

After Unipolarity

China's Visions of International Order in an Era of U.S. Decline

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The post-Cold War era was a brief and uncertain period. As Condoleezza Rice observes, "We knew better where we had been than where we were going."¹ Whereas the sudden peace that broke out in the late 1980s had been unexpected, the exuberant idealism that followed was all too predictable. Realism was pronounced dead, and the future of international politics became legalized, cosmopolitanized, and network globalized.²

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the world does not appear so easily transformed, or history so easily escaped.³ Even unipolarity, which seemed strangely durable only a few years ago, appears today as a "passing moment"—one that most realists predicted.⁴ Although the United States remains the lone superpower, it is no longer a hyperpower towering over poten-

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1. Condoleezza Rice, "Rethinking the National Interest: American Realism for a New World," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 87, No. 4 (July/August 2008), p. 2.
2. Judith L. Goldstein, Miles Kahler, Robert O. Keohane, and Anne-Marie Slaughter, eds., *Legalization and World Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001); Anne-Marie Slaughter, "The Real New World Order," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 5 (September/October 1997), pp. 183–197; Anne-Marie Slaughter, "America's Edge: Power in the Networked Century," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 1 (January/February 2009), pp. 94–113; Luis Cabrera, *Political Theory of Global Justice: A Cosmopolitan Case for the World State* (London: Routledge, 2004); Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007); David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996); and Daniele Archibugi and David Held, eds., *Cosmopolitan Democracy: An Agenda for a New World Order* (London: Polity, 1999).
3. George H.W. Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998); and Robert Kagan, *The Return of History and the End of Dreams* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008).
4. Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise," *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Spring 1993), pp. 5–51; John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Summer 1990), pp. 5–56; Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 2

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tial contenders. The rest of the world is catching up.⁵ If a great transformation is coming, it is not one that heralds a radically altered world politics based on legalism, constitutionalism, or global civic activism. Rather, it is a structural transformation from unipolarity to multipolarity that most realists believe promises a return to the familiar history of great powers struggling for power and prestige.⁶ This prediction is grounded in the proposition that multipolar systems arise from traditional “hard” balancing in the system’s core and are inherently conflictual. We disagree. A return to multipolarity tells us that several great powers will emerge to join the United States as poles within the international system. That is all. It does not tell us how multipolarity will arrive (whether by means of traditional balancing behavior or as an unintended consequence of inwardly focused states growing at different rates) or what the specific content of international politics will be on the other side of the transition from unipolarity to multipolarity (whether emerging powers will accept or resist the inherited Western order). These issues largely depend on what roles the emerging powers, especially China, decide to play. They may choose to be (1) supporters, who assume their fair share of the responsibilities associated with co-managing an evolving but essentially unchanged global order, (2) spoilers, who seek to destroy the existing order and replace it with something entirely different, or (3) shirkers, who want the privileges of power but are unwilling to pay for them by contributing to global governance.⁷

History tells us that dramatic structural changes rarely unfold smoothly or peacefully. Realists as far back as Thucydides have noted the danger of situations in which states undergo rapid rises and declines in relative power, where one state aspires to hegemonic status and another seeks to maintain it. Indeed, history’s most destructive and influential armed conflicts have been titanic struggles called hegemonic wars: systemwide military contests of unlimited means between coalitions led by a declining leader and a rising challenger. The fundamental issue at stake in hegemonic wars is the maintenance or acquisition of prestige, defined as the reputation for power that serves as the everyday currency of international politics. Prestige decides who will order and

(Fall 1993), pp. 44–79; and Kenneth N. Waltz, “Structural Realism after the Cold War,” *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Summer 2000), pp. 5–41.

5. Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008); National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, November 2008); and Christopher Layne, “The Unipolar Illusion Revisited: The Coming End of the United States’ Unipolar Moment,” *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Fall 2006), pp. 7–41.

6. See, for example, John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), chap. 10.

7. See David A. Lake, “Beneath the Commerce of Nations: A Theory of International Economic Structures,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (June 1984), pp. 143–170.

govern the international system, the nature of that order (its social purpose), and how that order will be provided (whether by means of coercive or legitimate authority).⁸

The main causal driver of Robert Gilpin's theory of hegemonic war and international change is the law of uneven rates of growth among states, which redistributes power in the international system. Hegemonic wars concentrate power in the hands of one victorious state, in whose interests a new international order is established. For a time, roughly twenty-five years, there is little disjuncture between actual power and prestige, and so the international order remains stable and legitimate. Over time, however, the law of uneven growth diffuses power throughout the system. As the hegemon's competitors grow more powerful, their dissatisfaction with the status quo, ambitions, and demands for prestige and influence grow as well. Prestige, however, tends to be sticky: reputations for power, divisions of territory, and the institutional architecture of the international order do not move in lockstep with changes in power. When a large enough disjuncture arises, the system enters a state of disequilibrium.⁹ Eventually, serious international crises ensue, as spectacular growth in the economic and military capabilities of rising powers triggers "intense competition among countries for resources and markets, military power, political influence, and prestige."¹⁰ Dramatic shifts in power also engender security dilemmas. Whatever their true intentions, rapidly growing states often appear as threats to their neighbors, as well as to the hegemon and its allies.¹¹

8. Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 197–209.

9. The foregoing discussion follows Robert Gilpin's theory of hegemonic war and international change in *ibid.* Gilpin's theory is related to but not the same as power transition theory. The classic statements of power transition are A.F.K. Organski, *World Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958); and A.F.K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). See also Ronald L. Tammen, Jacek Kugler, Douglas Lemke, Allan C. Stam III, Mark Abdollahian, Carole Alsharabati, Brian Efirid, and A.F.K. Organski, *Power Transitions: Strategies for the 21st Century* (New York: Chatham House, 2000); Jonathan M. DiCicco and Jack S. Levy, "The Power Transition Research Program: A Lakatosian Analysis," in Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman, eds., *Progress in International Relations Theory: Appraising the Field* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), pp. 109–157; Jacek Kugler and Douglas Lemke, eds., *Parity and War: Evaluations and Extensions of The War Ledger* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Woosang Kim and James D. Morrow, "When Do Power Shifts Lead to War?" *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (November 1992), pp. 896–922; and Douglas Lemke and William Reed, "Regime Types and Status Quo Evaluations: Power Transition Theory and the Democratic Peace," *International Interactions*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (October 1996), pp. 143–164.

10. Nazli Choucri and Robert C. North, *Nations in Conflict: National Growth and International Violence* (San Francisco, Calif.: W.H. Freeman, 1975), p. 28.

11. Without considering international legitimacy, realist theory should assume that the hegemon and rising powers are equally threatening to each other. Kenneth N. Waltz himself emphasizes that the hegemon can appear more threatening than the rising power. See Waltz, *Realism and International Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. xiii. The legitimacy gap between the hegemon and rising power often accounts for why the latter appears more threatening than the former. Cur-

Prior to military confrontation or even the threat of such conflict, we argue that the rising challenger must delegitimize the hegemon's global authority and order.¹² This delegitimation phase, which appears years before the critical inflection point of a power transition, creates the conditions for the emergence of a revisionist counterhegemonic coalition. During this phase, the revisionist power voices its dissatisfaction with the established order and forges the social purpose that will become the foundation of its demand for a new world order. This phase occurs within the larger cyclical pattern of (1) a stable order, (2) the deconcentration and delegitimation of the hegemon's power, (3) arms build-ups and the formation of alliances, (4) a resolution of the international crisis, often through hegemonic war, and (5) system renewal.¹³ Is contemporary international politics following this conventional pattern and, if so, where are we in the cycle?

The nuclear age makes power transition by means of a deliberately waged hegemonic war unthinkable. In this crucial sense, the hegemonic-war cycle has been permanently broken. That said, we argue that the transition from unipolarity to some form of global balance will conform to the early phases of this cyclical pattern. Where it goes from there is anyone's guess. The key issue is whether international order will be preserved by peaceful adjustment or undone by military balancing or mismanagement and incompetence. In our view, the latter outcome is most probable.

Leaving these questions aside for the moment, we argue that the current international system is entering a deconcentration/delegitimation phase. Delegitimation involves two components: a delegitimizing rhetoric (the discourse of resistance) and cost-imposing strategies that fall short of full-fledged balancing behavior (the practice of resistance). The discourse and practice of delegitimation are mutually sustaining and necessary for the next phase of balancing behavior. Unipolarity, however, represents an unprecedented historical anomaly that makes delegitimation strategies more necessary and complex than ever before. In multipolar and bipolar systems, balancing is the primary mechanism to preserve the status quo. Under unipolarity, in contrast, balancing becomes the very definition of revisionism: the goal of restoring a global balance of power requires the overthrow of the existing unipolar struc-

rently, the legitimacy of U.S. hegemony is widely recognized, whereas the status of a potential peer competitor is unconsolidated and uncertain.

12. For the strategy of delegitimation, see Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), pp. 160–178.

13. For similar cyclical patterns of international politics, see George Modelski, "The Long Cycle of Global Politics and the Nation-State," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (April 1978), pp. 214–235; and George Modelski and William R. Thompson, *Leading Sectors and World Powers: The Coevolution of Global Economics and Politics* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

ture. Hence, concentrated power within the unipole is not the only obstacle that states seeking a balance must overcome; they must also overcome the revisionist label attached to any state seeking to restore global equilibrium.¹⁴

The article is laid out as follows. First, we explain why emerging powers will initially attempt to undermine the legitimacy of the hegemon—through cost-imposing measures short of hard balancing—to pave the way for global contestation. The next two sections explore various forms of resistance to hegemonic domination: the discourse and practices of resistance and the strategies of everyday and rightful resistance. We then focus on China as the most viable contender for a hegemonic challenge, exploring its ambitions and blueprints for a new world order.¹⁵ These blueprints or visions are associated with various state strategies and scenarios about how the transition from unipolarity to a restored global balance of power—whether bipolar, multipolar, or nonpolar—will develop. We then discuss what we believe to be the most likely alternative future. As inwardly focused emerging powers grow at faster rates than those of the established powers, a global balance will be restored as an unintended consequence of the law of uneven growth among states. The predominant behavior within this new multipolar system will not be balancing but rather shirking: emerging powers will attempt to free ride on U.S. contributions to global governance.

Balancing as Revisionist Behavior under Unipolarity

International relations scholars have virtually ignored a crucial obstacle under unipolarity to balancing behavior: unipolarity is the only system in which balancing is a revisionist, rather than a status quo, policy. This ideational hurdle

14. There are many ways to measure “revisionism” in international relations. Some scholars argue that the hegemon itself can be revisionist if it breaks the rules of its own global order or does not follow prevailing international norms, or both. See Robert Jervis, “The Remaking of a Unipolar World,” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Summer 2006), pp. 7–19; and Ian Hurd, “Breaking and Making Norms: American Revisionism and Crises of Legitimacy,” *International Politics*, Vol. 44, Nos. 2–3 (March 2007), pp. 194–213. For more on the distinctions between revisionist and status quo states and their associated behaviors, see Alastair Iain Johnston, “Is China a Status Quo Power?” *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Spring 2003), p. 56; Randall L. Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler’s Strategy of World Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); and Jason W. Davidson, *The Origins of Revisionist and Status-quo States* (New York: Palgrave, 2006).

15. For many observers, the Georgia conflict indicates that Russia is taking a more confrontational approach to the U.S.-led order. In contrast, China’s “peaceful rise” or “peaceful development” strategy emphasizes accommodation with the West. For analysis of the Russian challenge, see Stephen Sestanovich, “What Has Moscow Done? Rebuilding U.S.-Russian Relations,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 87, No. 6 (November/December 2008), pp. 12–28. Of course, Russia is a great power in decline, having been reduced to little more than a petro-state. China, on the other hand, though not yet a peer competitor of the United States, is a comprehensive rising power with a complete portfolio of great power capabilities.

and the huge power disparity inherent in unipolarity have been the main obstacles to balancing behavior.¹⁶ Any state or coalition of states seeking to restore a balance is, by definition, revisionist: it seeks to overthrow the established order of unbalanced power and replace it with a balance of power system. The goal is a change of system, not a change within the system, and so achieving this goal will alter the very structure of international politics from unipolarity to bipolarity or multipolarity. Because balancing under unipolarity is a revisionist process, any state intent on restoring system equilibrium will be labeled an aggressor.

This reality implies that balancing under unipolarity must be preceded by a delegitimation phase. States must first come to see hegemony as so incompetent and so dangerous that its rule must be overturned. Otherwise, the risks and high costs of attempting to restore a global balance will be prohibitive. The delegitimation phase that we have in mind is most associated with George Modelski's theory of long cycles.¹⁷ For Modelski and his followers, Karen Rasler and William Thompson, delegitimation succeeds a "world power" phase: delegitimation "is a response to the erosion of the phase of leadership, order, and peak concentration found in the world power/execution period."¹⁸ That is, delegitimation occurs after the hegemon (or unipole) has begun its relative decline. In Modelski's scheme, delegitimation is followed by a "deconcentration/coalition building" phase, in which power becomes even more diffuse and balance of power alliances start to form.¹⁹ This is essentially what we argue, but there are some differences having to do with timing and the fact that the current system is the first truly unipolar, not just hegemonic, structure.²⁰

In our view, unipolarity requires both delegitimation and deconcentration to

16. For the most comprehensive analysis of the structural hurdles to balancing under unipolarity, see Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010). Compared with other systems, unipolarity is the most dangerous structural condition for China's rise, which partly explains why China has pursued a reassurance strategy since the end of the Cold War. See Jia Qingguo, "Danji Shijie yu Zhongguo de Heping Fazhan [Unipolarity and China's peaceful development]," *International Politics Quarterly* (Beijing), No. 4 (November 2007), pp. 51–64. For an overview of China's grand strategy, see Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005).

17. See, for example, George Modelski, *Long Cycles in World Politics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987); and George Modelski, ed., *Exploring Long Cycles* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1987).

18. Karen Rasler and William R. Thompson, "Global War and the Political Economy of Structural Change," in Manus I. Midlarsky, ed., *Handbook of War Studies*, Vol. 2 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), p. 315.

19. Modelski, *Long Cycles in World Politics*.

20. In terms of timing, our notion of a delegitimation/deconcentration phase is closer to that of the "challenge" phase offered by Brian M. Pollins and Kevin P. Murrin: "'Challenge' is a time in

move in lockstep. Delegitimation provides the rationale (embodied in a discourse of resistance) for internal and external balancing practices, while deconcentration, by dispersing power more evenly throughout the system, lowers the barriers to both the discourse and practice of resistance to hegemonic rule. Thus, delegitimation affects the will to pursue costly balancing strategies, while deconcentration affects the ability to do so. The two phases occur simultaneously because, as mentioned, balancing under unipolarity is not a conservative policy as it is under bipolarity or multipolarity but rather an extremely revisionist one. Therefore, any state that openly espouses a desire to restore a balance of power will be targeted by the hegemon as a threat not only to its primacy but also to its established order and the interests of allies that support that order. Given these risks, delegitimation and deconcentration of power within the system must occur together.

The Discourse and Practice of Resistance under Unipolarity

The interplay of great power politics in a unipolar setting is an example of the more general phenomenon of relations of domination and resistance. James Scott observes that “most of the political life of subordinate groups is to be found neither in overt collective defiance of powerholders nor in complete hegemonic compliance, but in the vast territory between these two polar opposites.”²¹ Unipolar systems, by definition, have yet to undergo a significant deconcentration of power. Secondary states, therefore, do not have the capabilities to balance against the unipole. This does not mean that they must obey the hegemon’s every wish. Rather, they practice the arts of resistance, for relations of resistance always coexist with relations of domination.²²

What types of resistance occur in a delegitimation phase? Scott points out that “subordinate classes throughout most of history have rarely been afforded the luxury of open, organized, political activity. [S]uch activity was dangerous, if not suicidal.”²³ The purpose of competing ideologies (the conservative ideologies of the rulers and the “deviant” ones espoused by the weak) “is not just to

which rising new powers begin to take issue with the existing order. This is followed by a period of jockeying among contenders, a period we label ‘Balancing,’ to reflect the important alliance dynamics of this time.” Pollins and Murrin, “Where Hobbes Meets Hobson: Core Conflict and Colonialism, 1495–1985,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (September 1999), p. 433.

21. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 138.

22. As Scott puts it, “Relations of dominations are, at the same time, relations of resistance.” *Ibid.*, p. 45.

23. James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985), p. xv.

convince but to control; better stated, they aim to control by convincing.”²⁴ The complex relationship between thought and action is key to understanding how delegitimation of hegemonic authority works.

Dreams inform consciousness, infusing the words, symbolic language, deviant ideologies, and discourses with shared values and pathways for action, which will be taken if and when the power situation changes. As such, the dreams, intentions, symbols, ideas, and language of subordinate actors not only presage future rebellions (blows against the established order) but are necessary precursors for them.²⁵ Acts and thoughts of resistance engage in regular conversation; taken together, they pose an alternative or imagined world, a vision of what could be, and the ways and means to achieve this goal. It all begins, however, with symbolic sanctions: “The rich, while they may be relatively immune to material sanctions, cannot escape symbolic sanctions: slander, gossip, character assassination.”²⁶ It is this type of process to which we are referring when we say “delegitimation.”

In addition to their competing visions of global order (the discourse of resistance), subordinate actors may adopt “cost-imposing” strategies (the practice of resistance) vis-à-vis the unipolar power that fall short of balancing against it.²⁷ States (weak ones included) and even nonstates can impose costs on a unipolar power in a variety of ways, ranging from the mere withdrawal of goodwill to actual attacks on its soil. In the current world, cost-imposing strategies include engaging in diplomatic friction or foot-dragging;²⁸ denying U.S. military forces access to bases;²⁹ launching terrorist attacks against the United States; aiding, abetting, and harboring terrorist groups; voting against the United States in international institutions; preventing or reversing the forward-basing of U.S. military forces; pursuing protectionism and other coercive economic policies; engaging in conventional uses of force such as blockades against U.S. allies;³⁰ making threats against pivotal states that affect regional

24. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

25. Scott writes, “It is possible and common for human actors to conceive of a line of action, that is, at the moment, either impractical or impossible. Thus a person may dream of a revenge or a millennial kingdom of justice that may never occur. On the other hand, as circumstances change, it may become possible to act on those dreams.” *Ibid.*, p. 38.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

27. What we are calling “cost-imposing” strategies others have called “soft balancing.” See Michael E. Brown, Owen R. Coté Jr., Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller, eds., *Primacy and Its Discontents: American Power and International Stability* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009).

28. For example, Israel said that it would dismantle its settlements in the occupied territories but did so very slowly while expanding others without notifying the United States.

29. An example is Turkey’s refusal to give the United States access to its bases prior to the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

30. A Chinese blockade of Taiwan’s trade through the destruction of ports or shipping would be an example of this behavior.

and international security;³¹ and proliferating weapons of mass destruction among anti-Western states or groups. Therefore, in the delegitimation and deconcentration phase, the discourse of resistance and the practice of resistance are mutually sustaining.

Everyday and Rightful Resistance to U.S. Hegemony

In addition to the discourse and practice of resistance, subordinate states may practice everyday resistance and rightful resistance, which share the principle that such states apply various “weapons of the weak” to contest the hegemon without openly defying it through violence.³² These strategies appear in the early stages of a power transition and are, therefore, consistent with the concept of “shaping strategies,” whereby rising powers in a unipolar system attempt to shape the environment without directly confronting the hegemon.³³

The concept of everyday resistance identifies the prosaic but constant struggle between dominant and subordinate actors that occurs across different social contexts.³⁴ In international politics, the concept of hegemony refers not only to concentrated material capabilities and processes of physical domination but also to ideological control by means of the hegemon’s virtual monopoly on the production of social, cultural, and symbolic capital. Through these nonmaterial mechanisms of social domination and reproduction, the hegemon ensures that the arbitrariness of the social order is either ignored or posited as natural, thereby justifying the legitimacy of existing social structures.³⁵ It is the

31. Robert S. Chase, Emily B. Hill, and Paul Kennedy, “Pivotal States and U.S. Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 1 (January/February 1996), pp. 33–51.

32. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*; and Kevin J. O’Brien and Lianjiang Li, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). See also Martha Finnemore, “Legitimacy, Hypocrisy, and the Social Structure of Unipolarity: Why Being a Unipole Isn’t All It’s Cracked Up to Be,” *World Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (January 2009), pp. 58–85. In domestic and transnational contexts, nonviolent resistance is a forceful alternative to violence that can pose effective challenges to opponents; indeed, nonviolent resistance is sometimes more effective than violent resistance. See Maria J. Stephan and Erica Chenoweth, “Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Non-violent Conflict,” *International Security*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Summer 2008), pp. 7–44.

33. See David Edelstein and M. Taylor Fravel, “Life on the Great Power Frontier: Capabilities, Influence, and Trajectory in China’s Rise,” unpublished manuscript, Georgetown University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2010. This is also similar to the notion of “reformist revisionist” proposed in Barry Buzan, “China in International Society: Is ‘Peaceful Rise’ Possible?” *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring 2010), p. 14.

34. Contrary to standard notions of hegemony and false consciousness, (1) most subordinate actors (whether classes, racial minorities, or weak states) can “penetrate and demystify the prevailing ideology”; (2) inevitability is not seen as implying legitimacy; and (3) hegemonic ideologies inherently beget contestation, because they “represent an idealization which creates the contradictions that permit it to be criticized in its own terms.” Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, pp. 317–318.

35. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press,

pervasiveness of ideological hegemony that normally guarantees international stability without resort to coercion or violence by the dominant power.

Everyday resistance assumes that weak actors resent the hegemonic order and criticize its legitimacy and the hegemon's authority to rule. Consistent with the discourse of resistance, everyday resistance counters this ideological hegemony and its associated notion of the inevitability of the existing structure with a revolutionary consciousness. This process often starts out with uncoordinated and spontaneous dissident speeches and other petty displays of rebellion. Over time, however, these low-level forms of resistance aggregate to a point where they form a coherent ideological movement that puts in danger the existing structures of power and order.

The notion of everyday resistance, however, does not capture key aspects of the arts of resistance. Here we add the concept of rightful resistance. Consistent with the practice of resistance, rightful resistance assumes that weak actors (1) partially and temporarily accept the legitimacy of the hegemon, and (2) take advantage of opportunities and authorized channels within the order to make relative gains and to contest particular behaviors of the hegemon.³⁶ The strategy of rightful resistance can have opposite goals. It can strengthen the state's position for the purpose of working within the established order or for the purpose of waging a hegemonic bid to overturn that order when doing so becomes a viable option. Accordingly, the strategy works for both limited-aims revisionists—those who believe that the order is essentially legitimate but want prestige commensurate with their power or have other grievances that can be satisfied without fundamental changes to the existing order—and unlimited-aims revisionists—those who seek the overthrow of the existing order, which they consider illegitimate and intolerable.

A rising power may employ a strategy of rightful resistance to improve its position within the established order.³⁷ Such a state does not seek to overthrow the order but merely to gain recognition of its rights and prestige within the system and to garner a better position for itself as a power broker at various international bargaining tables. Here, the grievance is not over the essential rules of the game but over representation and the application of the rules, that is, the hypocrisy, pitfalls, injustices, and corruption behind the existing manifestation

1977); and Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991).

36. For these two assumptions, see O'Brien and Li, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China*, pp. 2, 15–24.

37. Imperial Germany's demand for its rightful "place in the sun" is an example of this type of grievance. Germany did not seek an overthrow of the rules of the system, but a modification of the division of territory that reflected Germany's dramatic gains in economic and military capabilities relative to the more established powers.

of that order. The U.S. civil rights and women's movements, for example, did not seek to fundamentally challenge democracy but to make its ideals a reality for disenfranchised groups.³⁸

As an unintended consequence, the strategy of rightful resistance may also deepen the legitimacy of the existing order. Because the strategy dictates that emerging powers follow established rules, norms, and practices of international politics and act through authorized channels, even "rightful resisters" that initially seek the order's overthrow may inadvertently become socialized by it. That is, a revisionist state that employs this strategy runs the risk of gradually entrapping itself—of becoming enmeshed and bound by the web of multilateral institutions that define the established liberal order.³⁹ This outcome is most likely under conditions of thick and deeply entrenched international institutionalization and when the rising challenger becomes so wildly successful under the existing order (e.g., China's unprecedented economic growth rate of 10 percent over the past two decades) that it becomes too costly for it to maintain its revisionist aims, that is, for it not to undergo a fundamental change of its identity and goals.

Alternatively, the strategy of rightful resistance may have the short-term goal of steadily increasing the emerging power's economic and military capabilities so that someday it can fulfill its long-term goal of overthrowing the established order. Here, rightful resistance positions the state to make wholesale changes to the system later on, when its enhanced capabilities enable a direct challenge. This begs the question: Why would an increasingly powerful state that is growing faster than its established competitors want to overthrow the very system under which it is benefiting (given its unmatched growth rate) more than any other state? This core question can be leveled at all hegemonic theories that posit revisionist powers as the primary agents of change. The answer is essentially that the rising power believes, rightly or wrongly, that it could do even better under an international order of its own design—an order that it governs and that reflects its interests and desires, institutional architecture, and idiosyncratic norms and rules.⁴⁰

38. See Kevin J. O'Brien, "Rightful Resistance," *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (October 1996), pp. 48–51.

39. This is consistent with the arguments made in G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001).

40. Rising powers often fantasize about world order, and in this sense contemporary China is not a unique case. See, for instance, Liu Mingfu, *Zhongguo Meng: Hou Meiguo Shidai de DaGuo Siwei yu Zhanlüe Dingwei* [China's dream: Major power thinking and strategic posture in a post-American era] (Beijing: China Friendship Publishing Company, 2010). It should be noted that Liu's book is controversial in China.

In summary, a strategy of rightful resistance does not provide reliable information about the rising state's intentions. Behaviors associated with this strategy are consistent with both the intention of strengthening the legitimacy of the existing order and of significantly revising or overthrowing it at a later date. And because intentions can change, there is no guarantee that they will remain consistent over time.⁴¹ Indeed, the rising power may not know or have the ability to accurately predict its future goals. That noted, the built-in flexibility of rightful resistance makes it an effective hedging strategy, which, given the rising power's uncertainty about its future intentions, may be the reason why the ascending power selects this strategy in the first place.

Chinese Arts of Resistance: Rising and Contesting within the Order

If China continues modernizing its economy at a rapid pace, it will someday become the wealthiest great power and, as such, the most likely peer competitor to the United States. China's leadership and intellectuals have not yet directly and openly challenged the dominant ideology of *Pax Americana*, but they have started thinking beyond the existing order. At this early stage of development, Chinese ideas about alternative world orders remain inchoate and contested within China itself. Accordingly, these visions have not yet gained traction within or beyond China. We suspect, however, that they will develop into a more appealing and consequential alternative ideology as they become more coherent and as China increases its power and prestige. In the meantime, however, China has found more subtle ways to resist U.S. unipolarity—resistance that may be likened to “prudent opposition newspaper editors under strict censorship,” wherein subordinate actors must “find ways of getting their message across, while staying somehow within the law. This requires an experimental spirit and a capacity to test and exploit all the loopholes, ambiguities, silences, and lapses available to them.”⁴²

Chinese resistance operates along two dimensions: the ways by which China exploits the current order and its thinking beyond that order. To cope with the existing order, China pragmatically accommodates U.S. hegemony, on the one hand, while it contests the legitimacy of U.S. hegemony, on the other. This type of resistance is similar to rightful resistance in a domestic context, in which weak actors partially accept the legitimacy of the hegemon but seize op-

41. Although our argument about the indeterminacy of China's intentions contradicts Iain Johnston's claim that China is presently a status quo power, Johnston admits that although he detects a “decline in the level and scope of revisionist interest in China's overall diplomacy,” this “trend [could] reverse in the future.” Johnston, “Is China a Status Quo Power?” p. 56.

42. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 138.

portunities to grow and contest perceived injustice. Thus, China has worked within the current international system to expand its economy and increase its visibility and status as a global political player, while avoiding actions that directly challenge U.S. hegemony. Relying on existing institutionalized channels to contest U.S. hegemony, China seeks to increase its political influence and prestige through active participation in, not confrontation with, the existing order. Specific tactics include (1) denouncing U.S. unilateralism and promoting the concept (if not always the practice) of multilateralism; (2) participating in and creating new international organizations; (3) pursuing a proactive “soft power” diplomacy in the developing world;⁴³ (4) voting against the United States in international institutions; and (5) setting the agenda within international and regional organizations. In the short term, China seeks a gradual modification of *Pax Americana*, not a direct challenge to it.

There are several reasons why China’s grand strategy incorporates accommodation with the United States. First, China’s ability to grow requires a stable relationship with the United States. Contemporary Chinese leaders view the first two decades of the twenty-first century as “a period of important strategic opportunities.”⁴⁴ Second, since the end of the Cold War, the United States has generally pursued engagement with China, not containment of it.⁴⁵ Third, Chinese strategists have a realistic estimate of their country’s relative strength. It “would be foolhardy,” Wang Jisi, dean of Peking University’s School of International Studies, proclaims, “for Beijing to challenge directly the international order and the institutions favored by the Western world—and, indeed, such a challenge is unlikely.”⁴⁶ Predicting continued U.S. domination during this era, Chinese leaders believe that they must accommodate the United States while relentlessly building China’s own strength. At the end of this period, China will be in a better position to defend and advance its interests.⁴⁷

Although China cannot balance the economic and military power of the

43. Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1991); and Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004).

44. Jiang Zemin’s report to the Sixteenth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, quoted in Pan Zhongqi, “Change of International Security Order and China’s Period of Important Strategic Opportunities,” in Shanghai Institute for International Studies, ed., *China and Asia’s Security* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish International, 2005), p. 79.

45. Thomas J. Christensen, “Fostering Stability or Creating a Monster? The Rise of China and U.S. Policy toward East Asia,” *International Security*, Vol. 31, No.1 (Summer 2006), pp. 81–126; and Thomas J. Christensen, “Shaping the Choices of a Rising China: Recent Lessons for the Obama Administration,” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (July 2009), pp. 89–104.

46. Wang Jisi, “China’s Search for Stability with America,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 5 (September/October 2005), p. 44.

47. See David M. Lampton, *The Three Faces of Chinese Power: Might, Money, and Minds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), p. 2.

United States, it can challenge the legitimacy of the U.S.-led order and pose problems for U.S. interests, especially in East Asia.⁴⁸ China has been contesting the current order in several ways.

First, an integral part of China's diplomacy in recent years has been the call for multilateralism, which has not only expanded China's political influence in Asian regional affairs but helped build its global image. Before the mid-1990s, China was skeptical about the value of participating in regional multilateral organizations, preferring instead to deal with its neighbors and other major powers bilaterally. Since the mid-1990s, however, China has actively participated in most regional multilateral institutions, such as Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations plus Three (ASEAN plus China, Japan, and South Korea), and ASEAN plus One (ASEAN plus China), becoming an entrepreneurial agent for Asian regional cooperation.⁴⁹

Second, China has used international institutions to project power, particularly with regard to agenda setting, through a gradualist reform strategy.⁵⁰ Thus, when China makes concessions to join a major international institution such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), it seeks not short-term economic gains but a seat at the bargaining table to influence the rules of the game.⁵¹ As a Chinese ambassador reportedly thundered during China's negotiations to enter the WTO, "We know we have to play the game your way now, but in ten years we will set the rules!"⁵² China has taken a similarly gradualist approach in its response to the financial crisis that began in 2008. At the Group of Twenty summit held in November 2008, for instance, Chinese President Hu Jintao made proposals to gradually reform international financial institutions, including changing representation mechanisms and encouraging regional financial cooperation along with diversification of the international currency regime.⁵³

48. China does not need to match U.S. military power to pose problems and achieve its own limited political objectives. See Thomas J. Christensen, "Posing Problems without Catching Up: China's Rise and Challenges for U.S. Security Policy," *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Spring 2001), pp. 5–40.

49. David Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order," *International Security*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Winter 2004/05), pp. 64–99.

50. According to Chinese strategist Yan Xuetong, the priority of China's diplomacy is to increase the capability of agenda setting in international institutions, not to satisfy the demands of the U.S.-led international community. See "Xuyan" [preface], in Yan Xuetong and Sun Xuefeng, *Zhongguo Jueqi Jiqi Zhanlue* [The rise of China and its strategy] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2005), p. 5.

51. Chinese leaders emphasize that WTO membership was primarily a political issue rather than a purely economic issue. See Li Peng, *Li Peng Waishi Riji* [Foreign affairs diary of Li Peng] (Beijing: Xinhua, 2008), p. 806.

52. Quoted in C. Fred Bergsten, "A Partnership of Equals: How Washington Should Respond to China's Economic Challenge," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 87, No. 4 (July/August 2008), pp. 57–69, at p. 65.

53. For China's proposals during the Group of Twenty summit on the international financial crisis, see "Hu Urges Revamp of Finance System," *China Daily*, November 17, 2008.

Third, China is increasingly using its financial power to gain political and diplomatic influence, most importantly, as a “hedge” against the excesses of U.S. hegemony.⁵⁴ Beijing is particularly worried that its huge dollar-denominated foreign exchange reserves—the largest in the world, valued at nearly \$2 trillion, with more than half of those holdings estimated to be made up of U.S. Treasuries and other dollar-denominated bonds—could lose significant value in coming years. Thus, in yet another indication that China is growing increasingly concerned about holding huge dollar reserves, Zhou Xiaochuan, the head of its central bank, called for the eventual creation of a new currency reserve system controlled by the International Monetary Fund.⁵⁵ The March 2009 proposal, though impractical, signaled Chinese dissatisfaction with the existing international monetary order and served as a trial balloon to elicit responses from like-minded emerging powers such as Brazil and Russia. For the United States, the danger is real. If the Chinese lose their appetite for Treasuries—because of fears that large U.S. government deficits will lead to inflation and erode the purchasing power of their dollar-denominated financial assets—borrowing costs in the United States will soar, making it more costly for Washington to carry out economic stimulus packages and for Americans to pay off their mortgages. Although the dollar’s status will remain uncontested in the near future, China is taking steps to lay the groundwork for a possible long-term challenge by, among other things, gradually enhancing the international status of the Chinese currency (the renminbi).⁵⁶ Within East Asia, for instance, the Chiang Mai Initiative—a \$120 billion multilateral currency swap arrangement among the ten ASEAN countries, China, Japan, and South Korea—is a regional reserve (an insurance pool of liquidity) that supplements the lending facilities of the International Monetary Fund, strengthening the region’s capacity to safeguard against increased risks and challenges in the global economy.⁵⁷

Fourth, China continues to expand its influence in defining legitimate norms

54. Daniel W. Drezner, “U.S. Debt to China: Implications and Repercussions,” testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 111th Cong., 2d sess., February 25, 2010; and Daniel W. Drezner, “Bad Debts: Assessing China’s Financial Influence in Great Power Politics,” *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Fall 2009), pp. 7–45.

55. More specifically, Zhou Xiaochuan proposed that the dollar be replaced as the world’s reserve currency by special drawing rights. See Jamil Anderlini, “China Calls for New Reserve Currency,” *Financial Times*, March 24, 2009.

56. See Paul Krugman, “China’s Dollar Trap,” *New York Times*, April 2, 2009; and Yu Yongding, “Zhongguo Shenxian Meiyuan Xianjing” [China is deeply trapped by U.S. dollars], *Di Yi Caijin Ribao*, May 31, 2010. Whether China can succeed in challenging the dominant status of the U.S. dollar is debatable. For a systematic examination of the dollar’s status, see Eric Helleiner and Jonathan Kirshner, eds., *The Future of the Dollar* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2009); and Stephen S. Cohen and J. Bradford DeLong, *The End of Influence: What Happens When Other Countries Have the Money* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

57. For the impracticalities of the proposal, see Barry Eichengreen, “The Dollar Dilemma: The

in international affairs.⁵⁸ According to some Chinese scholars, a rising power such as China must not only increase its material capabilities but grow “socially” within the existing international society. This expansion requires international recognition of China’s status and normative preferences as legitimate.⁵⁹ In the security domain, for example, China zealously defends its definition of legitimate war through multilateral institutions such as the United Nations. As Guo Shuyong, an international relations expert at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, points out, “Legitimacy plays an indispensably important role in the structuring and socializing of international political behavior, and the ability to wage legitimate wars constitutes an important part of a nation’s soft national power.”⁶⁰ In recent years, China has become more active in UN peacekeeping operations, partly because the nature of these operations has changed in such a way that China’s normative concerns have been addressed.⁶¹ With respect to human rights, the influence of the European Union and the United States has been declining in recent years, while Chinese and Russian positions on human rights have garnered increasingly more votes in the UN General Assembly. The success of China and Russia in this regard reflects not only their commitment to a strict definition of state sovereignty but also their enhanced diplomatic skill and influence within the United Nations.⁶²

Fifth, China has gained influence and prestige in Africa, Central Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East through its soft power diplomacy.⁶³ Soft

World’s Top Currency Faces Competition,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 5 (September/October 2009), pp. 61–63. For the Chiang Mai Initiative, see Drezner, “U.S. Debt to China.”

58. Most of the literature focuses on how China is “socialized” or “integrated” into the existing international society. See, for example, Alastair Iain Johnston, *Social States: China in International Institutions, 1980–2000* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007). In contrast, the other side of the story—how China might influence the evolution of norms in international institutions—has been relatively undertheorized, probably because this is a relatively new face of China’s foreign policy. “Socialization,” however, is typically understood as a two-way process: people are not only the targets of socialization but are also active agents who influence the content and outcomes of the process. See Kent L. Sandstrom, Daniel D. Martin, and Gary Alan Fine, *Symbols, Selves, and Social Reality: A Symbolic Interactionist Approach to Social Psychology and Sociology* (Los Angeles, Calif.: Roxbury, 2002), pp. 65–66.

59. Guo Shuyong, *Daguo Chengzhang de Luoji: Xifang Daguo Jueqi de Guojizhengzhi Shehuixue fenxi* [The logic of the great power growth: A study of the rise of Western powers from the perspective of international political sociology] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2006).

60. For the discussion of legitimate wars and the rise of China, see Guo Shuyong, “Legitimacy, War, and the Rise of China: An International Political Sociology Perspective,” *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Spring 2007), pp. 47–77, at p. 47.

61. Stefan Stähle, “China’s Shifting Attitude towards United Nations Peacekeeping Operations,” *China Quarterly*, Vol. 195 (September 2008), pp. 631–655.

62. Richard Gowan and Franziska Brantner, “A Global Force for Human Rights? An Audit of European Power at the UN,” Policy Paper (London: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2008), http://ecfr.3cdn.net/3a4f39da1b34463d16_tom6b928f.pdf.

63. Soft power “rests on the ability to shape the preference of others,” according to Joseph Nye. “It is leading by example and attracting others to do what you want.” Nye, *Soft Power*, pp. 5–6.

power can become a source of zero-sum U.S.-China competition because social goods associated with soft power—such as political influence, leadership, and prestige—can spark highly charged competitions with important long-term strategic implications.⁶⁴ The Chinese view the term “soft power” broadly to include anything outside the traditional security domain, such as popular culture, foreign aid, and economic cooperation.⁶⁵ China’s soft-power diplomacy has several ingredients. First, China has increasingly promoted its language and traditional culture, which has bolstered its central status in Asian civilization. Second, China’s economic miracle and its gradualist reforms and political authoritarianism provide an attractive developmental model for many poor, nondemocratic countries.⁶⁶ Third, China’s flexible economic diplomacy attracts many developing countries, mainly because its aid, in contrast to that of Western donors, is typically offered without political preconditions.

In this section, we outlined several of China’s short-term strategies to contest U.S. hegemony within the established order. Some Chinese strategists, however, are starting to think about the long term, when China overtakes the United States as the global hegemon and must establish its own social and material structures for global governance. The next section explores these competing visions of a future Chinese-led global order.

Thinking beyond the Order

Hegemonic orders rest on both material and ideational bases, and weak actors, though unable to confront the hegemon directly, can still delegitimize the ideational foundation of hegemony through everyday resistance and visions of alternative orders. The United States has successfully shaped world politics with some big ideas such as “capitalism is better than socialism” and “democracy is better than dictatorship.”⁶⁷ Recently, however, the emerging non-Western powers have let it be known that they do not share the United States’

64. It is not necessarily true that every dimension of China’s soft power diplomacy will become part of a zero-sum game with the United States. In some situations, China’s increasing soft power might create opportunities for U.S.-Chinese cooperation. See Christensen, “Fostering Stability or Creating a Monster?” pp. 81–84. Moreover, China confronts significant barriers in its promotion of soft power. See Yanzhong Huang and Sheng Ding, “The Dragon’s Underbelly: An Analysis of China’s Soft Power,” *East Asia*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Winter 2006), pp. 22–44.

65. Joshua Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive: How China’s Soft Power Is Transforming the World* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 6.

66. “Even if the People’s Republic had done nothing in the world, the power of the Chinese example would have presented a major challenge to promoters of democracy,” writes Mark Leonard. Leonard, *What Does China Think?* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2008), p. 124.

67. Bruce W. Jentleson and Steven Weber, “America’s Hard Sell,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 169 (November/December 2008), pp. 43–49, at p. 43.

views on these issues.⁶⁸ As Bruce Jentleson and Steven Weber argue, “Outside the United States, people no longer believe that the alternative to Washington-led order is chaos. . . . [T]he rest of the world has no fear about experimenting with alternatives.”⁶⁹ This section analyzes Chinese visions of the current and future international order. Pluralistic in their views on the outside world, Chinese strategists have been passionately debating how Beijing should proceed.⁷⁰ Rather than presenting one particular Chinese idea,⁷¹ therefore, we present diverse Chinese perspectives, showing consensus where it exists and general trends in Chinese thinking.⁷² We categorize these visions of global order into three ideal types: a new Chinese order, a modified liberal order, and a negotiated order, each challenging U.S. hegemony in different ways.⁷³ These visions of a future order map on to three potential strategies. China might (1) embrace delegitimation, functioning as a spoiler with a competing view for how the world should be structured; (2) emerge as a supporter of the existing system, working within the existing rules of the game and contributing its fair share to global governance; or (3) continue to shirk some of its international commitments and responsibilities, focusing on internal development and consolidation, contributing selectively to global governance, and seeking to implement its vision of global order gradually.⁷⁴

68. See Stewart Patrick, “Irresponsible Stakeholders? The Difficulty of Integrating Rising Powers,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 6 (November/December 2010), pp. 44–53.

69. Jentleson and Weber, “America’s Hard Sell,” pp. 46–47.

70. Thomas J. Christensen, Alastair Iain Johnston, and Robert S. Ross, “Conclusions and Future Directions,” in Johnston and Ross, eds., *New Directions in the Study of China’s Foreign Policy* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 380.

71. William A. Callahan’s analysis of emerging Chinese visions of world order is insightful but limited, focusing on only one particular Chinese scholar, Zhao Tingyang. Although Zhao’s philosophical thinking informs debates among some Chinese international relations experts, Zhao is also heavily criticized in China. See Callahan, “Chinese Visions of World Order: Post-hegemonic or a New Hegemony?” *International Studies Review*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (December 2008), pp. 749–761.

72. Chinese visions of international order partly depend on the uncertain prospect of its domestic politics, of which there is a parallel debate (e.g., democracy vs. resilient authoritarianism). For overviews of this debate, see Daniel C. Lynch, “Envisioning China’s Political Future: Elite Responses to Democracy as a Global Constitutive Norm,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (September 2007), pp. 701–722; and David Shambaugh, *China’s Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), chap. 8.

73. We do not claim that any particular Chinese vision is accurate or unrealistic. Instead, we present what the Chinese think the future international order would look like from their perspective. Whether these Chinese visions are logically coherent (or historically accurate) is not our major concern here.

74. Beijing’s strategies may shift as China continues to grow. The various strategies during different rising periods (early period vs. late period of rising) have been identified by several scholars. See Edelstein and Fravel, “Life on the Great Power Frontier”; Yan and Sun, *Zhongguo Jueqi Jiqi Zhanlue*, pp. 13–15; and Sheena Chestnut and Alastair Iain Johnston, “Is China Rising?” in Eva Paus, Penelope B. Prime, and Jon Western, eds., *Global Giant: Is China Changing the Rules of the Game?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2009), pp. 237–260.

We analyze these visions against four dimensions of U.S. hegemonic ideology (U.S. hegemony, capitalism, democracy, and Western culture).⁷⁵ The overall trend is consistent with our earlier discussion of delegitimation and deconcentration in the international system. China's increasing material power—particularly its rapid economic growth—has boosted its ideational self-confidence. Accordingly, Chinese intellectuals are increasingly questioning the inevitability of what they regard as Western ideational dominance.⁷⁶

Moreover, the influence of these three Chinese visions of international order has been shifting in lockstep with China's growth in power. When China was relatively weak in the 1980s and 1990s, its strategy stressed integration within the Western-led order. As China's power and capabilities have increased, its strategists have gradually shifted the debate toward visions of a negotiated order, and an embryonic vision of a new Chinese order has emerged. Given the relatively early stage of China's rise, such rhetoric is a relatively new phenomenon and has yet to lead to fundamental change in China's foreign policy. This is not surprising, as Chinese leaders understand that unrealistic goals could be deeply destabilizing at home and abroad.⁷⁷

A NEW CHINESE ORDER: THE SPOILER STRATEGY IN A POWER TRANSITION

An ambitious and controversial idea within China, the vision of a new Chinese order suggests that (1) Chinese traditional philosophy provides a better framework than the current order to deal with world problems; (2) U.S. hegemony is losing international legitimacy; (3) Chinese political and economic systems are gaining legitimacy and provide the basis for a better social model for the world; and (4) China should build a global *datong* (Great Harmony) society, in which emphasis is given to social welfare and collective goods.

This vision aims to undermine the legitimacy of U.S. hegemony in a comprehensive sense. It is a vision and strategy consistent with the traditional realist story of power transitions. China may or may not be pursuing this spoiler strategy now.⁷⁸ But, as we have argued, prior to a traditional hegemonic bid to

75. The four dimensions are adapted from Jentleson and Weber, "America's Hard Sell."

76. A similar trend is also occurring in China's thinking about its domestic political future. See Lynch, "Envisioning China's Political Future," p. 718.

77. Yong Deng, *China's Struggle for Status: The Realignment of International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 53–54.

78. Again, we emphasize that Chinese revisionist alternatives to the current order are still embryonic and contested at this point. For example, Zhao Tingyang's Tianxia philosophy and Liu Mingfu's book, *China's Dream*, are controversial and hotly debated in China. Some argue, however, that China is already pursuing a spoiler strategy and that China's challenge is increasingly an ideational one. See, for example, Edward Friedman, "Appeasing a Rising Authoritarian China: Implications for Democracy and Peace," paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, New York, New York, February 15, 2009; and Stefan Halper, *The Beijing Con-*

overthrow the current order, China must successfully challenge the ideational foundations of the existing liberal order and offer an appealing blueprint for a new one. What are the elements of this potential Chinese challenge and new world order?

First, the vision of a new Chinese order fundamentally disputes the notion that Western ideas and culture are superior to those of the rest of the world. In recent years, China's leaders and some of its intellectuals have rekindled an interest in the philosophy and history of traditional Chinese order. Contemporary philosopher Zhao Tingyang argues that traditional Chinese ideas provide a better philosophical framework for solving global problems, asserting that the Chinese theory of Tianxia (literally, "all under Heaven") is simply "the best philosophy for world governance."⁷⁹ Compared with the Westphalian international system, the traditional Chinese notion of global order has some distinctive features, such as a holistic and inclusive view—as opposed to the dualistic and exclusive one offered by the West—with a foundation in benign hierarchical relationships similar to that between fathers and sons in the Confucian family.⁸⁰

Second, the U.S. "empire," according to Zhao, is a comprehensive and contradictory ruling model in global politics. The United States, he believes, often fights wars in the name of peace, damages freedom in the name of freedom, and rejects ethics in the name of ethical reasons.⁸¹ Zhao argues that the key feature of Western empires (including that of the United States) is "dominance" for the purpose of maximizing the interests of their peoples; they offer no "order" to maximize the interests of all people.⁸² Consequently, Western imperial

sensus: How China's Authoritarian Model Will Dominate the Twenty-first Century (New York: Basic Books, 2010). For a counterargument, see Edward S. Steinfeld, *Playing Our Game: Why China's Rise Doesn't Threaten the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

79. Tingyang Zhao, "Rethinking Empire from a Chinese Concept 'All-under-Heaven' (Tianxia)," *Social Identities*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (January 2006), pp. 29–41. For a comprehensive view of Zhao's Tianxia philosophy, see Zhao Tingyang, *Tianxia tixi: Shijie zhidu zhexue daolun* [The Tianxia system: A philosophy for the world institution] (Nanjing, China: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2005).

80. Victoria Tin-bor Hui argues that an interpretation of Chinese history as a benign Confucian order is historically inaccurate. See Hui, "How China Was Ruled," *American Interest*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (March–April 2008), pp. 53–65. In contrast, Zhao Tingyang argues that the contemporary "reconstruction" of traditional Chinese ideas is key, not the historical accuracy of those ideas. See Zhao, "Tianxia Tixi de Yige Jianyao Biaoshu" [An introduction of Tianxia (all-under-heaven) system], *World Economics and Politics*, October 2008, p. 85. Some Chinese scholars view the hierarchic nature of this alternative world as highly problematic. See Yaqing Qin, "Why Is There No Chinese International Relations Theory?" *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (September 2007), p. 330.

81. Zhao Tingyang, "Tianxia gainian yu shijie zhidu" [The Tianxia concept and the world system], in Qin Yaqing, ed., *Zhongguo Xuezhe Kan Shijie: Guoji Zhixue Juan* [Chinese scholars' views of the world: International order] (Beijing: New World Press, 2006), p. 6.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

orders always rest on dubious and unsustainable legitimacy claims.⁸³ Here, it is useful to note that rising powers often portray their visions of order in terms of universal solutions to world problems. In history, some leaders of rising powers have truly believed this rhetoric, whereas others have cynically made such proclamations for self-serving purposes. The Tianxia worldview claims to offer a posthegemonic order but, when articulated, it often gives the impression that China seeks to impose its views on the world.⁸⁴ It is not surprising, therefore, that Tianxia philosophy appears to its detractors within and outside China as ideational preparation for a new hegemonic, not a posthegemonic, world order.⁸⁵

Third, the vision of a new Chinese order raises doubts about the inevitability of democratic liberalism. Zhao argues that contemporary democracy is increasingly commercialized and, therefore, does not serve the interests or values of the masses.⁸⁶ Peking University professor Pan Wei argues that “democratization” is a myth, and claims that China should instead develop its political institutions along Chinese traditions and build an effective non-Western bureaucracy and legal system.⁸⁷ According to Yan Xuetong, dean of the Institute of Modern International Relations at Tsinghua University and chief editor of the *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, if China wants to supplant the United States as a global leader, it must “present to the world a better social role model.”⁸⁸ It is unclear whether China is promoting a “Beijing Consensus” to counterbalance the influence of the so-called Washington Consensus. What is clear, however, is that the Chinese developmental model has gained popularity in many parts of the developing world.

Fourth, in terms of economic ideas (capitalism vs. socialism), the vision of a Chinese world order might or might not challenge the fundamentals of capitalism. It does, however, have a collectivist mind-set, which emphasizes social justice and collective welfare, and seems to be rooted in the Chinese Confucian tradition of seeking a *datong* society.⁸⁹

Related to the discourse of a new Chinese world order, many scholars in China who argue that China is an “intellectual colony” of the United States

83. Ibid.

84. Xiang Lanxing, “Jieyan Jueqi, Shenyan Hexie” [Stop talking “rise,” be cautious about talking “harmony”], *Lianhe Zaobao*, March 26, 2006. See also Callahan, “Chinese Visions of World Order.”

85. Callahan, “Chinese Visions of World Order.”

86. Zhao, “Tianxia gainian yu shijie zhidu,” pp. 30–31.

87. Pan Wei, “Toward a Consultative Rule of Law Regime in China,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 12, No. 34 (2003), pp. 3–43.

88. Yan Xuetong, “Xun Zi’s Thoughts on International Politics and Their Implications,” *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Summer 2008), p. 159.

89. For an overview, see Shiping Hua, “A Perfect World,” *Wilson Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Autumn 2005), pp. 62–67.

have been seeking to develop a distinct “Chinese school” of international relations theory.⁹⁰ The trouble, they argue, with Chinese intellectuals learning about international politics from their American counterparts is that Western theories cannot be expected to emphasize, much less solve, the problem of “American domination.”⁹¹ To be sure, China’s scholars of world affairs have good intellectual reasons to explore a “Chinese school,” and their efforts will have political implications with respect to legitimating and delegitimizing particular social orders.⁹² As Jack Snyder points out, “Having a distinctively Chinese school of thought about international politics—especially one that portrays China as a benign dominant power because of its wise cultural traditions—will help to establish China’s intellectual independence and will legitimate China’s challenge to the liberal democratic states for international leadership.”⁹³

A MODIFIED LIBERAL ORDER: THE SUPPORTER STRATEGY IN A CONCERT SYSTEM

The second vision posits the continuation of the current liberal order, which has nurtured China’s historically unprecedented economic growth. It is a future of peaceful evolution, not system transformation. The U.S. unipolar distribution of power gives way to either a U.S.-China bipolar system or a multipolar “great power concert” system, but it is still an international order dominated and run by the major states, which establish a relatively stable system of cooperation and managed competition. All of these major states are status quo oriented, value global and regional political stability, are willing to make strategic bargains and compromises with one another, abide by great power norms of restraint and accommodation, and continue to move along a trajectory toward greater integration into a “one world” global political economy. Over the course of several decades, the major powers develop rules and institutions for joint management of the global system. The United States and the other democratic states retain their alliance partnerships, but more encompassing institutions emerge, bringing all the great powers together within regional and global governance structures. It is a world without grand ideological divides and conflicts, where all states are deeply integrated within a

90. Not all Chinese scholars, however, share this vision of building a Chinese school.

91. Ren Xiao, “Toward a Chinese School of International Relations?” in Wang Gungwu and Zheng Yongnian, eds., *China and the New International Order* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 296–297.

92. Yaqing Qin, “Guanxi benwei yu guocheng jiangou: Jiang Zhongguo linian zhiru guoji guanxi lilun” [Relationality and processual construction: Bringing Chinese ideas into international relations theory] *Zhongguo Shehui Kexue* [Social Sciences in China], No. 4 (2009), pp. 5–20; and Yaqing Qin, “International Society as a Process: Institutions, Identities, and China’s Peaceful Rise,” *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Summer 2010), pp. 129–153.

93. Jack L. Snyder, “Some Good and Bad Reasons for a Distinctively Chinese Approach to International Relations Theory,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, Massachusetts, August 28–31, 2008, p. 6.

unitary global system governed by the rule of law and centrally organized international institutions that place strict limits on the returns to power.

By furthering China's miraculous growth and liberal socialization, this transition from the current unipolar system to a future bipolar or multipolar one, in which the great powers (old and new) find ways to build an architecture for joint management of the system, suggests a peaceful path to the ultimate demise of U.S. hegemony. For China to become a stakeholder within the future system, several implications follow. First, the vision of a modified liberal order assumes that democracy and human rights, as originated in the West, are universally valid norms. From this perspective, China must continue to develop its internal politics to become a more respected and "normal" country within international society.⁹⁴

Second, China has been a hugely successful player under the existing order, which states consider legitimate because it benefits not just the United States but all countries willing to invest in the system and abide by its rules. Because the Western-led order has provided China with unparalleled opportunities to become a stronger, safer, and more respected country, China should largely pursue a grand strategy of "bandwagoning" and "transcendancy," participating in international regimes and forming a largely accommodative relationship with the United States and the community of Western nations.⁹⁵ This vision also acknowledges the positive effects that U.S. provision of global public goods has had on China, as well as the deep economic interdependence between China and the United States. While Western strategists debate how to manage the rise of China, some Chinese scholars worry about the damaging effects that a rapidly declining America would have on China and the world.⁹⁶ The United States would still protect its core areas of hegemony (finance and security), while sharing responsibilities in less crucial areas with emerging powers. The most realistic and prudent goal for China, therefore, is not to challenge the core areas of U.S. hegemony but to increase China's power and prestige in less crucial areas.⁹⁷ In this way, a rising China can become not just a stakeholder but an indispensable pillar of the "one world" capitalist system.⁹⁸

A third implication is that democratic liberalism is universally valid and that

94. Yinghong Shi, "Fengwu Changyi Fangyanliang: Zhongguo Yinyou De Waijiao Zhexue he Shiji Dazhanlue" [To have a long vision: Diplomatic philosophy on external affairs and secular grand strategy for China in the 21st century], *Journal of HIT* (Social Science edition), Vol. 3, No. 2 (June 2001), p. 15.

95. *Ibid.*, pp. 13–20.

96. Wang Yiwei, "Zhongguo Fuxin Bushi Fengxiang Meiguo Baquan" [China's rise is not to share the American hegemony], *Huanqiu Shibao*, January 17, 2008, <http://column.huanqiu.com/wangyiwei/2008-01/48528.html>.

97. *Ibid.*

98. Wang Yiwei, "China's Rise: An Unlikely Pillar of U.S. Hegemony," *Harvard International Review*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Spring 2007), pp. 60–63.

China should eventually become democratic. The vision of a modified liberal order accepts the notion that democracy is not only a universally valid norm but also one that could be helpful in overcoming many political problems.⁹⁹ Yu Keping, a leading Chinese intellectual and prominent figure in China's official think tank, published a widely read essay, emphasizing that "democracy is a good thing."¹⁰⁰ The question for China is not whether it will become democratic but when and how such a transition will happen.

Fourth, liberal economic ideas such as trade, a market economy, and economic globalization are keys to China's success. The vision of a modified liberal order holds that China's rapid growth is largely the result of domestic market-driven reforms and the embrace of economic globalization.¹⁰¹ According to Shi Yinghong, professor of international relations at Renmin University in Beijing, China's "peaceful rise" is an extraordinary example of Richard Rosecrance's thesis about the rise of trading states in the contemporary world.¹⁰²

A NEGOTIATED ORDER: THE SHIRKER STRATEGY IN A POWER DIFFUSION PROCESS
The stark dichotomy of China either confronting the existing order or becoming a full-fledged member of it perhaps simplifies a complex reality.¹⁰³ Between these two extremes, we posit a third vision of a negotiated order during a messy transition out of unipolarity—one more consistent with a power diffusion process of system change than with one based on the transition of power.¹⁰⁴ Change brought about by a power diffusion process would generate

99. Shi, "Fengwu Changyi Fangyanliang," p. 15.

100. For an English translation of this essay, see Yu Keping, *Democracy Is a Good Thing: Essays on Politics, Society, and Culture in Contemporary China* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008).

101. For a detailed documentation of this approach, see Steinfeld, *Playing Our Game*.

102. Yinghong Shi, "Zhongmei Guanxi Jiben Toudi He Zhanlue Fengxi" [U.S.-China relations: Basic perspectives and strategic analysis], *Forum of World Economy and Politics*, No. 4 (2007), p. 11. See also Richard Rosecrance, "Power and International Relations: The Rise of China and Its Effects," *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (February 2006), pp. 31–35.

103. Naazneen Barma, Ely Ratner, and Steven Weber, "Chinese Ways," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 87, No. 3 (May/June 2008), p. 166.

104. The existing international relations literature conceptualizes negotiated orders in a liberal political sense, such as in terms of "constitutional contracts" or "legislative bargaining." See Oran R. Young, "Regime Dynamics: The Rise and Fall of International Regimes," *International Organization*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Spring 1982), especially p. 283. We use this term in a broader sense, meaning the process of how actors with diverse preferences build and maintain an order through constant interactions and negotiations. This is closer to a sociological understanding of the term. See Gary Alan Fine, "Negotiated Orders and Organizational Cultures," *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 10 (August 1984), p. 241. Chinese scholar Yaqing Qin expresses a similar idea to describe the ideational interaction between China and the West. See Yaqing Qin, "Yanjiu Shejie yu Xueshu Zhuanxin" [Research design for academic innovation], *World Economics and Politics*, No. 8 (2008), p. 76.

an international system in which states do not have the capacities to shape and direct the system. No state or group of states would be in control. Moreover, polarity would become less meaningful as a predictor of state behavior and system dynamics than it has been in the past—so much so that it might be more accurate to say that unipolarity will be replaced not by bi- or multipolarity but by nonpolarity.¹⁰⁵

Both power transition theory and power diffusion theory posit that concentrated power will disperse over time. The theories disagree, however, about the likely consequences of this inevitable process of power deconcentration. Power transition theory sees it triggering large-scale war and system change, whereas power diffusion theory predicts peace and more system continuity than change. This is because power diffusion theory challenges the core logics and expectations of power transition theory. Most basically, power diffusion theory does not expect rising powers to become dissatisfied challengers. Far from aiming to overthrow the international order, rising powers are not eager to manage the existing international order. They would prefer, instead, that the declining hegemon pay the costs of order, while they free ride. If tensions arise among the unipole and the rising polar powers, it will be over this issue, namely, that the declining hegemon expects these powers to assume the role of supporters, while they attempt to shirk some of their responsibilities and obligations. Frustrated by the free-riding behavior of its peer competitors and seeking to stem the tide of decline, the hegemon will ultimately retrench from its global commitments, leaving no state or group of states to manage the international system.

While the power diffusion model predicts shirking behavior, it does not expect the coming poles to be spoilers. After all, the rising powers are doing far better than everyone else under the current order. Why would they seek its overthrow? Why would they choose an enormously costly global war of uncertain outcome to destroy an order that has demonstrably worked for them, only to replace it with an untested order that they have to pay the costs to manage? The traditional notion of prestige (as the reputation for power that serves as the everyday currency of international politics) matters most when powerful states have serious material conflicts of interests, disagreements over

105. For the discussion of a nonpolar world or a world in which polarity is less important, see Richard N. Haass, "The Age of Nonpolarity," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 87, No. 3 (May/June 2008), pp. 44–56. For a discussion of power diffusion, see Randall L. Schweller, "Entropy and the Trajectory of World Politics: Why Polarity Has Become Less Meaningful," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (March 2010), pp. 145–163; and Chen Yutang, Qianqiu Jingrong Weiji, and Meiguo Shuailuo, "You Guoji Zhixu De Bianpinghua" [Global financial crisis, the United States' decline, and the flattening of international order], *World Economics and Politics*, No. 5 (2009), pp. 28–34.

international norms and rules, and expectations that they will settle their differences by fighting. Conflicts and expectations of this kind are largely absent today and are unlikely to arise in the future.

The diffusion of power occurs spontaneously as a result of differential growth rates among nations.¹⁰⁶ This process occurs peacefully because the restored global balance arises without traditional balancing behavior in the system's core. In a world in which (1) security is plentiful, (2) territory is devalued, and (3) a robust liberal consensus exists, the rising great powers will behave more akin to rational egoists driven to maximize their absolute gains than defensive or offensive positionalists, who seek to avoid relative losses or make relative gains. Rational egoists driven to maximize absolute gains are inward-looking actors unconcerned with the fate of others or the larger system in which they are embedded. If global order persists, it will do so without an orderer. It is also worth noting that complex adaptive systems often succumb to precipitous and unexpected change, and so the restored global balance of power may not arise gradually and predictably as the next phase in a smooth cycle.¹⁰⁷ Instead, U.S. power and the American global order may simply collapse.

For China, the vision of a negotiated order supports a hedging strategy of avoiding direct confrontation with the United States but preparing favorable conditions for China to shape an emerging world order in the long term. It is a strategy that appears most consistent with what China is currently doing.¹⁰⁸ First, this approach neither rejects Western culture nor ignores the potential values of traditional Chinese ideas. Instead, it champions an order of "peaceful coexistence with differences," in which the Chinese worldview is recognized by the United States and the rest of the world as being different but legitimate.¹⁰⁹ This vision refrains from posing Chinese ideas as a universally applicable alternative model that directly confronts Western ideas.

Second, the vision of a negotiated order does not reject the legitimacy of U.S. hegemony.¹¹⁰ Instead, it critiques the current order on its own terms. For in-

106. Growth rates differ for many reasons: for example, innovation tends to cluster; the diffusion of technology benefits secondary and late movers (imitation costs are much lower than innovation costs); hegemons overpay for defense and become addicted to consumption, resulting in massive debt that eventually crowds out research and development spending; the ratio of retirees to workers; and so on.

107. Niall Ferguson, "Complexity and Collapse: Empires on the Edge of Chaos," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 2 (March/April 2010), pp. 18–32; and Randall L. Schweller, "The Future Is Uncertain and the End Is Always Near," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* (forthcoming).

108. This vision and strategy are related to the "rightful resistance" approach.

109. Ren Xiao, "Women Ruhe Duidai Chayi: Dui Hexie Shijie zhi neihai De Yige Tantaoy" [How we should deal with differences: An inquiry into the meaning of a harmonious world], *Foreign Affairs Review* (Beijing), No. 97 (August 2007), pp. 37–39.

110. Wang, "China's Search for Stability with America." See also Wang Jisi, "America in Asia: How Much Does China Care?" *Global Asia*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Fall 2007), pp. 27–28.

stance, China is using the notion of democracy against the United States to contest its hegemonic behavior. Despite the promotion of liberal democracy having long been the capstone of U.S. foreign policy, Chinese intellectuals have critiqued the contradictions of U.S. liberal democracy at home and abroad. In domestic politics, the U.S. government has applied checks and balances to protect democracy and the rule of law, whereas in international politics it seeks to preserve its dominant status so that it can act without constraints.¹¹¹ In a supposedly “democratic” world order, Chinese intellectuals ask, how can the United States assume the roles of police, prosecutor, and judge?¹¹²

Third, although the vision of a negotiated order does not reject liberal democracy, it demands that the practices and meanings of Chinese democracy be adjusted to fit the specific cultural context. Given the pressure of global constitutive norms of democracy, many Chinese leaders and scholars have increasingly come to use the term “democracy” to describe the goal of China’s political development. In their view, no matter what kind of political arrangements define China’s future, the overall system must be called a “democracy.”¹¹³

Finally, the vision of a negotiated order takes a flexible and pragmatic approach to economic policymaking. On the relationship between the state and markets, for instance, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao argues that the combination of both “the invisible hand” and “the visible hand” explains China’s economic success.¹¹⁴

A core prediction of this “power diffusion” future is that China, like other emerging great powers, will attempt to shirk its newfound global responsibilities and obligations. Given the speed and size of its economic miracle, China can be expected to experience growing pains as it transforms from a regional to a global player. It may even be wary of assuming this new role. After all, Chinese officials have much to fear: their nation is heading to either superpower status or economic and social implosion. China’s potential is great, but its domestic pitfalls are many. For instance, China is a rapidly aging society with demographic trends accelerated by China’s coercive attempt to limit pop-

111. Wang Jisi, “Meiguo Baquan de Luoji” [The logic of American hegemony], in Qin, *Zhongguo Xuezhe Kan Shijie*, p. 95.

112. Ren Xiao, “‘Meilijian Digu’ Lun de Xingqi Yu Meiguo De DaZhanlue” [The rise of “the American empire” proposition and America’s grand strategy], in Qin, *Zhongguo Xuezhe Kan Shijie*, p. 150.

113. For a summary of such an orientation, see Lynch, “Envisioning China’s Political Future,” pp. 701–722.

114. “Transcript of Interview with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao,” *CNN.com/asia*, September 28, 2008, <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/09/29/chinese.premier.transcript/>.

ulation growth. The biggest question hanging over China, of course, is its political stability, especially during a global recession that may turn into a global depression. The bottom line is that China is strong abroad but fragile at home.¹¹⁵ Thus, China may be reluctant to take on major international responsibilities with respect to the global economic, climate change, and security crises. Instead, it may choose to focus inward, negotiating favorable international deals, while shouldering less global burdens than others (including the United States) will want and expect it to bear.

Under this scenario, the United States will encourage China to play a larger global role and will not view China's increased global influence as a threat to U.S. hegemony or interests. To the contrary, the United States will gladly offer China more prestige. In return, however, Washington will expect Beijing to shoulder greater international responsibilities and obligations. This "prestige at a price" trade-off is, in our view, key to understanding the relationship of a rising power and a declining hegemon. Surprisingly, it is a trade-off that has gone unrecognized by power transition theory. Instead, the theory expects all rising powers to seek prestige commensurate with their relative growth in capabilities, and it is this unmet demand for prestige that triggers hegemonic wars.

Do rising challengers to hegemony invariably demand increased prestige, as power transition theory claims? Consider the last hegemonic leadership transition. During the 1930s, a declining Britain—one gravely imperiled by threats in Europe and elsewhere and too weak to both defend its interests and manage the international system—grudgingly decided that it was time for the United States to become the global leader. As the British persistently grumbled, however, the United States demanded unparalleled prestige but was unwilling to pay the price of increased global responsibilities and obligations associated with an exalted position in the international pecking order.

Roughly the same problem exists today and, if this scenario plays out, will persist in the future. The United States complains that China wants enhanced prestige but not the responsibilities that global leaders are obligated to perform. While some Western observers argue that China must be coerced into taking appropriate actions when global crises arise, it is useful to recall that the United States accepted leadership of the system commensurate with its actual power only after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, and in the aftermath of World War II, when it emerged as the only victor willing and able to construct

115. Susan L. Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower: How China's Internal Politics Could Derail Its Peaceful Rise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Wang Jisi, "Inside China," *Global Asia*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Summer 2010), pp. 8–9.

a liberal international order. In fact, most rising powers throughout history have been less than eager to assume the responsibilities associated with system management.

Thus, during the global financial crisis of 2008, it was widely expected that China would play a larger role on the world stage. Yet, as David Shambaugh pointed out, "China doesn't want to lead the world—it doesn't even want to be seen as a leader of the developing world."¹¹⁶ Little surprise, then, that Chinese leaders said "no thanks" to the development of a G-2—a group of two advocated by Zbigniew Brzezinski that would have elevated China to the status of the United States' co-managing partner on issues such as trade and currency reform, climate change, food safety, peace and stability in East Asia, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and perhaps even the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.¹¹⁷

Chinese strategists have begun to explore seriously the geopolitical implications of the financial crisis of 2008, particularly the boost it has given China's international status and the appeal of its economic model with respect to the developing world. As Wu Xinbo, a professor at Fudan University in Shanghai, opines:

In the post-Cold War era, the U.S. model used to be hailed as the only way to economic prosperity. Now, the Chinese model seems to provide an alternative. To be sure, the Chinese model is not perfect and is actually confronted with many challenges such as a widening income gap, serious environment pollution, and rampant corruption. Yet, the record of tiding over two financial crises (the 1998–1999 Asian financial crisis and the 2008–2009 global financial crisis) and securing three decades of a high economic growth rate testifies to its strength. Unlike Washington, Beijing does not like to boast of its model and impose it on others, but the increased appeal of the Chinese experience will certainly enhance Beijing's international status and augment its influence among developing countries.¹¹⁸

For the moment, China's political elites and bureaucracies—ill-prepared for the country's sudden high profile in global affairs—remain resistant to changing its global status and obligations, emphasizing instead that China remains a developing country and, therefore, need not take on new and unwanted re-

116. Quoted in Melinda Liu, "Analyze This: On the Eve of Obama's Visit, China Reveals an Identity Crisis," *Newsweek*, November 14, 2009, <http://www.newsweek.com/2009/11/13/analyze-this.html>.

117. Elizabeth C. Economy and Adam Segal, "The G-2 Mirage: Why the United States and China Are Not Ready to Upgrade Ties," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 3 (May/June 2009), pp. 14–23; and Jian Junbo, "China Says 'No Thanks' to G2," *Asian Times*, May 29, 2009, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/KE29Ad01.html>.

118. Wu Xinbo, "Understanding the Geopolitical Implications of the Global Financial Crisis," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (October 2010), p. 159

sponsibilities. At the UN General Assembly in September 2010, for instance, Premier Wen Jiabo urged the international audience to recognize “the real China,” which is not a superpower but a mere “developing country” whose further progress is constrained by a shortage of resources, energy, and complex environmental issues.¹¹⁹

In sum, the lack of U.S.-Chinese cooperation stems neither from the failure of Washington to acknowledge how much China matters nor U.S. unwillingness to grant China more status and prestige. Rather it derives from China’s tendency to shirk its contributions to global governance at this stage of its development as well as mismatched interests, values, and capabilities within the U.S.-Chinese relationship.¹²⁰

Conclusion

The current unipolar order is unprecedented and therefore a condition rife with uncertainty and ambiguity. For all the real and imagined dangers posed by U.S. hegemony, however, a balance of power has yet to emerge. We have argued that a key reason for this missing balance is that this type of behavior under unipolarity means, by definition, the overthrow of the current system—tantamount to the goal of an unlimited-aims revisionist power. For active and intense balancing campaigns to commence, therefore, peer competitors to U.S. power and prestige must first undermine the legitimacy of the American order. Otherwise, they risk being portrayed as dangerous threats to international order. Moreover, without the requisite power to balance against the United States, the other major powers have little choice but to employ “weapons of the weak”: dissident rhetoric and cost-imposing strategies short of actual balancing behavior. These antihegemonic discursive and diplomatic strategies lay the groundwork for the more formidable revisionist project of dislodging the United States from its preeminent position.

As evidence that we are in a delegitimation phase, we have described the recent arts of resistance by China, the United States’ most viable peer competitor. A skeptic might say that these delegitimizing discourses and their accompanying low-level, cost-imposing policies are simply empty posturing—just hollow

119. Wu Jiao and Zhang Yuwen, “China Will Focus on Peaceful Development: Wen,” *China Daily*, September 24, 2010, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010WenUN/2010-09/24/content_11340567.htm.

120. These mismatches within the relationship center on Washington’s and Beijing’s dramatically different views on sovereignty, sanctions, and the use of force. See Economy and Segal, “The G-2 Mirage,” p. 16.

posing and, as such, not intended to be acted out in earnest. China makes these public statements either to gain political leverage with the United States on various issues of vital concern to them or to impress their domestic audiences or both. These domestic audiences want to see some defiance by their country's leaders of what they perceive as U.S. global imperialism.¹²¹ Perhaps. But larger forces may be at work here; and historical evidence suggests that deviant discourses and practices presage rebellions or, at the least, are preconditions for them.

Another explanation for this anti-American rhetoric is that emerging non-Western powers, unable to balance against or control the exercise of U.S. power, can only voice their displeasure with U.S. foreign policies. Harsh speeches serve as a harmless catharsis that substitutes for aggressive action. Once again, there may be some truth to this "safety valve" hypothesis, but social psychological experiments have yielded little support for it. Instead, subjects who were unjustly harmed experienced little or no reduction in their level of frustration and anger through forms of aggressive expression that left the source of anger untouched. Thus, speeches and other acts of anger that fall short of actual direct injury to the frustrating agent are not alternatives to eventual outbursts but rather preparations for them.¹²²

Whatever the calculations behind China's current delegitimizing activities, for a balance to emerge against the United States, its rule must be "exposed" as dangerous to the wealth and security of the other great powers. A similar situation existed in the nineteenth century under *Pax Britannica*. At that time, Friedrich List implored the other countries of Europe to form a continental alliance and pool their naval power to counterbalance British supremacy in naval and manufacturing power:

It has always been felt that the ultimate aim of politics must be the equalization of the nations. That which people call the European balance of power has always been nothing else than the endeavors of the less powerful to impose a check on the encroachments of the more powerful. . . . That the idea of this Continental system will ever recur, that the necessity of realizing it will the more forcibly impress itself on the Continental nations in a proportion as the preponderance of England in industry, wealth, and power further increases, is already very clear, and will continually become more evident. . . . An effective Continental system can only originate from the free union of the

121. For a response to this type of criticism that involves the "infrapolitics" of subordinate groups, see Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, chap. 7.

122. Leonard Berkowitz, *Aggression: A Social Psychological Analysis* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962), pp. 204–227.

Continental powers, and succeed only in the case it has for its object (and also effect) an equal participation in the advantages which result from it.¹²³

As List understood, the strength of a revisionist challenge, whether from a single dissatisfied state or a coalition of such powers, is not discerned from the challenger's current capability to destroy the existing status quo. Rather, the challenge derives its strength from the indispensable need to restore a balance of power.¹²⁴ This will not be easy, however. The culture of hegemony attempts to eliminate alternatives to it by transforming everything that is not inevitable into the improbable. Under unipolarity, the structure of power and prestige come to be taken for granted to the point where dramatic displays of hegemonic power and coercion become unnecessary.¹²⁵

While the consensus opinion is that U.S. power is eroding, the legitimacy of the United States' international order and authority to rule have not, to this point, been seriously undermined. Any challenger that seeks to restore global balance-of-power dynamics, therefore, must put forward an alternative idea of order that appeals to other powerful states. Delegitimizing U.S. unipolarity and proposing a viable new order are prerequisite exercises for traditional balancing behavior to commence.

123. Friedrich List, *The National System of Political Economy*, trans. S.S. Lloyd (Roseville, Calif.: Dry Bones, 2000), pp. 98, 110.

124. "The proximate task of politics," writes List, "always consists in clearly perceiving in what respect the alliance and equalization of the different interests is at the moment most pressing, and to strive that until this equalization is attained all other questions may be suspended and kept in the background." *Ibid.*, p. 98.

125. Zygmunt Bauman, *Socialism: The Active Utopia* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1976), p. 123.