Tidy, 1986; Wilks, 1975; Fynn, 1971). However, contrary to what would be expected by defensive realism (that states seek the level of power that maintains and sustains their status quo, and limit war) and offensive realism (that states seek to maximize their power and influence to achieve security through domination and hegemony), the maximization of military power by the principal actors in the Gold Coast states system led to both status quo and revisionist disposition.

The aggressive nature of the polities in the Gold Coast states system made the concept of 'balance of power' unworkable, in the sense that the polities were prepared to use force (military power) to achieve their objectives. Mearsheimer as well as other realists hold the notion that states build their own capabilities and/or aggregate their capabilities with those of others in alliances, against a prospective adversary. He differs only on his insistence on aggression, revisionism and hegemony. Basically, balancing, be it against interests, threats or military capabilities, is supposed to be a process that checks and restores the equilibrium of imbalances and concentration of power (Mearsheimer, 2001; James, 1995; Waltz, 1964, 1979; Grieco, 1990; Lobell 2014; Walt, 1986). The Gold Coast system, as realism predicts, was marked by numerous instances of balancing and counterbalancing by both the aggressors and the threatened states. Fante, Twifo, Wassa, Aowin, Akyem, Nzima, Denkyira, and other provincial states of Asante were continually attempting to balance and counterbalance their power to block Asante's access to firearms trade and break Asante's political dominance. As the states faced a constant redistribution of power, they changed enemies and allies effortlessly. For example, in 1765, Fante switched over and partnered with Asante against Wassa, Akyem, and Twifo, then did a turn around again in the same year to form an alliance with Twifo, Akyem, and Wassa against Asante. Such incidents substantiate Mearsheimer's (2001) proposition that alliances are only temporary marriages of convenience: Today's alliance partner might be tomorrow's enemy, and today's enemy might be tomorrow's alliance partner (p. 33). As almost all the polities in the system were prepared to use force to achieve their objectives, attempts by all the polities to balance against threats and military power of their adversaries hardly worked. Accordingly, the Asante case supports Mearsheimer's assertion that states are selfish

actors, who usually act according to their own self-interest and do not subordinate their interests to those of other states (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 33).

Ultimately, the polities' selfish pursuit of military power arguably made the concept of 'balance of power' unworkable. Evidence in the Asante case suggests that military alliances do not always deter aggression and prevent war as assumed by some scholars (e.g., Waltz, 1979; Morgenthau, 1967; Gulick, 1955). The military alliance of Asante with its neighbors rather provoked and expanded the conflict (Mearsheimer, 2001; Siverson & Starr, 1991; Vasquez, 1993; Christensen & Snyder, 1990) because first, each state within the alliance believed that it had sufficient military assets to confront the adversary by itself; and second, the polities entered into the alliance with selfish agendas, leading to distrust. Such an incident suggests that in this particular case, the military capability of the alliance partners and distrust among them influenced alliance behavior negatively.

Selfishness in alliances, particularly in Asante's case, brings up an interesting observation not addressed by Mearsheimer or defensive realists. For example, status quo states like Fante indiscreetly broke up an alliance with Asante, a revisionist state, and adopted a self-defeating aggressive behavior toward Asante, a more powerful state. For instance, Fante captured about 4,000 Asantes and had them killed or sold into slavery, and also launched an attack on Asante, even though Asante had opted for diplomacy to resolve any disagreement (Fynn, 1971, p. 100-101; T70/31, William Mutter, Cape Coast Castle, 20 July 1765). As a state that sought 'positional survival', Fante's actions were misguided. Oddly, for a status quo state, it exhibited revisionist

tendencies. Even Mearsheimer's revisionist states think carefully about balance of power and weigh the costs and risks of their actions (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 37). As per defensive realism (Schweller, 1996; Grieco, 1993), a status quo state like Fante should have sought for security by cooperating with Asante, and not by attempting to alter the balance of power by force. What explains such a self-defeating behavior? Mearsheimer (2001) may probably argue that Fante's '(ir)rational' behavior was possibly informed by 'calculated self-interest' guided by a domestic agenda unknown to us. Realists usually tend to align what they view as misguided foreign policies to sub-unit level variables (Mearsheimer, 2009, p. 245; see also Waltz, 1979; Posen, 1984; Rathbun, 2008; Van Evera, 1999).

Classical and neoclassical realists especially tend to move beyond the limiting confines of systemic explanations and incorporate domestic considerations into their account of the foreign policy (Niebuhr, 1932; Morgenthau, 1993; Wohlforth, 1993; Rose, 1998; Schweller, 2004; Zakaria, 1998). Niebuhr, a classical realist speaks of how individual unselfishness transmutes into 'national egoism' (Niebuhr, 1932, p. 91). For neoclassical realism unit-level variables such as economic resources, land and population, and decision-makers' perception of power largely influences outcomes at the system level (Zakaria, 1998, pp. 38-39; Wohlforth, 1993, p. 2; Rose, 1998, p. 144-172; Schweller, 2004, p. 164).

Yet, their explanations do not specifically provide any rational account to why Asante, a revisionist state remained revisionist until its disintegration in 1902. Neoclassical realism does not specifically explain how and why unit-level variables influence

revisionism, and classical realism's reference to an abstract idea of human nature, is unconvincing and immeasurable. Besides, structural realists like Waltz (1979) consider unit-level variables as extraneous variables that should be controlled because they may suggest presumed effects on systemic outcomes when, in fact, there are none. For Waltz, these are undesirable variables because every new observed phenomenon would require the addition of new unit-level variables, which will invariably lead to the infinite proliferation of variables (Waltz, 1979, p. 65; Waltz, 1993, p. 45).

In spite of Waltz's objection, this Asante case leads to the assumption that 'revisionism' cannot be explained simply by the study of structural factors like distribution of military capabilities and interactions of the principal actors at the international level. Zakaria (1992) claims that this requires an inquiry into non-structural factors at the domestic level as well. This brings up an important question Mearsheimer never directly answered: What makes revisionist states revisionist? What made Asante a revisionist state from its inception, and why did it remain revisionist till its demise in 1902, and why did Fante continue to be a status quo state even when it exhibited revisionist tendencies at times? Defensive realists assume that states tend to behave as 'defensive positionalists' (Schweller, 1996, p. 101; Grieco, 1993, p. 303), and consequently, revisionism becomes an anomaly requiring explanation. They hold such a position because they believe states have no real incentive to become revisionist or expansionist (Waltz, 1979).

Zakaria (1992) admits that some states sometimes try to expand beyond their objective security requirements; and argue that if realism is to account for attempts at expansion,

they need to bring in domestic variables (p. 192). Zakaria concludes from his book *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role* (1998) that unit factors such as wealth in particular explain why some states expand beyond their objective security, and seek hegemony (also see Zakaria, 1992, p. 192). However, this Asante case challenges Zakaria's assertion. For instance, gold-rich territories located on the southwestern trade routes had enough wealth to build a formidable army to pursue an expansionist agenda. Yet, wealth and military capability alone did not motivate them to expand beyond their objective security requirements—their status quo—control of the trade routes.

Although Mearsheimer (2001) never directly linked nationalism, a sub-unit factor, to revisionism (pp. 109, 148, 181-182, 202, 282-283, 289), his discussions on the subject suggest that nationalism is probably the most powerful political ideology in the world that motivates states to be revisionists, because it glorifies the state. However, just like Zakaria's assertion on the link between wealth and revisionism, nationalism alone cannot make states revisionist. Consider for example, how badly the Palestinians want their own state, but nationalism alone will not qualify them to be a revisionist state. However, most of Asante's neighbors in this case study had military capability and significant wealth; however, it appears that their people did not have the sense of national consciousness or collective identity that exalted the nation above all others. Although Asante's military forces fought to death for their Empire, there were many instances where the soldiers of its neighbors fled the war (Meredith, 1812).

To this end, besides Asante's wealth, military capability, and its sense of nationalism, embedded in the 'mystical golden stool', may have advanced its strategic position at the international level. Asante's citizens' pledged to the golden stool and their belief in what it stood for infused patriotism in their political leaders and population, who were motivated to fight and die for the Asante nation[60]. Besides, Asante's sense of nationalism highly motivated its leaders to extract the resources needed to build a formidable military organization in the pursuit of external objectives. It can therefore be extrapolated from this Asante case that revisionism is attainable if states combine three key factors—First, nationalism/glorification of national unity (collective identity), (2) a state's 'mobilizable' wealth (the resources at its disposal to build a formidable military organization, and (3) military capability.

Furthermore, another example of how unit-level factors, such as 'collective identity' could have a powerful effect on outcomes at the system level is evident in the case, where the civil strife within Greater Asante had particular repercussions on the Asante's strategic position at the international level. Although Asante's nationalism advanced Asante's strategic position at the system level, the civil strife within Greater Asante weakened the empire's strategic position in the system. In theory, 1750–1764 could be considered as the years of non-expansion because Asante was embroiled in civil strife, and for the most part, it concentrated on domestic reforms. Apparently, factors at the unit-level rather worked against the Asante Empire by creating a powerful incentive for

[60] For example, Asante's officers took an oath of death to hold their ground rather than retreat from wars (Edgerton, 1995, pp. 54, 59; Fynn, 1978, p. 27). The British knowing Asante's nationalism was bounded by the 'mythical golden stool', tried to take possession of it in 1900, because they believed capturing the golden stool was the only way they could break the resilience of the Asante Empire (Edgerton, 1995; McLeod, 1981).

Asante's adversaries to be hostile toward it, undermining Asante's strategic position. Invariably, significant fault-lines or rifts within 'a unit' can adversely affect its strategic position and prevent it from extracting internal resources such as wealth, population, and military assets needed to maximize its power abroad. Ultimately, sub-unit and unit level factors may advance or undermine sound strategic thinking and the balance-of-power logic. The Asante case suggests that sub-unit or unit level factors may either negate or undermine a state's position at the international level if the bond of the unit or national cohesion is threatened, but advance its strategic position if the national cohesion is strong. Importantly, this case study sheds light on how realism can advance its debate on the link between sub-unit variables and structural explanation.

In addition, there is the possibility that 'personal power' or 'regime politics' another sub-unit variable can strongly influence state's external behavior and revisionism. Personal power is a central facet of the study of 'modern' African politics (Jackson & Rosberg, 1984). Moreover, most of the historical work on the Asante Empire hints more on how instrumental, strong Asante rulers like Osei Tutu (1695–1717) and Opoku Ware I (1720–1750) were in creating elaborate military organizations and sophisticated centralized bureaucracies to facilitate Asante's imperial ambitions (Wilks, 1975; Fynn, 1971; Adu Boahen & Ajayi, 1989). In addition, some historians consider 1750–1764 as 'years of inaction' because the king of Asante during that period, King Kusi Obodum was an elderly mediocrity, who did not particularly have a forceful character (Fuller, 1921, p. 31; Priestley, 1961, pp. 41-42; Priestley & Wilks, 1960; W.I.C. 114, J.P.T. Heydecooper, Elmina, 1 May, 1750). Thus, personal power of the Asante kings was therefore central to the foreign policy and strategic decisions of the state. Some African

scholars attribute critical decisions on state-building, building of the military organization, wars and strategic coalitions to African leaders (the Kings and Queens), not the state (Fynn, 1971; Bowdich, 1819; Cruickshank, 1853; Adjaye, 1984). Unfortunately, I do not have detailed historical data on domestic policy and the foreign policy decisions of these leaders to look into how the personal power of the kings directly influenced the great power politics of the Gold Coast.

To conclude, I contend that Africanists and realists missed the inquiry into the great power politics of the Gold Coast (pre-colonial Africa states systems), because the history of the Gold Coast and Asante's international relations has been obscured by the trans-Atlantic slave trade of the 17th to the 19th centuries (Adamu, 1979; Anstey, 1975; Curtin, 1967, 1969; Daaku, 1970; Dantzig, 1975; Davidson, 1961; Lovejoy, 2000; Wilks, 1993). Rightly so, this period is largely marked by the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Without a doubt, the slave trade contributed enormously to the wealth and power of the principal actors of the Gold Coast. Yet, it is misleading for scholars to attribute Asante's expansionist ambitions exclusively to the slave trade.

Asante and most of the states in the hinterland of the Gold Coast were rich gold territories, which gave this region of the West African coast its name, the 'Gold Coast'. The slave trade, just like the gold trade, gave Asante the wealth to build a formidable army to pursue its expansionist agenda. Mearsheimer (2001) notes that great powers do not consider wealth as 'actual power'. Wealth rather reflects 'latent power'—the critical resource that goes into building powerful military organizations (pp. 55, 60-63). Wealth is the means to the end, the end being military power. In addition, Richard Bean (1974)

actually disagrees with the relative importance of the slave trade to African exports. Examination of the rough statistical evidence indicates that slave exports earned less for the African polities than did the single most important trading commodity—'gold'. He asserts that it was the dominance of gold trade that helped make the Gold Coast the focus of the Europeans in West Africa (pp. 351-356).

The question is if Asante's drive for hegemony was solely influenced by its greed to control the slave trade, then why did Asante vigorously pursue its expansionist policies even after the slave trade ended in 1807? Asante reached its peak in the 1820s, that is, over 15 years after the slave trade had been abolished. Besides, Asante persistently resisted Britain's attempts to control parts of its territories. Although the British were the Asante's principal trading partner, Asante chose security (the survival of its Empire) over wealth by directly confronting the British over control of territories in the South. Mearsheimer (2001) maintains that security (maximization of [military] power) trumps wealth when those two goals clash because security and survival are much more important than prosperity (p. 48). Asantes was willing to forgo absolute gains for military power (dominance). If they were able to stifle the British economic power (trade in gold), then they could probably have discouraged the British from interfering in their internal politics. Mearsheimer (1990) notes that cooperation would be much easier to achieve if states worried only about absolute gains so every state would benefit from economic cooperation and interdependence (p. 45). However, security was scarce in the Gold Coast states system. The primary concern of Asante was the survival of its Empire. In this 'anarchic state of nature', Asante did not consider benefiting from economic cooperation and interdependence with the British. As Mearsheimer (1990)

points out, in such an environment, his great powers do not ask, 'Will both of us gain from cooperation?', but instead, 'will we lose our security (survival of our great power status) to cooperation and interdependence? (pp. 44, 45; see also Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 395-396).

Moving ahead, there is no need for the development of new IR or realist theories per se for (pre-colonial) Africa because it is Africa, and not a part of the European core. It would rather be constructive for realism to reassess how sub-unit factors such as collective identity (glorification of the nation) and regime power among others directly influence states' behavior at the system-level and revisionism. The Asante case demonstrates the fact that inter-state relations is rather complex because it is marked by complicated societal factors. I do not think sub-unit factors contradict structural theory; they supplement it. Unfortunately, I have limited information on the domestic policies (foreign policy objectives) of the polities in the Gold Coast in the 18th and 19th centuries, to definitely establish which and how unit-level factors influenced the behavior of the polities in the Gold Coast system.

In applying Mearsheimer's theory to the Asante case, it encountered anomalies because realists usually simplify reality by emphasizing on structural factors, while limiting their understanding of sub-unit factors. Fixated on its structural analysis, Mearsheimer miss out on some of the intricacies and indirect connections at unit level. Although Mearsheimer's offensive realism does not provide precise explanations to everything we need to know about Asante's relations with its neighbours in the 18th and 19th centuries; the question is not whether it provides precise explanations or answers for

every question that arose in the international politics of pre-colonial Gold Coast, but whether it is useful and provides some valuable insights? Even with its limitations, applying Mearsheimer's theory to this Asante case has opened up the theoretical space to advance realists' understanding of how complex intricacies at the sub-unit level such as collective identity (glorification of the nation) and regime (personal) power may influence revisionism and great power politics; how a sense of national consciousness advances a state's strategic position at the international level; and how significant fault-lines within a state's collective identity can adversely affect its strategic position and prevent it from extracting internal resources to maximize its power abroad.

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