# Concerts as a mode of ordering in world politics: an ideal-type approach

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*Chapter 3*

*Concerts as a Mode of Ordering in World Politics: An Ideal Type Approach*

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In revisiting the 19th-century Concert[1] of Europe as a potential model for global security governance in the 21st-century we run into a methodological challenge. We wish to explore the potential of a renewed concert for avoiding the continued risk of great power war today, but we recognise that a modern-day concert of powers would have to differ in numerous ways from its predecessor (Acharya 1999, 97). The problem this creates is how to define a concert in a way which captures those aspects of the 19th-century Concert which motivate us to re-examine it as a potential model, while also providing sufficient critical distance from it to recognise (and perhaps rectify) its faults (see Fahrmeir, this volume).

Political scientists seeking to learn from the Concert have adopted three strategies for addressing this methodological challenge, none of which is wholly satisfactory. First, Jervis bases his definition directly on the 19th-century Concert: he argues, for example, that concerts "occur after, and only after, a major war fought to contain a potential hegemon" (Jervis 1985, 60). This approach is indicative of how the Concert of Europe has framed subsequent thinking, but it appears to rule out the possibility of constructing a concert as an instrument for avoiding great power war in the contemporary world. Second, Slantchev approaches concerts through the lens of structural incentives, asking under what conditions a stable security order is likely to emerge among rational, self-interested actors (Slantchev 2005). This approach helpfully abstracts from the historical specificity of the Concert, but it also offers a limited sense of what underpinned the Concert's success in preventing great power war: in focusing on whether states were satisfied with the territorial settlement, it underplays the extent to which the Concert was a normative achievement (Schroeder 1994; Cronin 1999, 59–66; Schulz 2007; Mitzen 2013). Third, Acharya contrasts concerts with other kinds of security orders (Acharya 2014). This helps clarify the distinctiveness of a concert order, but the underlying methodological challenge remains, for it is unclear how Acharya identifies the characteristics of a concert order if not by reference to the 19th-century Concert.

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[1] I use the lower-case 'concert' to refer to the concept and the upper-case 'Concert (of Europe)' to refer to its 19th-century instantiation.

This methodological problem lies at the heart of research into concerts. The term 'Concert of Europe' has been widely used since the late 1870s to refer to the institutionalised practices of great power consultation and cooperation which characterised European politics after 1815 (Holbraad 1970). Since then, the term 'concert' has also been used to identify various briefer periods in which practices of great power concertation were once again thought to be causally linked to increased levels of order, if not peace. These include the immediate post-war periods of 1919-20 and 1945-46 (Jervis 1985), the post-Locarno period (Cohrs 2003, 22–25), the period of détente between the US and USSR (Garrett 1976), and the early G7 (Kirton 1993). In the aftermath of the Cold War, Mueller (1989), Charles A. Kupchan and Clifford A. Kupchan (1991), Rosecrance (1992) and Zelikow (1992) all advocated a conscious attempt to build a security architecture analogous to that of the European Concert. Acharya (1999; 2014) has also explored whether a 'concert' might underpin the Asian security order. In each of these cases, as in this volume, the term 'concert' is intended to capture certain characteristics of the Concert of Europe without suggesting that it might be reincarnated in identical form.

The aim of this chapter is to help advance the debate about the desirability and feasibility of developing Concert-like norms and practices in contemporary security governance by conceptualising a 'concert' as a mode of ordering in world politics. This conceptualization is intended to do two things. First, it should capture what we consider to be valuable about the Concert of Europe as a potential model for contemporary security governance. Second, it should give us sufficient critical distance from the 19th-century Concert for us to consider how a 21st-century concert of powers would have to differ. The challenge, in short, is to articulate a conception of a 'concert' which allows us to learn from a discrete and in many ways idiosyncratic historical episode (the 19th-century Concert) in a fashion which respects its historical specificity while also extracting something of trans-historical value.

I argue that Weber's theorization of social science concepts as ideal types is particularly suited both to learning from history and, more specifically, to exploring phenomena (such as concerts) which are treated as social kinds despite being understood largely by reference to a particular historical exemplar (such as the Concert of Europe). Indeed, developing a concert ideal type makes three important contributions to this volume's inquiry into the potential contribution of a modern-day concert to 21st-century security governance. First, it provides a distinctive lens through which to view the 19th-century Concert, one which focuses not just on the mechanics of great power consultation (see Schulz, this volume), but also on the objectives thereof. Second, it reveals the deep presuppositions of the idea of a concert, thereby helping to situate concerts theoretically. Third, it provides a conceptual basis for exploring putative concerts and for identifying dimensions on which real-world concerts are likely to vary.

The remainder of this chapter proceeds as follows. The first section outlines the merits of an ideal type approach for addressing phenomena such as concerts and elaborates the characteristics of a proposed ideal-typical concert. The second section explores the historical specificity of the Concert of Europe when viewed through the lens of this ideal type. The third section situates the ideal type theoretically. The conclusion spells out the implications of my analysis for a possible 21st- century concert of powers.

# 1.	An Ideal-Typical Concert

One of the most serious obstacles to learning lessons from history is the vast and conflicting array of precedents available. Genuine efforts to learn from past errors may therefore be indistinguishable from rhetorical attempts to justify pre-determined positions by appeal to select examples. Given the association of the term 'concert' with a particular historical experience, seeking to learn from the 19th-century Concert about the prospects for a reimagined 21st-century concert of powers also raises two more specific difficulties. First, we are likely to undertake such an endeavour only if we read at least some aspects of the Concert of Europe in a positive light: a return to concert principles is advocated because it is thought likely to achieve a desirable end. This raises the question of which comes first: our positive reading of the Concert (motivating our interest in applying its lessons), or a desire to promote a particular form of contemporary order (leading us to read the Concert in a particular light). Second, some aspects of the 19th-century Concert were features of their time that cannot possibly be recreated, while other aspects are likely to be deemed undesirable today. How, then, are we to establish what a 'concert' is, let alone explain how a refashioned 21st-century concert might reproduce the successes of its famous predecessor?

These kinds of problems were familiar to Weber. Following Rickert, he contended that the "sheer infinity" of social life makes "*exhaustive* description" of even of the smallest aspect of it impossible (Weber 2004, 374). For this reason, he argued, "[a]ll cognitive knowledge of infinite reality by the finite human mind" must rest "upon the implicit presupposition that at any one time only a finite part of this reality … [is] 'worth knowing'" (Weber 2004, 374). In other words, knowledge of social life involves giving up on the possibility of comprehensive description. Analysis must start by identifying which parts of social life are worth knowing. Knowledge of social life is therefore, by definition, "knowledge from a *specific point of view*", that is, a point of view (or perspective) which identifies some (and only some) aspects of social life as worth knowing (Weber 2004, 381). As Weber famously put it: there can be "no 'objective' analysis of 'social phenomena' *independent* of special and 'one-sided' perspectives on the basis of which such phenomena can be … selected as an object of research" (Weber 2004, 374).

The chief implication of this for the study of concerts is that the Concert of Europe is not "objectively inherent" in social reality (Weber 2004, 368). Rather, it is identified as an object of inquiry by a particular perspective brought to the study of 19th-century history. In other words, we pick out certain aspects of that history as constituting 'the Concert of Europe' because we approach it from a perspective which identifies those aspects as worth knowing (Carr 2001, 16–18). This perspective, in turn, is given shape by 'evaluative ideas': according to Weber we bring order to the sheer infinity of social life by focusing on those elements highlighted by "the *cultural evaluative ideas* that we bring to reality" (Weber 2004, 379). So what evaluative idea picks out concerts from the surrounding infinity of social life? I surmise that most researchers are motivated by an interest in the desirability of an ordering institution which mitigates the competitive effects of anarchy and, in particular, reduces the incidence and

severity of great power war. In other words, we identify the Concert of Europe as a distinctive phenomenon because we have a normative interest in the transformation of European politics after 1815 (Schroeder 1994).[2]

For Weber, this question of how aspects of reality become objects of inquiry is intimately related to the problem of concept formation. He rejects the idea that concepts can be formed through "'disinterested' *description* of a concrete phenomenon, or by the abstract analysis of that which is *common* to *several* material phenomena" (Weber 2004, 389). This, he explains, is because there can be "no simple 'descriptive reduction' of … concepts to their elements" until we have determined which aspects of reality fall under the concept: we cannot compare instantiations of a concept until we have picked them out as objects of inquiry (Weber 2004, 390). Weber's point is that while instantiations of a concept may share certain features in common, these features are not what unites them into a class.[3] What unites them into a class is the perspective which causes them to be picked out collectively as objects of inquiry. This perspective, and the evaluative idea it represents, is therefore the key to concept formation. As Weber explains: concepts are "formed by a one-sided *accentuation* of one or *several* perspectives, and through the synthesis of a variety of diffuse, discrete, *individual* phenomena … subsumed by such one-sided emphatic viewpoints so that they form a uniform construction *in thought*" (Weber 2004, 387–88). In other words, a concept gives expression to the perspective which picks out instantiations of that concept as a class.

Weber's argument implies that we cannot simply read the concept of a concert off the Concert of Europe or off the empirical features which the class of episodes that subsequent analysts have labelled as 'concerts' may have in common. Weber intends this argument to apply to all social science concepts, but it is particularly pertinent to the study of concerts, for there is little agreement on which periods qualify as concerts, let alone on what empirical characteristics they may share. Indeed, there is widespread agreement only on the status of the period from 1815-1848 as a concert: even the claim that the concert extended to 1914 (see Shulz, this volume) has been subject to considerable historiographical debate. But if this lack of consensus reflects the fact that periods such as 1815-48, 1848-1914, 1919-20, 1925-29, 1945-46 and 1969-74, the G7, and the post-Cold War Asian security order are in many ways quite different from one another, then this need not be fatal. For according to Weber, what unites these episodes is precisely the evaluative perspective which, notwithstanding their diversity, picks them out from the sheer infinity of social life as (candidate) concerts.

Weber describes a concept which gives expression to an evaluative perspective as an '*ideal type*' (Weber 2004, 387–88). This, he explains, is because such a concept "is not a *representation* of the real, but [rather] seeks to provide representation with unambiguous means of expression". Because it gives expression to an evaluative idea, it "can never be found in

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[2] This is reflected in how the term 'Concert of Europe' came into prominence in the mid-19th century. See Holbraad (1970, 3–4). Our having a normative interest does not imply that we appraise concerts positively, but rather that we view their effects as normatively significant.
[3] Indeed, some classes, such as the class of games, have *no* single (non-tautological) feature in common. See Wittgenstein (1972).

reality": rather, "[h]*istorical* research has the task of determining in each *individual case* how close to, or far from, reality such an ideal type is" (Weber 2004, 387–88).[4] A concert ideal type will therefore explicitly allow that not all concerts are identical. Indeed, it will leave membership of the class of concerts somewhat fuzzy (Ragin 2000), for some episodes identified as possible concerts will be closer to the ideal type than others. Given that one of the aims of this volume is to ask how a 21$^{st}$-century concert of powers would have to differ from the Concert of Europe, this is an important strength of an ideal type approach. Instead of defining concerts in terms of an empirical identity (demanding that all concerts share certain empirical characteristics), an ideal type approach aims to facilitate inquiry into how they differ. Indeed, an ideal type will provide an idealised point of comparison for exploring what is particular to each and every concert, including the Concert of Europe.

How, then, might we go about specifying a concert ideal type? Weber's answer is that we should spell out the logic of the evaluative idea which motivates our inquiry into concerts. After all, it is this evaluative idea which serves to pick out the Concert of Europe as a distinct object of inquiry within the infinity of social life. This evaluative idea, I have suggested, is an interest in the desirability of an ordering institution which mitigates the competitive effects of anarchy and, in particular, reduces the incidence and severity of great power war. Spelling this out in more detail suggests seven dimensions of an ideal-typical concert. First, a concert is an institution, that is, a set of "principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge" (Krasner 1982, 185). Second, a concert operates in the context of international anarchy. Third, a concert provides order, which we may define, following Bull, as a relatively stable and predictable patterning of social life among diverse actors which serves to sustain its principal goals (Bull 2002).[5] Fourth, a concert shapes relations among great powers who recognise each other as such.[6] A concert order is therefore not hegemonic.[7] Fifth, war remains on the table. A concert is therefore not a security community (Charles Kupchan 2010, 189; Acharya 2014, 159). Sixth, for a concert to be required, great powers must have some competing interests, but for it to be viable, there must be some hope of a mutually acceptable accommodation of at least some of those competing interests. Seventh, because the competitive effects of anarchy are only mitigated, not dissolved, room for competition remains.

I propose, therefore, that an ideal-typical concert is:

- An ordering institution;

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[4] Thus an ideal type is a logical idealization, not a normative one. See ibid. 388.

[5] A concert provides order as distinct from providing other possible social goods such as social integration, equality, or justice.

[6] Schulz (this volume) emphasises that this was an innovative feature of the Vienna settlement. See also Mitzen (2013, 88–89).

[7] Ikenberry (2001) argues that the Concert of Europe was shaped by British hegemony, though many historians disagree. The implication of my ideal type is that if the post-Vienna order *was* structured by British hegemony in a fashion analogous to how the Cold War Western order was structured by US hegemony, then it was not a concert. See also Schulz, this volume.

- operating in the context of international anarchy;

- revolving around great powers who recognise each other's status as such;

- which is intended to reduce the incidence and severity of war among those great powers;

- by seeking to accommodate competing interests;

- without ruling out competition among them.

I contend that this ideal-typical conception of a concert is logically implicit in the evaluative idea which motivates our interest in this volume in the potential of a 21st-century concert of powers. I contend, moreover, that insofar as other historians and political scientists have identified episodes subsequent to the Concert of Europe as also being 'concerts', they must have done so with something like this ideal type implicitly in mind.[8]

An ideal type is an idealization: it does not identify a set of empirical features that all concerts must share. Consequently, it cannot be empirically tested. We evaluate it by asking whether it is useful, that is, whether it is capable of organising our thinking about concerts within what Weber terms "an internally coherent *conceptual* cosmos" (Weber 2004, 387). One way in which to illustrate the potential value of my proposed ideal type is therefore to spell out its implications for four of the principal aspects of concerts on which previous scholarship has focused, viz. membership, objectives, interests, and procedures.[9]

**Membership**. According to my ideal type, a concert is an ordering institution operating in the context of international anarchy. Its membership will therefore be formally self-selecting. It will consist of those states identified as great powers by their capacity to deliver ordering functions within a formally anarchic international system (Bull 2002). They must be at least two in number, because the system is not hegemonic, and they must recognise each other's status as great powers and hence as legitimate members of the concert.

**Objectives**. The need for a concert arises when the consequences of disorder are potentially so severe that great powers would rather act in concert than risk them (Mitzen 2013). Functionally, therefore, concerts are likely to be restricted to the security domain, wherein their objective is to provide order rather than any other good.[10] Given this objective, a concert will not operate ad hominem, in the fashion of an alliance; rather, it will seek to create a set of common understandings, acceptable to all, about great power privileges and responsibilities.

**Interests**. A concert is only required if great powers have both common and competing interests, the common interests including the benefit to each of an ordered international system which mitigates the risk of great power war and the competing interests being of sufficient

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[8] Although the differences between how historians and theorists approach the Concert is often lamented (see Goddard *et al* 2015), I suspect that both draw implicitly on ideal type thinking.

[9] See, *inter alia*, Garrett (1976), Jervis (1985), Charles A. Kupchan and Clifford A. Kupchan (1991), Holsti (1992), Kirton (1993), Slantchev (2005), Mitzen (2013), Acharya (2014) and Schulz, this volume.

[10] I am therefore inclined to view the G7 as a club rather than a concert (see Badie, this volume).

magnitude to create that risk in the first place. For common understandings to be reached, great powers must be able to recognise the legitimacy of at least some of each other's competing interests and also see the value of accommodating those interests in an ordered fashion. This requires, in turn, that members are able to separate and stratify their interests, being willing to give ground on some but not others. This accommodation is not, however, contingent on the development of a common identity: that would turn a concert into a security community.

**Procedures**. A concert must develop consultative and decisional procedures which are capable of sustaining common understandings, facilitating mutual accommodation, and hence upholding international order. Moreover, these procedures must themselves be recognised as legitimate. This is likely to require (i) sufficiently frequent communication for common understandings to develop, (ii) the development of a common language of interests, order, power, and fairness, and (iii) a degree of autonomy for diplomacy and foreign policy from societal pressures. However, it does not make sense to specify specific procedures as part of an ideal-typical concert. Rather, an ideal-typical concert can encompass whatever procedures are capable of fulfilling these requirements.

This conception of a concert does not, in substance, differ markedly from that proposed by previous theorists. Indeed, I operate on the supposition that many previous historians and political scientists who have explored concerts have had something like this ideal-typical concert in mind, even if they have not spelled it out as such. Its ideal-typical form does, however, offer a significant advantage. Because it abstracts from the historical particularity of the Concert of Europe, it provides a critical perspective from which to explore how a 21st-century concert of powers would have to differ from its predecessor. For example, whereas Schulz and Mitzen both emphasise the importance of the consultation practice embodied in the 19th-century Concert, my ideal type highlights the fact that a concert is distinguished more by the ends towards which such a consultation practice is directed than by the precise form it takes (Mitzen 2013; Schulz, this volume). The procedures of a 21st-century concert of powers may therefore appear quite different from those of the Concert of Europe, even though the underlying mode of ordering remains the same. In the remainder of this chapter, I consider what the proposed ideal type can reveal about the Concert of Europe and about the prospects for a renewed concert.

## 2.     The Concert of Europe in Ideal Type Perspective

As noted, a concert ideal type does not specify a particular institutional form, but rather expresses the logic of ordering to which a concert approximates. Examining the Concert of Europe through the lens of the proposed ideal type therefore helps to reveal how closely its particular institutional features reflected its contingent historical circumstances. The key factor shaping its particular institutional form is that it originated in the determination of the great powers allied against Napoleon after 1812 to reach the common understandings and agreements required to sustain the coalition until total victory was achieved and thence to build a sustainable peace settlement (Schroeder 1986, 12; Charles Kupchan 2010, 190; Mitzen 2013,

85–88).[11] The ensuing interests, practices, and norms carried over first into the Congress system and thence to the post-1822 concert. These circumstances account for many of the ways in which, as we shall see, the 19th-century Concert departs from the provisions of the concert ideal type. Yet this departure is a strength, not a weakness, of the ideal type approach, for it helps us to resist inferring too much about concerts in general from idiosyncratic features of the 19th-century Concert.

*Membership*. Membership of the Concert of Europe was self-selecting (Holsti 1992, 35–36), but informal hierarchies shaped its operation in important ways. For example, Schroeder argues that Russian and British hegemony was a key feature of the Vienna settlement: far from being ordered by a group of equal great powers, it was a "pentarchy composed of two superpowers [Russia and Britain], one authentic but vulnerable great power [France], one highly marginal and even more vulnerable great power [Austria], and one power called great by courtesy only [Prussia]" (Schroeder 1992, 688). Moreover, these great powers were imperial states, though of differing kinds: Austria was an imperial European state, Russia was an imperial European and Asian state, Britain ruled a colonial empire, and France also ruled a colonial empire (though it was substantially rebuilt only from the 1830s onwards), while Prussia, though ruling a small German empire, only acquired significant overseas colonies as part of a united Germany in the 1880s. These features of Concert membership illustrate the extent to which any concert is likely to be characterised by historical particularity and contingency. They suggest that no direct inference should be drawn from the Concert of Europe about the required number of great powers for a concert to operate, about the kinds of states involved (including precisely where the line is drawn between great powers and the rest), or about the nature of the informal hierarchies that may or may not operate within a concert order.

*Objectives*. The Concert of Europe emerged when the risk of further great power war was widely believed to be so damaging that the great powers would rather act in concert. Although its origins lay in an alliance against France, it quickly lost this ad hominem quality. Functionally, it operated in the security domain and within that domain it provided order, in contrast to the more ideological agenda pursued by the Holy Alliance. These features of the Concert were all reflected in the commitment of the Quadruple (and later Quintuple) Alliance to maintaining the provisions of the Vienna treaty order and to employing great power conferences to resolve future threats to a stable international order (Lauren 1983, 35–36). However, the construction of particular issues, such as the Eastern question, as security problems was very much a feature of its time, reflecting both the imperial basis of the 19th-century system and also the extent to which the very concept of security was, at that time, detachable from other goods such as self-determination and human rights. It is not obvious that a similar separation is either feasible or desirable today. I contend, therefore, that how the security domain is demarcated should be treated as specific to each putative concert.

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[11] Of course, disagreements among the great powers continued, emerging especially at Vienna. See Schroeder (1986, p. 19), Schroeder (1992, pp. 696–7), Slantchev (2005, pp. 575–6). The point of a concert is that (at least some) competing interests are accommodated, not that they wholly disappear.

*Interests*. The Concert of Europe exhibited a wide and fluctuating range of common and competing interests. Indeed, the development of the concert system after 1822 reflected both the ideological split between liberal and conservative powers and also the fact that this split did not trump their common interest in maintaining a stable security order (Rosecrance 1963). The extent to which great powers were willing to recognise the legitimacy of (at least some of) each other's competing interests was reflected in their acceptance of local spheres of influence and in the volume of diplomatic correspondence dedicated to clarifying issue hierarchies prior to concert summits (Lauren 1983, 43–46). Similarly, the separation and stratification of interests required to ensure that accommodation could be achieved in one domain while leaving others untouched is exemplified in what Schroeder terms "the 'fencing off' of the European state system from the extra-European world", that is, the separation of the management of European conflicts of interest from maritime and colonial conflicts (Schroeder 1986, 12). However, the specific ways in which competing interests were accommodated, such as the creation of "intermediary bodies", is a contingent feature of the Concert from which no clear inference may be derived about the kinds of measures likely to be successful in accommodating competing great power interests today (Schroeder 1986, 17).

One of the most striking features of the Concert of Europe is that it seemed to involve more than the mere accommodation of interests. Schroeder argues that statesmen sought to produce a "political equilibrium", reflecting a "mutual consensus on norms and rules, respect for law, and an overall balance among the various actors in terms of rights, security, status, claims, duties, and satisfactions" (Schroeder 1992, 694). Although this has been contested (Kraehe 1992, 712), Mitzen has once again argued that the Concert embodied a kind of collective agency which went beyond merely self-interested cooperation (Mitzen 2013, 7). Hence while the Concert illustrates the basic dynamic of common and competing interests required for concert ordering to take root, the specificity and contingency of the particular interests in play is such that few direct inferences can be drawn from the 19th-century Concert about the specific configuration of interests that might underpin any future concert.

*Procedures*. The various means by which the Concert sought to accommodate competing interests constitute some of its most recognizable features. For example, the 1815 Vienna Treaty provisions on diplomatic immunity find their modern counterpart in the 1961 Vienna Diplomatic Convention, while the use of summit meetings in the G7/8 displays obvious parallels with Concert practices (Kirton 1993). Yet my ideal type stipulates nothing about the form that consultation must take, beyond the fact that members must consult to whatever extent and in whatever form required to reach common understandings. It is worth noting, in this regard, that the form of Concert diplomacy changed after 1822, with summits and ambassador conferences thenceforth occurring on a more ad hoc basis (Holsti 1992, 38–39). Recent research suggests that these meetings of the Concert were responsible for making more, and also more substantive, decisions than has previously been recognised (Schulz, this volume), while Mitzen argues that the Concert's consultation forums were essential to its success (Mitzen 2013, 62). But none of this shows that different procedures might not have produced a similar result and nor does it imply, therefore, that specific procedures associated with the 19th-century Concert should automatically carry over to any other concert. The key point, as

emphasised by the ideal type, is that the consultative and decisional procedures must be adequate to develop and sustain common understandings and facilitate mutual accommodation.

This brief analysis suggests that some scholars have been too uncritical in treating the Concert of Europe as a model for all subsequent and future concerts. For example, Miller fails to abstract sufficiently from historically contingent features of the 19th-century Concert in arguing that all great powers have to share a fear of revolution or inadvertent war for a concert to be formed (Miller 1994, 328). It is a strength of the ideal type approach that it brings out the historical particularity and contingency of the Concert of Europe. Yet it thereby also brings out the difficulties involved in deriving inferences from historical cases about what will work in different circumstances. Of course, the very flexibility of the ideal type reveals that a variety of institutional provisions might be capable of sustaining a similar kind of order. This may raise hope that some of the Concert's successes might be replicated, but it also reinforces the fact that the 19th-century Concert offers little clear guidance regarding the institutional structures most likely to achieve this goal. Indeed, the proposed ideal type emphasises that the heart of the Concert was less its specific institutional form than its norms of consultation and accommodation (Schulz 2007).

## 3.      Situating Concerts as a Mode of Ordering

Before going on to ask what our ideal type implies about the prospects for a 21st-century concert, it will be helpful to situate concerts as a mode of ordering by examining the presuppositions that are built into the concert ideal type. The evaluative idea which underpins the ideal type is an interest in the desirability of an ordering institution which mitigates the competitive effects of anarchy and, in particular, reduces the incidence and severity of great power war. But we are likely to hold such an interest only if we also subscribe to three further beliefs. The first is empirical: the international system is anarchic, though its risks can be mitigated. The second is methodological: states may usefully be treated as atomistic individuals who create social norms through their interactions. The third is ethical: by upholding a rule-governed pluralism, concerts produce a potentially valuable end. I explore each of these further below and show that, as embodied in my ideal type, concerts dovetail with softer, ethically-oriented forms of realism and with thinner forms of constructivism. As such, concerts are neither a form of balance of power politics nor a progressive project, but rather occupy a space in between.[12]

An ideal type which can encompass both the Concert of Europe and a putative 21st-century concert can help us think about how the latter might differ from the former only on the assumption that (formal) anarchy has remained a reasonably stable feature of the international landscape over the last two hundred years. To associate concerts with anarchy is not, however, to associate them with a logic of anarchy in the neorealist sense (Mearsheimer 2001): the point is not that anything determinate follows from anarchy for state behaviour, but that anarchy

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[12] Mitzen (2013, pp. 21-7) makes a similar argument specifically about the Concert of Europe.

provides the context in which conflicts of interest must be negotiated. The role of anarchy in the proposed concert ideal type is more akin to its place in Wendt's constructivism (Wendt 1999): anarchy distinguishes the international from other social realms, but it is consistent with multiple sets of more or less stable social conventions. In other words, anarchy is a context which can be navigated in more or less ordered ways. The implication of the concert ideal type is that concerts represent a conceptually coherent means of negotiating conflicts of interest under anarchy. It remains a further question whether, in any particular context, the required conditions for a concert to operate, such as the willingness of great powers to recognise the legitimacy of each other's competing interests, will be fulfilled.

My concert ideal type treats states as coming to the negotiating table with reasonably well defined interests and a reasonably well ordered issue hierarchy which allows them to distinguish between their essential and negotiable interests and to determine which competing interests are legitimate. In other words, the ideal type embodies a form of methodological individualism. It allows that states may develop practices which acquire normative weight, that this normative weight may in turn help to reproduce those practices, and hence that these norms and practices may play a causal role in maintaining order (Schulz 2007, 48). However, the ideal type does not allow that states' interests are defined by their role in the broader social system in the way, say, that an individual's role as a capital owner might constitute her interests within a capitalist system. This individualism is built into the evaluative idea I have identified as driving research into concerts, but it also imposes some analytical limitations. From a methodologically individualist perspective, for example, appeals within the Concert of Europe to a greater European unity appear as rhetorical attempts to represent individual interests as being in the common interest.[13] Absent from this perspective is any space for the idea of a greater Europe to play any more than an instrumental role: any space, that is, for the idea that European states were already bound together by, for example, historical commonality, dynastic ties, or a shared culture, and that this might give direction to their individual interests (Jackson 2004).[14]

In many cases, scholars with an interest in the desirability of an ordering institution which mitigates the competitive effects of anarchy will also believe that the positives associated with ordering institutions such as concerts outweigh the negatives. This is a non-agonistic belief, in the sense that it implies that competing interests can potentially be accommodated to the benefit of all, and it is consistent with, but does not entail, the stronger view that states with the capacity to do so also therefore have a duty to provide ordering functions on behalf of the broader international community. To the extent that research into concerts is motivated by such a belief, that belief requires justification.[15] Two broad kinds of justification are possible. One is that

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[13] In Mitzen's (2013, 53–54) more nuanced formulation, such appeals may represent public, as distinct from private, reason, but this public reason still constrains rather than constitutes individual action.

[14] Mitzen (2013, 26–27) explicitly criticises Cronin (1999, 47–52) for viewing the idea of a greater Europe in this way.

[15] We cannot automatically assume that research into concerts is motivated by such a belief. We might, for example, be interested in concerts not because we hold such a belief, but rather because we are interested in what institutional structures have been developed or advocated by actors who do hold such a belief.

pluralism itself is valuable and that a concert is a feasible and relatively costless means of preserving pluralism. The implication of this position is that what is good for states is also in some measure good for their citizens. The second justification is that a rule-governed pluralism is sufficiently good for now, whether because there is no feasible route to more desirable alternatives, because the costs of the transition would outweigh the benefits, or because the best means of achieving transformation is through a reformist process which requires preserving pluralism for now.

Recognizing these presuppositions of the concert ideal type suggests, on the one hand, that concerts should be distinguished from the kind of balance of power politics associated historically with 18th-century great power politics and theoretically with neorealism but, on the other hand, that concerts are at most reformist, rather than progressive, institutions.[16] In this sense, concert thinking fits comfortably with Bull's contingent defence of pluralism and with Morgenthau's consideration of the potential benefits and risks of seeking to transcend anarchy in pursuit of peace (Bull 2002; Morgenthau 1973). Theoretically speaking, therefore, research into concerts as a mode of ordering is best understood as being located at the intersection of more contingent and ethically grounded forms of realism (Williams 2005) with thinner forms of constructivism which focus on the processual nature of social life without necessarily endorsing arguments for social change.

## 4.      Conclusion: Prospects for a Twenty-First Century Concert of Powers

Many of the most well-known features of the Concert of Europe were historically contingent and hence could not be precisely replicated even if they were thought desirable. Indeed, it is difficult to infer anything directly from its successes and failures about the prospects for a 21st-century concert. The Concert of Europe does, nonetheless, demonstrate the contingent feasibility of an ordering institution of the kind imagined in our ideal type. There are, moreover, two further ways in which an ideal type approach can inform our thinking about the prospects for a 21st-century concert. First, recalling that an ideal type is an idealization which no actual concert can match precisely, we can ask on which dimensions concerts are likely to vary and which variations might be more likely to sustain a concert. Second, we can ask to what extent the deep presuppositions of the ideal type (outlined above) hold true in today's international system.

Because an ideal type does not specify empirical conditions that a putative concert must fulfill, but rather offers an idealised point of comparison, it also serves to illustrate the dimensions on which concerts could, in principle, vary. Thus in terms of membership concerts might vary in the number and nature of the members (are they all states?), in the willingness with which great powers recognise each other's status, and in the extent to which the informal hierarchy institutionalised in a concert is accepted by other states, that is, in the extent to which other states regard an identified set of great powers as possessing special rights and

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[16] Schroeder's (1994) claim about the *transformation* of European politics is, in this sense, a bounded one.

responsibilities (Bull 2002). In terms of their objectives, concerts might vary in how clearly and tightly the security domain is defined, in whether they are restricted to that domain, in whether they solely provide order or also seek to provide other goods, and in whether they compete with other ordering institutions. In terms of the interests at stake, there may be variation in the extent to which great powers are willing and able to separate and stratify their interests and to recognise the legitimacy of others' competing interests. There may also be variation in whether accommodating competing interests means altering the status quo and, if so, to what extent. Finally, there may be variation in the degree of formality and institutionalization, in the degree to which leaders are insulated from popular pressure, and in the extent to which concerts are deliberative or decisional (Kirton 1993, 352).

In some of these dimensions, it seems intuitively obvious which kinds of variation are likely to favour a concert's success. In other dimensions, it is less clear. Thus, for example, common sense suggests that a concert stands a greater chance of success when there is greater internal and external acceptance of the legitimacy of its membership (see Jüngling and Mallavarapu, this volume), when it operates in a domain in which the great powers are the key players and in which there is little competition from other bodies, when the risk of great power war is widely feared, when a common value is placed on prudence, moderation, and restraint, and when concert procedures foster personal trust among leaders. On the other hand, it is less obvious what the impact might be of variation in the number of members, in the nature of those members (for example, if non-state actors such as the EU were included as members), in the substantive domain in which concerts operate, in the extent of economic interdependence among members, in whether a concert seeks to uphold or reform the status quo, in the degree of popular pressure to which leaders are subject, in the degree of formality and institutionalization, or in the extent to which the focus is decisional or consultative. The ideal type helpfully identifies these issues and locates them within the broader logic underpinning our interest in concerts, but it cannot, on its own, provide a recipe for success.

It is also instructive to juxtapose the underlying presuppositions of the concert ideal type with key features of the contemporary international system. For example, it is a very real question whether anarchy endures in the sense required for concert thinking to gain traction. The rise of international institutions as a locus of global governance and the associated legalization of world politics have introduced new elements of hierarchy into world politics (Gruber 2000; Goldstein et al. 2001), while the Responsibility to Protect has formalised the idea that sovereignty is conditional rather than absolute. Even if the risks of great power war endure, a case still needs to be made that these risks are best mitigated through a concert. Similar doubts might be raised about whether states can usefully be treated as atomistic actors in a world order characterised by the dominance of capitalist structures and by the fragmentation of governing authority (Wallerstein 1979; Slaughter 2004). Finally, we can ask to what extent these developments undermine the validity and feasibility of a pluralist ethic (Hurrell 2007). Although I do not offer substantive answers to these questions, many of which are explored in other chapters in this volume, it seems reasonable to surmise that as assumptions about the endurance of anarchy, the utility of methodologically individualist

analysis, and the value of pluralism come under strain, so too will the concert model become less relevant.

These questions illustrate that when it comes to studying concerts, and a fortiori when it comes to thinking about the prospects for a 21st-century concert as an instrument of security governance, an ideal type approach cannot provide all the answers. Yet any attempt to consider which institutional provisions would be most appropriate for such a concert must surely proceed with at least an implicit ideal-typical conception of a concert in mind. For in even asking what form a 21st-century concert of powers would have to take, and whether it could work, we implicitly recognise that concerts can take a variety of forms and that the 19th-century Concert was only one such possible form. To this extent, the merits of an ideal type approach to research into concerts should be obvious: it provides a conception of a concert which abstracts from the particularity of the Concert of Europe, but without denying its historical specificity. It thereby starts us on the road to learning from history.

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