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China's Aspirations and the Clash of Nationalisms in East Asia: A Neoclassical Realist Examination

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This paper applies a neoclassical realist approach that combines systemic- and domestic-level variables to explain important aspects of the current global delegitimation phase. The key unit-level variable is nationalism, which interacts with structural-systemic factors to create unexpected behaviors for both the rising power and its threatened neighbors. With respect to China, nationalism interacts with its power status and trajectory to produce an increasingly assertive foreign policy regardless of whether it continues rising or stalls. With respect to China's neighbors, nationalism makes it easier for leaders to mobilize public support for military preparation and sacrifices associated with internal balancing behaviors. But nationalism and other powerful domestic factors interact with system structure to constrain China's neighbors from aligning with each other. These domestic restrictions that reduce the apparent flexibility of alliances under multipolarity partly explain the puzzling absence of a counter-balancing coalition against a rising and increasingly assertive China.

Keywords: nationalism, alliances, neoclassical realism, Chinese assertiveness, neorealism

Introduction

International politics is transforming from a system anchored in predictable and relatively constant principles to one that is far more erratic, unsettled, and devoid of behavioral regularities. Global chaos is the new normal.[1] Part of this world disorder is attributable to a

1. Doyle McManus, "Is Global Chaos the New Normal?" *Los Angeles Times*, July

global diffusion of power driven by an extraordinary transfer of wealth over the past decade from West to East and South. According to the U.S. National Intelligence Council: "By 2030, Asia will have surpassed North America and Europe combined in terms of global power based on GDP, population size, military spending, and technological investment."[2] In the near term, the United States will remain the strongest and only world power, but it no longer towers over all contenders. *Pax Americana* is coming to an end.

Speculating about the post-American era, Randall Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu argued that the world was entering a delegitimation phase.[3] Power shifts of the current magnitude and speed typically unravel the established international order. Lesser states in the international system follow the leadership of the dominant state and its allies in part because they accept the legitimacy and utility of the existing order; that is, they accept the hegemon's authority to rule and the hierarchy of prestige that reinforces its order. Over time, global power is redistributed, weakening the hierarchy of prestige and increasing the ambiguity in interpreting it. A widening disjuncture between actual power and prestige (the reputation for power) is frequently the prelude to eras of conflict and struggle, as the legitimacy of the international system — its nature and governance — increasingly comes under challenge from rising dissatisfied powers.[4] Prior to the arrival of a great-power military confrontation or even the threat of such conflict, the rising challenger must first delegitimize the hegemon's global authority and order.[5] This 'delegitimation'

29, 2014. http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-mcmanus-column-foreign-policy-chaos-20140730-column.html.

2. The United States National Intelligence Council (NIC), *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2012), p. 19.
3. Randall L. Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu, "After Unipolarity: China's Visions of International Order in an Era of U.S. Decline," *International Security* 36, no. 1 (Summer 2011), pp. 41-72.
4. Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
5. This is particularly true for unipolar systems, in which balancing behavior is

phase, which appears years before the critical inflection point of a power transition, creates the conditions for the emergence of a future revisionist counterhegemonic coalition. During this phase, the rising challenger 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. Thus, China and the other rising powers will not simply embrace the existing Western order but will, instead, fashion alternative orders based on their own cultural, ideological, and sociological proclivities, giving voice to diverse discourses of resistance.[6]

This article extends the structural theory of emerging delegitimation to include variables at the domestic level of analysis and thereby offers a neoclassical realist explanation for China's current posture in East Asia and its neighbors' responses. The key variable is nationalism, which interacts with power to create unexpected behaviors for both the rising power and its threatened neighbors. With respect to the rising power (currently, China), nationalism interacts with its power status and trajectory to produce what I call a "double whammy" effect: an increasingly assertive foreign policy regardless of whether the challenger's rise continues or stalls. With respect to China's neighbors, nationalism makes it easier for leaders to mobilize public support for military preparation and sacrifices associated with internal balancing behavior (military buildups).[7] But various domestic factors, including nationalism, interact with aspects of regional multipolarity to constrain them from aligning with each other to maintain their security.[8] These 'alliance handicaps,' to use Liska's term, considerably

entirely revisionist in its goal: to overthrow the existing unipolar (unbalanced) system and replace it with a balance of power system. See Schweller and Pu, "After Unipolarity." 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.

6. Charles A. Kupchan, "The Normative Foundations of Hegemony and the Coming Challenge to Pax Americana," *Security Studies* 23, no. 2 (April-June 2014), pp. 219-257.
7. States can balance internally through the buildup of their own national and autonomous military capabilities, and externally through coalitions that aggregate their capabilities with those of their allies.

reduce the structural flexibility within the multipolar Asia-Pacific regional system and, thereby, explain the puzzling absence of a counter-balancing coalition against a rising and increasingly assertive China.[9]

Neoclassical Realism: The Complementarity of Structural and Domestic Realism

The anarchic environment in which states operate generates powerful incentives for them to behave in certain ways as opposed to others. So-called "third image" causes favored by structural realists (also known as neorealists) include: (1) the anarchic, self-help nature of international politics, which drives competitive security-maximizing and power-seeking behaviors; (2) dangerous threats to states' survival that compel them to build arms and form alliances; (3) irresistible opportunities in the form of power vacuums that tempt states to make gains at the expense of others; (4) a state's position (its relative power or status) within the international system, which determines its core national interests; (5) changes in the balance of power that trigger or intensify security dilemmas; and (6) competitive pressures to emulate the most successful practices of the day, especially in the arts and instruments of force, that produces a sameness of the competitors.[10]

Those who believe that system structure is the primary determinant of international politics claim that similarly placed states within the system are structurally constrained to act similarly, regardless of their domestic political systems, historical experiences, national traditions, ideological legacies, or deeply rooted ideas about foreign policy and world politics. If a state's position within the international system

8. See Zoltán Búzás, "Nationalism and Balancing: The Case of East Asia," unpublished paper, McGill University, Centre for International Peace and Security Studies, Fall 2014.
9. George Liska, *Nations in Alliance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962).
10. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979), pp. 127-28.

(its status within the global hierarchy of power) largely determines its preferences, policies, and actions, then there is no need to reference country-specific "baggage" — ideational, historical, or domestic — that might otherwise inform and shape how it behaves on the international stage and what it seeks to achieve. Such a structurally dominant world conforms to Kenneth Waltz's claim that, in "self-help systems, the pressures of competition weigh more heavily than ideological preferences or internal political pressures."[11]

In this hypothetical world driven entirely by structural-systemic causes, there are no uniquely American, Japanese, Chinese, Russian, or Korean explanations for these countries' behaviors or foreign policy preferences. It is a world driven by massively intense structural incentives and constraints consistent with Arnold Wolfers's famous "house on fire" and "racetrack" analogies, where external compulsion determines behavior.[12] Structural theories of this kind must posit strict situational determinism — a "straitjacket" or "single exit" notion of international structure — that leaves actors with no other choice but to act as they did, such that no outcome can occur other than the one predicted by the theory.[13]

Waltz himself, however, clearly does not subscribe to such a view. Instead, he argues that international structure (anarchy and the system-wide distribution of capabilities) provides only "a set of constraining conditions" for state action. The external environment, in Waltz's words, "can tell us what pressures are exerted and what possibilities are posed by systems of different structure, but it cannot tell us just how, and how effectively, the units of a system will respond to those pressures and possibilities."[14] He further asserts: "Each state arrives at policies and decides on actions according to its own internal processes,

11. Kenneth N. Waltz, "A Reply to My Critics," in Robert O. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 329.
12. Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962).
13. Spiro J. Latsis, "Situational Determinism in Economics," *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 23 (1972), pp. 207-245.
14. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 71.

but its decisions are shaped by the very presence of other states as well as by interactions with them."[15] In this view, international structure accounts for continuities and uniformity of outcomes despite the variety of inputs over time and space. Conversely, unit-level theories explain "why different units behave differently despite their similar placement in a system."[16]

The key point for present concerns is that Waltzian neorealism makes no assertions about what domestic processes look like, where they come from, and how they influence the way nations assess and adapt to changes in their environment.[17] Structural realism is strictly a theory of international politics, which, accordingly, makes no claim to explain foreign policy or specific historical events. Unhappy with this limitation, young realist scholars in the early 1990s spontaneously formed a new school of political realism, called neoclassical realism. Placing the rich but often discursive insights of early realist works within a more theoretically rigorous framework, these scholars embraced the more densely textured formulations of traditional, pre-Waltzian realists — formulations that permitted a focus on foreign policy as well as systemic-level phenomena. Neoclassical realism does not reject systemic theory but instead combines it with domestic-level theorizing, exploring the internal processes by which states arrive at policies and decide on actions in response to the pressures and opportunities in their external environment. After all, a compelling account of a nation's

15. Ibid., p. 65.
16. Ibid., p. 72.
17. This is precisely why structural realism not only can incorporate domestic-level processes as causal variables in a consistent and rigorously deductive manner but must do so to offer a complete explanation of the core processes the theory itself identifies: balancing, uneven growth rates, and the "sameness effect." See Jennifer Sterling-Folker, "Realist Environment, Liberal Process, and Domestic-Level Variables," *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (March 1997), p. 22. Even Christopher Layne — one of the staunchest proponents of Waltzian structural realist — admits that structural effects, such as great-power emergence, result from unit-level actions and decisions. See Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise," *International Security* 17, no. 4 (Spring 1993), p. 9.

foreign policy should include systemic, domestic, and other influences, specifying what aspects of the policy can be explained by what factors.[18] In his seminal article on the subject, Gideon Rose, who coined the term "neoclassical realism," explained it this way:

> [Neoclassical realism] explicitly incorporates both external and internal variables.... Its adherents argue that the scope and ambition of a country's foreign policy is driven first and foremost by its place in the international system and specifically by its relative material power capabilities. This is why they are realist. They argue further, however, that the impact of such power capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex, because systemic pressures must be translated through intervening variables at the unit level. This is why they are neoclassical.[19]

In practice, neoclassical realists have explained foreign policy decisions and particular historical events by supplementing "third image" insights about international structure and its consequences with first- and second-image variables, such as domestic politics, internal extraction capacity and processes, state power and intentions, and statesmen's perceptions of the relative distribution of capabilities and the offense-defense balance.

Returning to Wolfers's "house on fire" analogy, the emergence of powerful aggressors — states that make security scarce and war appear

18. See Fareed Zakaria, "Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review Essay," *International Security* 17, no. 1 (Summer 1992), p. 198. Likewise, Jack Snyder writes: "Theoretically, Realism must be recaptured from those who look only at politics between societies, ignoring what goes on within societies. Realists are right in stressing power, interests, and coalition making as the central elements in a theory of politics, but recent exponents of Realism in international relations have been wrong in looking exclusively to states as the irreducible atoms whose power and interests are to be assessed." Jack L. Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 19.
19. Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (October 1998), p. 146. Rose refers to Thomas Christensen, Aaron Friedberg, Randall Schweller, William Wohlforth, and Fareed Zakaria as neoclassical realists.

inevitable — raises the temperature to the point where we can speak of compulsion in the external environment: rational people within a burning house will rush to the exits. In terms of international politics, the third image provides a straightforward prediction for how states can be expected to respond to powerful aggressors: they will build arms and form alliances to counterbalance them. It also partly explains why the house is on fire (that is, why a country becomes aggressive and threatening to its neighbors): a rapidly rising power will seek power and influence commensurate with its newfound power, often demanding changes in the status-quo order.

If the world follows this script, then third-image theories explain much, if not all, we need to know. But what if the house remains on fire even when a rising challenger stops rising and begins to decline? What if threatened neighbors do not rush to leave the burning house? In other words, what if the regional rivals of a powerful state do not build arms and form alliances in response to its growing power? Purely third-image theories cannot explain these puzzles. Explanations for these counterintuitive behaviors are rooted, instead, in unit-level causes — those that reside within the state itself.

When so-called second-image variables define international relations, the overall story of international (or regional) politics will not be simple, straightforward, or even coherent from the big picture perspective. Instead, international politics will be the fractured product of many individual and often quite complex storylines — some embedded in partisan politics, others in domestic structures and cultural values, and still others in ideas, trials, and experiences that may have occurred decades or even centuries ago. The complexity of second-image theories results from their emphasis on the redistributive aspects of grand strategic choices, highlighting the pressures within the state rather than the pushes and pulls from outside it. This inside-out approach typical of all domestic-politics theories starts with the premise that leaders' foreign policy choices are often constrained and sometimes distorted by societal interests (e.g., bankers, industrialists, merchants, interest groups, and the general public) that have a stake in the nation's foreign policy.[20]

Recognizing that national intentions and definitions of the national interest are forged not only by a state's position within the international structure but also by second-image (internal) factors, assessments of the degree of security within a region often turn on the domestic politics of the region's major powers. The current case of China's new assertiveness is the product of causes at both the second and third images. The key second-image variable is nationalism, which combines with both the power trajectory of the rising challenger and the balancing dynamics of China's neighbors in ways that will likely ratchet up East Asian insecurity. Nationalism is a natural complement to structural realist theory; its domestic-level counterpart.[21] The notion of a constant struggle among nations over issues of power, security, and prestige that animates realism is in no small part a consequence of nationalism, which "fuels interstate rivalry and by its sharp delineation of in- and out-groups, abets status rivalry, accentuates stereotyping, and deepens and perpetuates perceived grievances."[22]

China's Assertiveness as an Outgrowth of Rising Power

From 2009 to late 2010, China engaged in a series of contentious diplomatic initiatives, which, regardless of Beijing's intentions, implied a Chinese challenge to the post-Cold War regional order and to the U.S. security system in East Asia. In March 2009, Chinese fishing vessels surrounded and harassed a U.S. Navy surveillance ship operating outside Chinese territorial waters. At the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference in December 2009, China refused to accept legally binding commitments on emission cuts. In January 2010, China challenged U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, and then reacted with anger over the Dalai

20. See, for instance, Peter Trubowitz, *Politics and Strategy: Partisan Ambition and American Statecraft* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011).
21. See John J. Mearsheimer, "Kissing Cousins: Nationalism and Realism," *Yale Workshop on International Relations* (Unpublished manuscript, May 5, 2011).
22. Steve Chan, *Looking for Balance: China, the United States, and Power Balancing in East Asia* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2012), p. 65.

Lama's visit in February 2010. The "new assertiveness" impression was further fueled by China's seemingly more expansive claims over the South China Sea in March 2010; by its loud protest against U.S.-South Korean naval exercises in international waters in the Yellow Sea; by its diplomatic defense of violent actions by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in March and November 2010; and by its tough response to the Japanese arrest of a Chinese fishing captain in September 2010.[23]

Since 2010, the Chinese government has been increasingly willing to follow popular nationalist calls to confront Western powers and adopt tougher measures in maritime territorial disputes with its neighbors. Thus, in November 2013, China unilaterally declared an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) over an area of the East China Sea that covers the Senkakus, the uninhabited islands administered by Japan but claimed by China, where they are called Diaoyu. This move drew sharp criticism from both Tokyo and Washington. China is "attempting to alter the status quo by coercive measures," including "dangerous acts that could cause unintended consequences," says the Japan's Ministry of Defense in its annual defense White Paper released on August 5, 2014.[24] The report goes on to express concern that China's rapidly expanding maritime and airspace activities around the Senkaku Islands are ratcheting up tensions in the East China Sea that could trigger an unwanted clash.

Similarly, China's sovereignty spats in the South China Sea with several Southeast Asian states came to a head in a prolonged naval standoff with the Philippines over the Scarborough Shoal (Huangyan Island). Tensions with Vietnam — another disputant to China's claims

23. See Alastair Iain Johnston, "How New and Assertive Is China's New Assertiveness?" *International Security* 37, no. 4 (Spring 2013), pp. 7-48. Johnston challenges the validity of the dominant "new assertiveness" view, which he claims has "gone viral" in the U.S. media, the blogosphere, and in scholarly work.
24. Japanese Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2014: Annual White Paper* (Tokyo, Japan: August 5, 2014), http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2014/DOJ2014_1-1-0_1st_0730.pdf

over South China Sea islands — also remain high. Most recently, China and Vietnam engaged in a two-and-a-half-month standoff over the Chinese rig known as HD 981, managed by the China National Petroleum Corporation and owned by the state-run China Offshore Oil Corporation, which was drilling in waters Vietnam considers its exclusive economic zone. Emboldened by Vietnam's inability to block HD 981, Beijing announced in July 2014 that it would place four more rigs in the South China Sea. The standoff over the rig was especially significant because it showed a high degree of interagency coordination among China's civilian maritime agencies, the People's Liberation Army, and the oil companies. Most important, it suggested that Xi Jinping has quickly consolidated his power and is now aggressively pushing China's maritime claims.[25]

Not surprisingly, discussion of China's rise, especially among the American and Japanese media, has been dominated in recent years by the theme of a newly assertive China — one that, as it grows economically and militarily more powerful, becomes more comfortable politically in revealing its "true colors."[26] Explanations of China's new assertiveness have focused on both international structure and China's domestic politics. In terms of international structure, pundits claim that, in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, Chinese leaders perceived a dramatic shift in the global balance of power.[27] The perceived decline of American power and onset of a more multipolar world, so the argument goes, emboldened Chinese leaders to be "more confident in ignoring Deng Xiaoping's longtime axiom not to treat the United States as an adversary, and in challenging the United States on China's interests."[28] Here, China's new assertiveness is consistent with the classical realist principle that nations expand their

25. Austin Ramzy, "On South China Sea, As China Flexes Muscle," *New York Times*, August 10, 2014, p. 10.
26. For examples of this type of commentary, see Michael Swaine, "Perceptions of an Assertive China," *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 32 (May 2010), p. 10, note 1.
27. Swaine, "Perceptions of an Assertive China," p. 2.
28. Johnston, "How New and Assertive Is China's New Assertiveness?" p. 35.

political interests abroad when their relative power increases; that is, a state's interests grow in lockstep with its power. In Robert Gilpin's words: "The Realist law of uneven growth implies that as the power of a group or state increases, that group or state will be tempted to try to increase its control over the environment. In order to increase its own security, it will try to expand its political, economic, and territorial control, it will try to change the international system in accordance with its particular set of interests."[29] In this view, China's assertiveness and rising nationalism are predictable consequences of its changed (more exalted) position within the international system.

The relationship between state power and nationalism — by which I mean not political movements seeking to create nation-states but rather the assertive foreign policies of governments to embellish state power and the formation of public opinion in support of such policies — suggests that nationalism may be understood as a core domestic component of structural realism. A change in a state's power and wealth usually causes a corresponding change in its foreign policy. Simply put, as a state grows more powerful, it seeks greater influence. Heightened nationalism among the masses merely reflects their country's greater aspirations and dissatisfaction with the established order, which it is determined to change.

Given China's determination to avenge its unjust past, there is every reason to expect that Chinese nationalism will continue to grow in lockstep with the country's increased power. This phenomenon is already evident among Chinese policymakers, military officials, and average citizens. The consensus is that China must eventually become more internationally assertive to the point where China, like the United States, is willing to intervene in the domestic affairs of other countries to protect its far-flung interests abroad.[30] Moreover, some

29. Gilpin, *War and Change*, pp. 94-95; Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role* (Princeton N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 19-20.
30. See Mark Leonard, "Why Convergence Breeds Conflict: Growing More Similar Will Push China and the United States Apart," *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 5 (September / October 2013), pp. 129-30.

suggest that the goal of global dominance lies at the core of China's journey from humiliation to rejuvenation. The notion of national rejuvenation, according to the conservative Chinese analyst Yan Xuetong, "conjures 'the psychological power' associated with China's rise 'to its former world status.' The concept assumes both that China is recovering its natural position and that this means being the 'number one nation in the world'."[31]

China's Assertiveness as an Outgrowth of Declining Power

If China's continued rise is predicted to cause it to behave more assertively, then we might expect a deceleration of its growth to cause it to be more reserved. Thus, if unmanageable official corruption, an aging population, and an unsustainable economic model slow or even reverse China's economic growth, then Beijing will naturally restrain China's aggressive behavior and moderate its goals. This assertion follows logically from Realism's core claim that a state's interests are determined by its power trajectory. There is another, however, more disturbing possibility: rather than moderating Beijing's assertiveness, economic decline might intensify internal problems, making the Chinese government, for reasons discussed below, more likely to stoke hypernationalism among the Chinese masses, more belligerent in its foreign relations, and more prone to miscalculation. If so, the danger is not only managing China's rise but weathering its eventual decline.

The straightforward logic of "if growth causes assertiveness, then decline causes moderation" is confounded by causes rooted in the second image. Incompetent rulers have routinely whipped up hypernationalism (national paranoia and fear of external enemies) to blunt internal opposition and distract the public's attention from the regime's economic mismanagement and other failings. This is the

31. Yan Xuetong as quoted in Jacqueline Newmyer Deal, "China's Nationalist Heritage," *The National Interest*, No. 123 (January / February 2013), p. 49.

familiar "scapegoat hypothesis" or diversionary war theory, which takes a decidedly "second-image" view of a nation's foreign policy. The causal scheme goes essentially as follows. A severe economic crisis or downturn causes social unrest at home. Threatened by mass discontent and antigovernment hostility, the ruling regime tries to shore up its domestic support by searching for enemies (an out-group to target) in an attempt to: (1) divert the public's attention away from the government's poor performance (its inability to solve the country's economic troubles) and (2) gain in-group solidarity and a rally-around-the-flag effect.[32] Seen in this light, China's recent tough diplomacy stemmed not from confidence in its military and economic strength but from a deep sense of insecurity. Faced with the challenges of "nerve-racking years of financial crisis and social unrest," Robert Ross explains, "and no longer able to count on easy support based on the country's economic growth, China's leaders moved to sustain their popular legitimacy by appeasing an increasingly nationalist public with gestures of force."[33] Growing unrest and the need to reverse a real crisis of legitimacy gave Beijing "no choice but to appease a growing cadre of hardline nationalists who wanted to project a tough image of China to the world."[34]

Along these lines, Innenpolitikers argue that the common problem of self-destructive overexpansion — including imperial overstretch, when a state's reach exceeds its grasp — has its origins in domestic politics. A shift in domestic coalitions necessitates redefinition of the "national interest." Specifically, the combination of a collective action problem (the costs of imperialism are spread widely among the masses, while the benefits are concentrated in the hands of a few), weak central authority, and the praetorian nature of society allow the state to be

32. See Jack S. Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique," in Manus I. Midlarsky (ed.), *The Handbook of War Studies* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp. 259-288.
33. Robert S. Ross, "The Problem with the Pivot: Obama's New Asia Policy is Unnecessary and Counterproductive," *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 6 (November/December 2012), p. 72.
34. Ibid., p. 75.

'hijacked' by special interest groups.[35] This process is particularly ripe for engendering reckless foreign policies when the hijacking groups not only have close ties to the state but derive parochial benefits from expansion and its associated military preparations and competitive political climate (namely, the military, heavy industrialists, populist demagogues, and pressure groups with an interest in war, military mobilization, empire, or protectionism). Forced to engage in a competitive process to mobilize mass support for their parochial policies, powerful elite groups within cartelized political systems propagate strategic rationales for their preferred programs — what Jack Snyder calls "myths of empire," which include the belief that conquest pays, that military success will induce states to bandwagon with the aggressor and cause dominoes to fall, and that threats and offensive strategies are the most effective means to enhance the state's security and influence.

These myths are then translated into actual programs for expansion by means of logrolling among competing elite groups — a policy-making process that generates the perverse effect of recklessly expansionist foreign policies, more extreme than any individual group would prefer on its own.[36] As Snyder explains, "logrolling works by giving each group what it wants most, so that even if only some of the groups in the coalition favored policies leading to war and expansion, that would be enough to make their adoption likely."[37] Driven by this byzantine political logic, the masses are whipped into a hyper-nationalist feeding frenzy, while their feckless leaders have fallen victim to "blowback" or, if clear-eyed, cannot get off the tiger's back.

This pattern of reckless expansion and hypernationalist rhetoric is made worse by the movement toward a more open and competitive political system. Statistical studies have shown that nations in transition from authoritarianism toward democracy are most likely (compared with stable autocracies and stable democracies) to initiate

35. Praetorian societies are those in which there is great pressure for mass political participation but institutions for effective participation are weak.
36. Snyder, *Myths of Empires*, pp. 39-49.
37. See Edward D. Mansfield and Jack L. Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War," *International Security* 20, no. 1 (Summer 1995), pp. 31-32.

conflict with their neighbors.[38] The reason for this rather counterintuitive finding is that democratizing states typically undergo a combustible process of rapid mass participation before effective democratic institutions have emerged to handle the enormous pressures for political participation. With democracy taking place in the streets (akin to mobocracy) rather than within institutionalized channels, elites resort to militant nationalist appeals in an attempt to mobilize and steer mass support without surrendering their grip on power. Nationalist pressure groups, for their part, serve "to limit the set of possible solutions available to leaders on the international stage, thus restricting their ability to pursue the more flexible policies and compromises that could [help] to avert conflict."[39] Additionally, nationalist constituents increase the stakes and payoffs of prestige politics and contribute to tensions that might precipitate war by tilting the scales of domestic political incentives in the direction of confrontation.

We may be seeing just such a dangerous dynamic playing itself out in China over the next decade or so. According to David Lampton, China is experiencing a tectonic shift: the pluralization and fracturing of its society, economy, and bureaucracy, making it progressively more challenging for China's leaders to govern.[40] The Beijing government's job is made all the more difficult by "more densely packed urban populations, rapidly rising aspirations, the spread of knowledge, and the greater ease of coordinating social action" as well as "by the lack of institutions that would articulate various interests, impartially adjudicate conflicts among them, and ensure the responsible and just implementation of policy."[41] A China characterized by a weaker state and a stronger but more diffuse society will require

38. See, for instance, Edward D. Mansfield and Jack L. Snyder, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005).
39. Ja Ian Chong and Todd H. Hall, "The Lessons of 1914 for East Asia Today: Missing the Trees for the Forest," *International Security* 39, no. 1 (Summer 2014), p. 29.
40. David M. Lampton, "How China is Ruled: Why It's Getting Harder for Beijing to Govern," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 1 (January / February 2014), pp. 74-84.
41. Ibid., p. 83.

substantial political reform that includes more reliable "rule of law" mechanisms to resolve conflicts, accommodate various interests, and distribute scarce resources.

Currently, the Communist Party of China (CPC) legitimizes its rule less on communist principles than on continued prosperity and the avoidance of social chaos, combined with appeals to nationalism. As Aaron Friedberg points out, however: "If economic progress falters, the present government will have little choice but to lean even more heavily on nationalist appeals as its sole remaining source of support. It may also be inclined to resort to assertive external policies as a way of rallying the Chinese people and turning their energies and frustrations outward, most likely toward Taiwan or Japan or the United States, rather than inward, toward Beijing."[42] This threatening scenario will likely be realized if China continues to pluralize and fracture but fails to build the institutions and norms required for responsible and just government at home and constructive behavior abroad. Indeed, as China goes down this path, the stage will be set for the kind of hypernationalist rhetoric and reckless foreign policies that have taken root in all other great powers similarly afflicted by cartelized politics and fragmented societies.

A related domestic view emphasizes the rise of Chinese popular nationalism coupled with the declining legitimacy of the ruling regime. Suisheng Zhao, for instance, argues that China's "strident turn" is explained by the convergence of state and popular nationalism calling for a more muscular Chinese foreign policy. "Enjoying an inflated sense of empowerment supported by its new quotient of wealth and military capacities, and terrified of an uncertain future due to increasing social, economic and political tensions at home, the communist state has become more willing to play to the popular nationalist gallery in pursuing the so-called core national interests."[43] The interaction between

42. Aaron Friedberg, "The Future of U.S.-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?" *International Security* 30, no. 2 (Fall 2005), p. 30.
43. Suisheng Zhao, "Foreign Policy Implications of Chinese Nationalism Revisited: The Strident Turn," *Journal of Contemporary China* 22, no. 82 (March 2013), p. 535.

officials and citizens in China has been transformed by the Internet and the commercialization of the media. While much of this change has been for the good, there is a dangerous downside: hypernationalist "netizens" have become the most dynamic of China's new foreign policy actors. As Linda Jakobson and Dean Knox point out:

> Although the online community encompasses a wide range of views, nationalist sentiment is prevalent and can escalate to extremes. Criticism of Chinese leaders for being too weak and bowing to international pressure is incessant on Internet forums. Chinese officials are acutely aware of how rapidly this dissatisfaction with foreign policy can give rise to questioning of the CPC's capability to govern. Hence, leaders' actions are indeed constrained by public opinion at large and especially by the views of the online community during international crises touching on China. This is especially relevant when Japan or the United States is involved or in conjunction with any issues related to Taiwan and Tibet.[44]

Whereas past Chinese nationalism was confined largely to young Chinese and to some soldiers in the PLA, it has spread to Chinese business people, academics, and elite politicians.[45] This new "cyber-nationalism," according to Shih-Ding Liu, "cannot simply be dismissed as top-down government manipulation or party propaganda. . . . Rather, the Chinese cyber-nationalists are keen to find their way to engage in nationalist politics and claim for the nation a vision that is not necessarily in line with the official discourse."[46] Social media is also used to organize large-scale nationalist protests not only in Beijing

44. Linda Jakobson and Dean Knox, *New Foreign Policy Actors in China*, SIPRI Policy Paper No. 26 (Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2010), pp. 47-48, http://books.sipri.org/files/PP/SIPRIPP26.pdf.
45. Robert S. Ross, "The Domestic Sources of China's 'Assertive Diplomacy,' 2009-2010: Nationalism and Chinese Foreign Policy," in Rosemary Foot (ed.), *China Across the Divide: The Domestic and Global in Politics and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 79.
46. Shih-Ding Liu, "China's Popular Nationalism on the Internet. Report on the 2005 Anti-Japan Network Struggles," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 7, no. 1 (March 2006), p. 148.

but in other cities against foreign governments. "Beyond the party's control," notes Jayshree Bajoria, "the emergence of the Internet in the last two decades has given nationalists more power to vent their anger after particular incidents. It has also brought the huge Chinese diaspora in places like Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Europe, and North America, into closer contact with those residing within China's borders," facilitating the continuous flow and escalation of nationalist rhetoric and propaganda.[47]

Importantly, PRC authorities turn to both the traditional press and online media, which are weighted toward extreme actors willing to risk the consequences of expressing their opinions, as indicators of public opinion. Specifically, influential academic, military advisors and high-ranking and retired officers of the PLA are frequently heard making thinly veiled threats in the official Chinese media about using military means to settle diplomatic flaps. Rear Admiral Yang, for instance, told the Xinhua News Agency, that "it is no longer possible for China to keep a low profile.... When any country infringes upon our nation's security and interests, we must stage a resolute self-defense.... Counter-attack measures [taken by Beijing] should be 'of short duration, low cost and efficient' — and leave no room for ambiguity or [undesirable] after-effects."[48] The result of public opinion in China being measured not by opinion polling but rather by "a set of collective notions that enter the public arena through such venues as popular media and the internet"[49] is a misleading portrait of a highly nationalist public that has assumed an authoritative dominance, especially on issues concerning Japan.

Other "second image" studies focus on new interest groups, such

47. Jayshree Bajoria, "Nationalism in China," *Council on Foreign Relations*, April 23, 2008, http://www.cfr.org/china/nationalism-china/p16079.
48. Rear Admiral Yang Yi, as quoted in Willy Lam, "As China's Foreign Policy Hardens, It is Beijing Versus All," *AsiaNews.it*, July 4, 2012. http://www.asianews.it/news-en/As-China%27s-foreign-policy-hardens,-it-is-Beijing-versus-all-25192.html.
49. James Reilly, *Strong Society, Smart State: The Rise of Public Opinion in China's Japan Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 178.

as large state-owned oil companies, and their incorporation into the foreign policy decision-making process.[50] An expanded but poorly coordinated foreign policy decision-making process — one characterized by consensus-driven decision-making (which requires an enormous amount of discussion and bargaining to reach an acceptable compromise among concerned parties), half-hearted and ineffectual collaboration between government and Party organizations, and personal networks and allegiance to mentors — has enabled some interest groups to pursue their own expansionist policies.[51] Thus, large state-owned enterprises (SOEs) have been able to exert disproportionate influence over foreign policy decision making, especially when it comes to the security of supply issues for energy and natural resources (e.g., the China Metallurgical Construction Corporation's acquisition of the Aynak copper mine in Afghanistan, and the new China-Central Asia natural gas pipeline that will carry over four-fifths of Turkmenistan's gas production and supply nearly half of Chinese consumption). Appointed by the Party, CEOs of large SOEs enjoy a symbiotic relationship with the political leadership that allows them to benefit from state support for large business deals. The political leadership, for its part, depends on these SOEs to employ large numbers of people, to maintain high economic growth, and to provide the government with revenues and Communist Party officials with illicit funds that have become the lifeblood of modern Chinese "communism."

The big and important point is this: once a rising power reaches an advanced stage in its power ascent, it expands its interests and adopts a more assertive and revisionist foreign policy posture; and this is true whether its upward rise continues, pauses, or regresses. Causal factors at the level of international structure and domestic politics combine to create a double-whammy effect on the foreign policy of rising challengers, especially those that have experienced

50. See Yan Sun, *Chinese National Security Decision-Making: Processes and Challenges* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2013); Jakobson and Knox, *New Foreign Policy Actors in China*.
51. Jakobson and Knox, *New Foreign Policy Actors in China*, pp. 17-19.

dramatic and long-term growth. If a rising power continues to rise, its external ambitions soar accordingly. If it starts to decline, the leadership is tempted to whip up nationalism by finding external enemies in the hope of fostering internal cohesion and support for the ruling regime. If the country's rise stalls or, worse still, reverses its course, the ruling regime will be increasingly seen by the masses as illegitimate and incompetent. With internal pressure mounting, the regime under duress will become more willing to play to the popular nationalist gallery — a constituency that seeks a muscular foreign policy, creates incentives for prestige politics, is harshly critical of compromise, is quick to advocate the use of force, and expresses outrage when the government is perceived as acting weak or capitulating on the international stage.

What Does China Want?

Just as a rising United States sought dominance over the Western Hemisphere a century and a half ago, Beijing aims to dominate its own East and Southeast Asian backyard, where Washington has been the incumbent hegemon since World War II. Because two hegemons cannot simultaneously exist in the same region, Sino-American competition for supremacy in the Asia-Pacific region will likely continue until there is a decisive conclusion. Some see the region as a primed powder keg, waiting for a single spark to explode into war. Thus, Christopher Layne avers: "Unless one of them abandons its aspirations, there is a high probability of hostilities. Flashpoints that could spark a Sino-American conflict include the unstable Korean Peninsula; the disputed status of Taiwan; competition for control of oil and other natural resources; and the burgeoning naval rivalry between the two powers."[52]

A Chinese Monroe Doctrine would likely feature all or most of

52. Christopher Layne, "The Global Power Shift from West to East," *The National Interest*, No. 119 (May / June 2012), p. 28.

the following elements: (1) the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Japan and Korea; (2) U.S. naval retrenchment from east Asia, perhaps as far back as Hawaii; (3) the creation of two Pacific zones: an eastern Pacific zone dominated by the U.S., and a western Pacific zone dominated by a Chinese blue-water navy, operating beyond the so-called second island chain running from Japan southeast to New Guinea; (4) the harmonization of the foreign policies of China's neighbors with its own foreign policy; (5) the isolation, if not absorption, of Taiwan; (6) a renminbi currency bloc in the Pacific Rim; and (7) a regional trading zone.[53]

China's geostrategic interests are only part of the larger geopolitical story. As is the case with all aspiring hegemons, there is also a geoeconomic dimension to China's ascendance. A core goal of any rising power, after all, is not only to control territory and the behavior of other states but also to exercise more influence over the organization and management of the world economy. Such an urge should be especially potent for China now that it has become a bona fide superpower in the international monetary and financial system.

China's financial power, like that of Japan in the 1980s, is tied to its emergence as a major creditor country — the most dramatic symbol of which has been China's foreign exchange reserves, which reached a record USD 3.8 trillion in 2013 (approximately 43% of China's gross domestic product). For two reasons, China today is more insulated than Japan was decades ago from U.S. structural power over the international financial system. First, China's foreign assets are more unambiguously controlled by the state than was the case in Japan. Second, China, unlike Japan, is not dependent on the U.S. for its security.[54] Nevertheless, its foreign assets have been largely held in U.S. dollar-denominated assets, especially U.S. Treasury bills and bonds, leaving China vulnerable to exchange rate risks (a 10% drop in the value of

53. Robert E. Kelly, "What Would Chinese Hegemony Look Like?" *The Diplomat* (February 10, 2014): http://thediplomat.com/2014/02/what-would-chinese-hegemony-look-like/

54. Gregory Chin and Eric Helleiner, "China as a Creditor: A Rising Financial Power?" *Journal of International Affairs* 62, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2008).

the dollar translates to about a 3% reduction in China's gross domestic product).[55] Recently, Beijing has been showing signs of desiring more independence. U.S. dollar-denominated assets now make up roughly 49 percent of Chinese reserves, down from 69 percent about three years ago.

China's soaring current account surplus, the largest in the world, and its foreign assets, most of which are held as official foreign exchange reserves, have significantly boosted not only Beijing's domestic decision-making autonomy but also its power and influence in the realm of international politics. The latter is most visible in Beijing's fast-growing government-to-government lending (especially in Africa and Southeast and Central Asia) and its influence over China's growing investments abroad by state banks and official agencies, which are highly sensitive to political signals from the Communist Party of China (CPC).[56]

The question remains, will China take on a more pronounced leadership role in global financial affairs — one commensurate with its actual financial power? Back in 2008, China seemed unwilling and unable to do so, as Gregory Chin and Eric Helleiner observed:

> Chinese leaders face ideological constraints in making the shift that would need to accompany Beijing's move toward a more overt and proactive international leadership role in international financial affairs. For the past three decades, Chinese Communist foreign policy has been guided by Deng Xiaoping's instruction that China should maintain a low profile in international affairs — that even if China one day comes to possess much greater power capabilities, as a socialist nation it must always side with the developing world. Clearly, in some ways China has already outgrown its self-proclaimed 'developing country' status. Nonetheless, Chinese leadership will have to engage in fundamental ideological innovation if it is to come up with a new policy line on why China must now take an international leadership role. This will take time unless Beijing is provoked to move faster by an unforeseen international crisis.[57]

55. Ibid., p. 92.

56. Victor Shih, *Factions and Finance in China: Elite Conflict and Inflation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

The global financial crisis of 2008, however, "eliminated the political consensus in support of the western financial model that had been in place since 1992."[58] This is true not only for the Chinese leadership but throughout Asia and the rest of the world. Yukio Hatoyama, who served briefly as Japan's Prime Minister in 2009-2010, and is now head of the opposition Democratic Party of Japan, attributed the crisis to "a way of economic thinking based on the idea that American-style free-market economics represents a universal and ideal economic order" and Washington's demand that all countries conform to that model. In response, Hatoyama predicts that "we are moving towards an era of multipolarity," which is unlikely to see "the permanence of the dollar as the key global currency."[59]

Rhetoric of this kind, calling for major revisions of the Washington Consensus and a restored global balance of power, assumes particular importance these days. As Xiaoyu Pu and I argued, periods of fading unipolarity lead to heightened sensitivity of even rhetorical deviations from status quo policies.[60] When the global distribution of power is multipolar or bipolar, balancing behavior is a conservative policy that functions to maintain system equilibrium and stability. In a unipolar world, however, balancing behavior is a radical, system-altering strategy. Therefore, the perception shifts: "unipolarity is the only system in which balancing is a revisionist, rather than status quo, policy.... 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."[61] In this delegitimation phase, any challenger to the unipolar status quo will attempt to discredit the pre-

57. Chin and Helleiner, "China as a Creditor," p. 99.
58. Carl E. Walter and Fraser J. T. Howie, *Red Capitalism: The Fragile Foundation of China's Extraordinary Rise* (Singapore: Wiley, 2011), p. 213.
59. Yukio Hatoyama, "A New Path for Japan," *New York Times*, August 27, 2009. Quoted in Jonathan Kirshner, *American Power After the Financial Crisis* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2014), p. 134.
60. Schweller and Pu, "After Unipolarity."
61. Ibid., pp. 45-46.

existing rules of the game, in order to lower the costs to a future balancing strategy.

The reality, however, has not lived up to the rhetoric. Contrary to concerns over China's imminent takeover of the U.S. role in the world, Beijing appears to have limited interest in, and capacity for, greater involvement in global governance. As Wang and French point out, "Beyond its 'core interests' of defending national sovereignty and territorial integrity (including Tibet and Taiwan) and securing access to energy and natural resources in other parts of the world (most notably in Africa and Latin America), the Chinese government has only played a limited and sporadic role in most areas of global governance."[62] Despite its financial and monetary power, China has refrained from offering an alternative to the Washington Consensus. As Daniel Drezner notes: "China's response has been to reject any notion of a Beijing Consensus.... Even if the global financial crisis bruised and battered the Washington Consensus, it did not break it — in part because the most viable proponent for an alternative pathway acted more like a responsible stakeholder of the status quo."[63] China has maintained a low profile in global governance, and there is little evidence, despite its growing economic power, that it will seek international leadership in the near future.

At this stage of the emerging power transition, China is still a regional power without significant global aspirations or power-projection capabilities. Within its region, China has assumed a spoiler role, delegitimizing the current order and seeking to displace the U.S. as the Asia-Pacific hegemon. At the global level, China is still in the role of partial supporter and shirker: Beijing is not yet ready to assume

62. Hongying Wang and Erik French, "China's Participation in Global Governance from a Comparative Perspective." *Asia Policy* 15, no. 1 (January 2013), p. 91.
63. Daniel Drezner, "Perception, Misperception and Sensitivity: Chinese Economic Power and Preferences during the Great Recession," Paper presented at the conference on "China, the United States, and the East Asian Order: Managing Instability," School of International Studies, Peking University, Beijing, China, November 2013, p. 15.

a high profile or to take on costly responsibilities and obligations associated with global management.

Nationalism and Internal Balancing against China

According to structural realism, all states derive a general strategic interest from the structural condition of anarchy in counter-balancing the growing power of a neighboring rival — especially one that appears to be bidding for regional domination. Such systemic pressures, however, must be filtered through intervening variables at the unit level. This is why neoclassical realists stress the influence of domestic politics on states' ability and willingness to undertake balancing policies. Some unit-level factors assist balancing behaviors, others impede them.

The few studies that explicitly examine the impact of nationalism on balancing, for instance, find that the two phenomena complement each other. Several scholars go so far as to posit nationalism as a necessary condition for balancing behavior. Steve Chan, for instance, opines: "It is not difficult to imagine that whenever and wherever sovereignty and nationalism have receded (as in contemporary Western Europe) or have never taken root (as in international systems in the pre-modern era), the motivation for undertaking balancing behavior would be more muted if not entirely removed. Conversely, wherever nationalism and sovereignty still hold strong sway (such as in contemporary East Asia), balancing behavior should be more likely."[64]

Nationalism exerts profound effects on various pivotal aspects of international politics that are essential to the realist enterprise. Key for the present purposes is nationalism's role in extracting resources from society to enhance state power. Leaders use nationalism to mobilize public support for military preparation and sacrifices. Indeed, the theory that states purposefully foster nationalism to facilitate internal balancing may be generalized to apply "to any security competition that involves 'mass mobilization,' that is, requires of society a large-

64. Chan, *Looking for Balance*, p. 65.

scale financial, organizational, and industrial effort to produce a great military force of any kind, on sea or even in the air as well as on land."[65] Moreover, as Zoltán Búzás points out, "nationalism seems expedient for mitigating the domestic impediments to effective balancing. Through appeals to shared collective identity and common interests in the security of state and nation, nationalism can alleviate domestic causes of underbalancing, such as domestic fragmentation."[66]

Until very recently, Japanese military policy in response to the rising Chinese threat could be characterized as underbalancing, defined as a situation where threatened countries either: (1) fail to recognize a clear and present danger or, more typically, (2) simply do not react to it or, more typically still, (3) respond in paltry and imprudent ways.[67] Japan falls mostly into the third category. As Christopher Hughes noted in 2012, the reliance of Japan's grand strategy "on the United States has merely delayed addressing the long-term challenges of a rising China, Korean Peninsula instability, developments in East Asian regionalism, and a multipolarizing international system. Moreover, Japan's dependence on the United States is likely to be unsustainable in any case, as U.S. power progressively wanes in the Asia-Pacific region, thus only enhancing Japan's desperation that it has been constrained from fully articulating a complementary or alternative grand strategy."[68]

Meanwhile, China has been operating under the presumption of maritime military clashes, modernizing its equipment, bolstering its fleet of new lightweight warships, and preparing to launch its first

65. Barry R. Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power," *International Security* 18, no. 2 (Fall 1993), pp. 122-123.
66. Búzás, "Nationalism and Balancing," p. 2. For underbalancing, see Randall L. Schweller, "Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing," *International Security* 29, no. 2 (Fall 2004), pp. 159-201; and Schweller, *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006).
67. Schweller, "Unanswered Threats," p. 159.
68. Christopher W. Hughes, "The Democratic Party of Japan's New (but Failing) Grand Security Strategy: From 'Reluctant Realism' to 'Resentful Realism'?" *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 38, no. 1 (Winter 2012), p. 139.

domestically built aircraft carrier in the early 2020s.[69] These are worrying developments for Japan. Though Tokyo increasingly fears that Beijing could achieve military superiority, Japan is saddled with a stagnating economy, making it difficult for the country to compete with China in a real arms race.[70]

Recently, however, there are signs that Japan is shifting from a restrained hedging posture to one — in accordance with the predictions of structural realism — that looks more like 'internal' balancing. The key domestic factor facilitating this shift in grand strategy is the resurgent nationalism of Japanese politics.[71] The advent since 2012 of Abe Shinzō, an overtly nationalist Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Prime Minister, has seen Tokyo pursue a more assertive nationalist foreign policy that persistently stokes patriotic fervor, expresses hawkish pride in Japan's national strength, and argues that the country behaved no differently than any other colonial power during the last century. For almost seven decades, Japan's pacifist public opinion appeared as an immutable roadblock, obstructing the grander ambitions of policymakers who would otherwise push outward Japan's military role.[72] To override these anti-militaristic norms, the Abe administration has leaned on aggressive nationalism to garner domestic support for its

69. The most recent Japanese White Paper notes with alarm China's expansion of military power, pointing out that China's defense budget has quadrupled in the past decade, reaching CNY 808.2 billion (about JPY 12.9 trillion) for fiscal 2014, up 12% from the previous year. Meanwhile, Japan's defense budget stood at JPY 4.78 trillion in fiscal 2014, an increase of 2.2 percent year-on-year from the JPY 4.68 trillion of the previous fiscal year. See Rajaram Panda, "Japan's Defense White Paper 2014 and Coping with the China 'Threat'," IPRIS Viewpoints, No. 150, August 2014. http://www.ipris.org/php/download.php?fid=797.
70. See the comments by Alexandra Sakaki in Rodion Ebbighausen, "Japan Concerned over China's 'Profoundly Dangerous' Acts," *Deutsche Welle (DW.DE)*, August 6, 2014. http://www.dw.de/japan-concerned-over-chinas-profoundly-dangerous-acts/a-17834009?maca=en-rss-en-all-1573-rdf.
71. See Yew Meng Lai, *Nationalism and Power Politics in Japan's Relations with China: A Neoclassical Realist Interpretation* (New York: Routledge, 2014).
72. See Paul Midford, *Rethinking Japanese Public Opinion and Security: From Pacifism to Realism?* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2011).

systematic dismantlement of the post-war constraints on Japan's exercise of military power, including breaches in 2014 of the ban on the exercise of collective self-defense, in large part in reaction to Sino-Japanese tensions.[73] As pro-American conservative nationalists, Abe and his allies want Japan to become a more reliable ally of the United States by ending the era of pacifism and taking on more of the military responsibilities that the U.S. expects of Japan.

In addition to renascent Japanese nationalism, public opinion data suggests that a "new" nationalism is on the rise in South Korea, encouraging the country to adopt a more assertive posture and to play a more central role in East Asian affairs. According to the survey conducted by the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, South Koreans expect China to overtake the U.S. as the most influential country in the world within a decade. More interesting is just how confident South Koreans are in the Republic of Korea. Over the next ten years, they expect South Korea's influence to surpass that of Japan and even to rival that of Russia, requiring a structural reorganization of East Asia that gives Korea a more prominent role.[74] As Steven Denney and Karl Freidhoff point out, "The growing confidence among Koreans should be carefully watched, because as the confidence of the general population grows, the South Korean government will carry out policies that act on this confidence."[75]

Structural and Unit-level Barriers to External Balancing

The question remains, however, why has Japan not formed a tight defensive alliance with South Korea against China and, possibly, North Korea? South Korea and Japan are both threatened by a more powerful

73. Margarita Estévez-Abe, "Feeling Triumphalist in Tokyo: The Real Reasons Nationalism is Back in Japan," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 3 (May/June 2014), p. 165.
74. Steven Denney and Karl Freidhoff, "South Korea and a New Nationalism in an Era of Strength and Prosperity," *Center for Strategic and International Studies: PacNet*, No. 75, October 7, 2013, http://csis.org/files/publication/Pac1375_0.pdf.
75. Ibid.

and still growing regional rival, China, which neither can counterbalance solely by their own internal means. Both countries, of course, have a bilateral alliance with the United States, which is militarily stronger than China. An alliance with the U.S. may be enough to balance against China. That said, there has been wide recognition of emerging global multipolarity among Japan's political leaders, who not only perceive the decline of Japan and the U.S. relative to China but also strongly accept "the 'rise of the rest,' in the shape of India, a resurgent Russia, a stronger South Korea, and, further afield, Brazil and a more integrated European Union (EU)."[76] These changes in the external environment — the passing from U.S. unipolarity to a more evenly distributed mutipolar balance of power — provide powerful incentives for Japan and South Korea to aggregate their capabilities as a counterweight to China's growing military strength. Yet, there is no discernable movement in that direction. The reason resides in various domestic factors that diminish the attractiveness of certain alliances that would otherwise be made for purely strategic interests rooted in system structure.

Structurally, multipolarity (such as exists in the Asia-Pacific regional system) appears as an oligopoly, with a few sellers (or buyers) collaborating to set the price. Behaviorally, however, it tends toward duopoly, that is, the few are often only two. Currently, the two consist of the United States on one side, China on the other. If the U.S. retrenches from the region, the two will be Japan and China. The scarcity of alternatives contradicts the conventional wisdom of the flexibility of alliances in a multipolar system. The point being that we should not confuse the apparent alliance flexibility that derives from the wealth of physical alternatives that are, in theory, available under a multipolar structure with the actual alternatives that are politically available to states within the system given their particular interests and affinities.[77]

This dearth of actual alternatives under multipolarity is essentially a function of what are called 'alliance handicaps,' that is, various impediments — constraints rooted in ideologies, personal rivalries, national hatreds, ongoing territorial disputes — to alignments that would otherwise be forged in support of short-run strategic interests. Fear of entrapment in a costly and unwanted war by virtue of an alliance tie can also impose considerable restrictions on the choice of alliance partners and, by extension, on the flexibility of alliances in a multipolar system.[78] These various inhibitions that make alliance alternatives, in practice, scarce are important because, for a multipolar balance-of-power system to operate properly, states cannot be so limited by alliance handicaps that they are unable to align and realign in response to shifts in power that threaten their security.[79]

To summarize, the greater flexibility of alliances and fluidity of their patterns under multipolarity is more apparent in theory than in practice. Various alliance handicaps at the domestic level prevent countries from obeying the structural-systemic imperative to pool their resources against a dangerous shared threat. This is certainly the case in East Asia, where nationalism, maritime and border disputes, fears of entrapment (e.g., with Taiwan in a war against China, with South Korea in a war against North Korea, etc.), competing ideologies, and historical legacies prevent virtually any and all possible combinations of China's neighbors from forming a coalition against it.

This regional dynamic is quite unique in history. Multipolar systems under conditions of high threat are supposed to undergo polarization into two armed camps, each composed of several states. Alliance handicaps in the Asia-Pacific region, however, prevent this dynamic. Instead, security agreements and commitments in the Asia-Pacific region will remain mostly bilateral, not multilateral, in nature. Just as important, most actors in Asia will continue to exhibit a tendency toward ambiguity. Members of the Association of Southeast Asian

76. Hughes, "The Democratic Party of Japan's New (but Failing) Grand Security Strategy," p. 113.
77. See Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 148-49.
78. See Snyder, *Alliance Politics*; Zeev Maoz, *Paradoxes of War: On the Art of National Self-Entrapment* (Boston, Mass.: Unwin Hymann, 1990), chap. 7.
79. Robert Jervis, "From Balance to Concert: A Study of International Security Cooperation," in Kenneth A. Oye (ed.), *Cooperation Under Anarchy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 60.

Nations (ASEAN) generally indicate that they do not want to choose between the United States and China. As Ja Ian Chong and Todd Hall point out:

> Ambivalence over security commitments among regional actors in Asia reflects simultaneous desires to benefit from increasing economic integration with China as well as to address apprehensions about China's long-term trajectory as a major power. Such "hedging" may inadvertently encourage the PRC and the United States to question the long-term reliability of partnerships with Southeast Asia, and can feed the impression that the region is a battleground for influence.[80]

The ambiguity and disparate mix of bilateral security relationships in East Asia can be expected to undermine regional stability even if they do not result in regional war.

Domestic Politics and Liberal Cosmopolitanism, Not Nationalism

To this point, I have argued that China's assertive nationalism will be high in two opposite scenarios, China's rising and China's stalling. This begs the question, if China's nationalism does not vary according to some factors that we can manage, why should we care about it? What explains when nationalism is weak? What makes nationalism vary (in an explicit way)? In keeping with the concerns of the present work, I will focus on domestic politics to answer these questions. But rather than offering a purely "inside-out" explanation, I put forth, instead, what is known as a "second-image" reverse explanation ("outside-inside-outside"). Let me explain.

The intentions and goals of states are largely, though not entirely, a function of second-image variables. As discussed, domestic politics can explain how nationalist urges sometimes compel the state to accumulate power in a way that overrides prudent foreign policy, resulting in imperial overstretch and self-encirclement. This is a decidedly realist version of domestic politics. The liberal perspective

80. Chong and Hall, "The Lessons of 1914 for East Asia Today," p. 25.

offers a more positive role for domestic politics in a state's foreign policy. Liberals point out that second-image causes are at work when domestic economic interests quell passions that seek to gin up nasty international politics; when business interests tip the balance of forces within their respective countries toward those in favor of peaceful conflict resolution. This is the familiar "economic interdependence" argument rooted in nineteenth-century Manchester Liberalism about how international economic relations affect domestic politics, which, in turn, recast national interests in a more pacific light.

These peaceful "political" effects of trade can be seen, somewhat ironically, in Beijing's avowed reluctance to mix "politics" with economics in its relations with other countries. At the height of the anti-Japanese riots in 2005, for instance, as nationalist Chinese demonstrators were calling for a boycott of Japanese products and demanding that the Ministry of Railways not import Japanese bullet-train technology, Bo Xilai, the-then Minister of Commerce, admonished the rioters for linking economic issues with political and diplomatic ones. In a globalized economy, he argued, a boycott of Japanese products would wind up hurting China: "Boycotting products [of another country] will be detrimental to the interests of the producers and consumers of both countries.... This will hurt our cooperation and [economic] development with other countries."[81] Contrary to its claim of decoupling politics from economics, however, Beijing did just the opposite in this case: the Party emphasized the country's gains from trade to defuse a malicious and vindictive political atmosphere. More recently, an op-ed in *China Daily* similarly warned in August 2012: "Blindly boycotting Japanese goods by giving way to sentiments could harm our own industries and exports, and reduce employment."[82] Indeed, Japan remains China's largest source of imports and foreign investment; take away these Japanese inputs, and China's exports collapse.

81. Quoted in Lam, "As China's Foreign Policy Hardens, It is Beijing Versus All," p. 1
82. Quoted in Richard Katz, "Mutual Assured Production: Why Trade Will Limit Conflict Between China and Japan," *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 4 (July / August 2013), p. 24.

Thus, if the theory of economic interdependence is correct, the logic of "mutual assured production" will continue to limit conflict between China and Japan.[83]

By affecting the interests, power, and coalitions that form in domestic politics, economic interdependence exerts a significant influence on the internal politics, and hence on the foreign policies and definition of interests, of countries both large and small. This is what IR theorists call a "second-image reversed" version of the relationship between internal and external politics — one that is not simply an inside-out view but rather follows an outside-inside-out logic.[84] In his influential work, *National Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade*, Albert Hirschman described such a process in terms of the political influence effect of trade. Simply put, large and growing trade relations between a big and small state will eventually change the way the smaller state conceives of its national interests, which will gradually over time converge with those of its larger partner. Business groups, Hirschman observed, "will exert a powerful influence in favor of a 'friendly' attitude toward the state" upon which their economic interests depend.[85] On precisely how trade relations bring about foreign policy convergence, Jonathan Kirshner writes, "when these relationships are sustained, and especially when they involve expanding sectors of the economy, over time the reshuffling of power, interests, and incentives among firms, sectors, and political coalitions will increasingly reflect these new realities. Those that favor warm relations will be empowered, and the trajectory of the 'national interest' remolded."[86] Of course, the warming effects of economic interdependence do not always triumph, as World War I infamously confirmed. But they do raise the costs of letting emotions steer the ship of state.

83. Ibid.
84. Peter Gourevitch, "The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics," *International Organization* 32, no. 4 (Autumn 1978), pp. 881-912
85. Albert O. Hirschman, *National Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980 / 1945), p. 29.
86. Jonathan Kirshner, "The Consequences of China's Economic Rise for Sino-U.S. Relations: Rivalry, Political Conflict, and (Not) War," in Robert S. Ross and Zhu Feng (eds.), *China's Ascent: Power, Security, and the Future of International Politics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008), p. 242.

A Cold Peace of Clashing Nationalisms

As its oil platforms drill in disputed waters, China no longer speaks the language of "quiet rise." Rather, Xi Jinping's self-assured foreign policy stimulates fear in Vietnam, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, and the United States. Nationalism is on the rise in the Asia-Pacific region. It will engender discourses and practices within the rising Chinese challenger that work to undermine the legitimacy of the established order. This will be true whether China's rise continues or stalls. Japan's nationalist turn, like China's new assertiveness, will make peaceful compromise in Asia more difficult. Mounting nationalism will also promote internal balancing among Beijing's neighbors but will, along with other alliance handicaps, inhibit their ability and desire to align with each other against China.

A cold peace will likely simmer within the region but not reach a boiling point. Outside the remote possibility of land warfare on the Korean peninsula, East Asia's maritime geography encourages naval competition but militates against land invasions and occupations. Because of what John Mearsheimer calls the "stopping power of water"[87] and the fact that East Asia is a seascape, where "the spaces between the principal nodes of population are overwhelmingly maritime,"[88] the region will avoid the kind of great military conflagrations that took place on dry land in the twentieth century even as nationalism continues to fuel tensions and disorder. In this leaderless but contested region of the world, threats are much more likely to be cold than hot; danger will come less frequently in the form of shooting wars among the regional powers over, say, disputed islands than diffuse disagree-

87. John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), pp. 114-128.
88. Robert D. Kaplan, *Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific* (New York: Random House, 2014), p. 5.

ments over geopolitical, monetary, trade, and environmental issues. Problems and crises will arise more frequently and, when they do, will be resolved less cooperatively.

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