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Rising Asian Powers and Changing Global Governance

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International Relations (IR) scholarship is directly in the path of two simultaneous tidal waves. The first is the rise of China and India in the traditional IR terms of military and economic power. The second is the expanding nature of what IR scholarship needs to address, as global integration transforms the nature of the issues to be addressed and numerous trends expand the number and types of relevant actors. Neither theory nor practice is yet coping well with the profound implications of these fundamental changes. Investigating what kind of a world order might emerge from these two simultaneous tsunamis will require an enormous research agenda that explores the roles of ideas, structural factors, and path dependencies across regions and issue areas. This article aims to illuminate a subset focused around the connection between theory and practice as related to two emerging powers. It briefly maps developments in Western IR theory and explores how those connect—or fail to connect—with intellectual and policy currents in the rising Asian giants. It draws on a number of interviews and workshops held in Asia in the past two years that explore how Asian scholars and policymakers are dealing with, and perhaps beginning to shape, the rapidly changing conceptual landscape.

Two key and simultaneous developments are shattering international theory and politics alike. First, the accelerating shift of power within the international state system, especially toward China and to a lesser extent India, raises questions about how those emerging actors will define their interests and what behaviors they will consider appropriate. An analysis of how these powers are explicitly or implicitly adopting the assumptions of various theoretical perspectives can shed light on some of those concerns. Second, the rapidly growing field of global governance, which investigates the broad range of efforts related to the need to address global-scale collective action problems in a world lacking a global government, is challenging existing paradigms of international relations (IR) theory.

With regard to the first, Western scholars and policymakers are struggling to internalize just how emphatically—and quickly—China has burst forth as a major power. A world that a decade ago seemed firmly in the grip of the American unipolar moment is now a world where progress in arenas from economic stability to environmental protection to development assistance requires China's consent and usually its active participation. Moreover, China's and increasingly India's

relative economic and to some degree geopolitical success over the past decade, standing in stark contrast to the various fiascoes of the Bush administration and the Western-led economic implosion of the past few years, has engendered a striking mood of Asian triumphalism. That mood ensures that key Asian governments, especially China and India, are increasingly disinclined to be willing to continue as rule-takers rather than rule-makers in the international system. But it is not yet evident what rules they are likely to want to make, or what conceptual frameworks they will bring to the table, making it difficult to determine whether or in what ways a power shift to Asia would change the nature of world order.

The rise of the Asian giants is complicated by the fact that the shift of power within the interstate system is happening at the same time that global integration is rapidly changing the nature of the issues that need to be addressed, while trends from democratization to information technology are widening the range of types of actors trying to address those issues. We are seeing not just major shifts in authority within the state system, but also growing needs for more authority to cope with an explosion of complex, border-crossing problems, and to some degree the re-location of authority out of state hands altogether.

Neither theory nor practice is yet coping well with the profound implications of these fundamental changes. Investigating what kind of a world order might emerge from these two simultaneous tsunamis will require an enormous research agenda that explores the roles of ideas, structural factors, and path dependencies across regions and issue areas. This article aims to illuminate a subset focused around the connection between theory and practice as related to two emerging powers. It briefly maps developments in Western IR theory and explores how those connect—or fail to connect—with intellectual and policy currents in the rising Asian giants. It draws on a number of interviews and workshops held in Asia in the past 2 years that explore how Asian scholars and policymakers are dealing with, and perhaps beginning to shape, the rapidly changing conceptual landscape.

Theories of International Relations and Global Governance

The study of IR has always been a complex, multi-faceted, ill-defined field, drawing from numerous theoretical traditions to study an enormous range of phenomena that share only one characteristic: something about them crosses national borders. Unfortunately, for those IR graduate students who have not yet passed comprehensive examinations, the complexity is getting worse. It is no longer enough to master the familiar state-centric theories. Instead, students, professors, and policymakers alike confront a variegated landscape of competing claims to authority and legitimacy across territories, issues, and rule systems.

The following quick overview of selected strands of IR theory provides a basis for considering the range of conceptual frameworks that may influence the intellectual and policy communities in China and India.

Realism

Most familiar to students of IR are the tenets of realism (including the many variants of neo-realism). These are focused around issues of war and conflict in what is assumed to be an inherently anarchical and entirely state-centric international system. Realists generally share the assumptions that states must be concerned primarily with the prospects for relative gains and losses of power and that cooperation across states occurs primarily in temporary and shifting alliances against common threats from other states (e.g., Waltz 1979; Jervis 1978; Mearsheimer 2001). Such core assumptions would lead policymakers in rising

China and India to be concerned primarily with the prospects for conflict with existing major powers, and it appears that realist tenets do have an impact on their thinking.

Liberalism

Liberalism focuses on prospects for interstate cooperation that can lead to mutual benefit. It analyzes the incentives behind such cooperation and investigates how states build rule systems that produce mutual benefit (Keohane 1990; Deudney and Ikenberry 1999). Liberal theorists generally accept the realist insights into the potential for conflict and competition but argue that not all games need to be zero-sum. States can and do bind themselves in meaningful systems in which major powers constrain their own short-term freedom of action to achieve longer-term benefits. Liberal theorists emphasize the need for structures to, as Keohane (1984) has argued, lower transaction costs and overcome information asymmetries.

However, this cooperative, rule-based order is not easily understood separately from the ruled-based, open nature of the domestic regimes of the hegemonic states that have developed it—the United Kingdom and the United States. A key question for the twenty-first century is whether a truly global liberal order has become a compelling and widely shared vision that can incorporate major powers whose domestic regimes are of a different nature, or whether that system of order now faces new competition from an emerging Chinese model of state-led capitalism and domestic authoritarianism (Bremmer 2010). It is also not clear to what extent India, with its vast underclass, will accept international rules that may undermine domestic policies aimed at protecting the poor.

Constructivism

Constructivism, the most recent contender in mainstream IR theory, shares the realist and liberal assertions about the state-centric nature of the international system, but problematizes the issues of interest formation (Wendt 1992; Finnemore 1996; Ruggie 1998). Constructivists contend that the realist and liberal assumptions about state interests are so broad and vague that they reveal little about how states will behave in specific cases. Although there is little evidence of constructivism appearing explicitly in the frameworks of Chinese or Indian policymakers, this literature features prominently in the works translated into Mandarin in the past two decades, and some leading Chinese IR scholars identify themselves as constructivists. Conversely, some of the most interesting analysis coming out of the West on China includes Johnston's (2007) fascinating analysis of socialization processes that may be moderating concerns about preserving sovereignty among some Chinese officials who participate in international institutions.

Global Governance

Global governance thinking, in contrast to conventional IR theory, generally starts from the perspective of a particular border-crossing issue or set of issues, without necessarily making a priori assumptions about which types of actors will have effective and/or legitimate roles in responding to that issue (Simmons and De Jonge Oudraat 2001; Florini 2005). Much of the literature flows from concerns about whether humanity can survive a host of border-crossing threats—not only war or economic instability but also pandemics, environmental devastation, and the like—and how it may reorganize in response to new opportunities for economic and social progress. Where IR theory has generally assumed that

responses to such threats necessary come overwhelmingly from states organized in Westphalian sovereign units, global governance theorists are much more willing to explore a wide range of sources of authority.

In so doing, they often refute the conventional theories' insistence that a nearly exclusive focus on states suffices to explain international outcomes. Instead, they draw attention to a new range of issues, actors, and authority structures that are emerging in response to these threats and opportunities. Institutionally, the world is experimenting with a vast range of transnational mechanisms, from networks and partnerships to regulations and law. States remain dominant, but the role of nonstate entities, from private companies to civil society organizations, and partnerships and networks between and within them, can no longer be ignored. In these ways, global governance theory goes beyond considering how regimes of "principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures" among states (Krasner 1983), regime complexes of multiple and overlapping regimes (Raustiala and Victor 2004), and institutional interplay (Young, Bradnee Chambers, Kim, and ten Have 2008) provide, or fail to provide, systems of order and governance that extend beyond national borders.

Increasingly, both bodies of theory—IR and global governance—share an explicit concern with identifying and locating sources of authority and the changing nature of state sovereignty. Indeed, some of the same scholars who have contributed to the development of the above mainstream theories are among those calling most vociferously for a rethinking of IR theory to take account of these authority shifts. David Lake used the occasion of his Presidential address at the 2010 Annual Convention of the International Studies Association to argue that the core concept of state-centric theory—sovereignty—should be treated as an endogenous variable rather than an exogenous reality and that all of IR should be a component part of a broader investigation of governance (Lake 2010; see also Lake 2007). Avant, Finnemore, and Sell (2010) recently spearheaded a project examining global governors—who creates issues, sets agendas, establishes and implements rules and programs, and evaluates/adjudicates outcomes? Why are they the governors, what is the basis of their authority, what outcomes do they produce, and what are the relationships among them and between them and the governed? Slaughter's (2004) analysis of cross-border networks of related branches of governments (regulators, parliamentarians, and judiciaries) has received widespread attention. And scores of works have explored shifts of authority to nonstate actors in the secretariats of inter-governmental organizations, civil society, and the private sector (see, e.g., Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Buthe 2004; Culter, Haufler, and Porter 1999; Florini 2000, 2005; Hall and Biersteker 2002; Risse 1995).

A significant part of the global governance literature has a regulatory focus, expanding beyond liberal notions of relatively voluntary interstate rule systems to examine the emergence of more hierarchical authority structures (Jayasuriya 2005). Accompanying this interest is concern with the measures needed to ensure fairness and legitimacy as well as efficacy in regulatory processes that are not clearly accountable to national political processes, with an important literature emerging from the Global Administrative Law project spearheaded by New York University (http://www.iilj.org/GAL/).

But conceptualizing, much less understanding, such fragmentation remains a challenge. Globalization has increased the need for global governance, but the cacophony of actors and mechanisms arising in part from efforts to govern globalization has ironically made governance harder. New actors and mechanisms create issues of legitimacy and representativeness and often fail to cohere into a harmonious whole. The diversity and richness of ideas being put forth for better global governance has not yet translated into actual creation and implementation of their effective forms.

Transforming cacophony into harmony could occur in a variety of ways. Hegemonic stability theory would contend that the world's very diverse instruments, in the form of states, must follow a score and be led by a conductor whom everyone obeys. Those liberal theorists who examine ways of lowering the transactions costs of international cooperation would focus on the roles of inter-governmental organizations as the auditoriums and building staffs—they provide the hall in which the players meet, and adequate heating and lighting, but whether beautiful music results is entirely up to the players who hire the hall. Global governance mechanisms could be seen as various types of jazz ensembles, allowing for improvisation, but performing in the same agreed key within the confines of an agreed general framework. Small combos might function on an egalitarian basis (reminiscent, perhaps, of regime theory, the G8, or a variety of informal networks), while large jazz bands might still need a hegemon in the form of a conductor.

Unfortunately, much of global governance currently most resembles the music of American composer Charles Ives. Ives, son of a US Army band leader, was inspired by the experience of watching Fourth of July parades with multiple marching bands parading around the central square of his hometown. Each band individually played a more or less coherent tune, but the effect when they all played at the same time was cacophony—or, as interpreted by Ives, a significant addition to the musical canon.[1]

What instruments, ensembles, or tunes will India and China bring to the global concert?

Connecting Theory and Policy in the Emerging Asian Giants[2]

Western-trained IR scholars increasingly speak easily, if not always clearly, of the shifting conceptions of sovereignty, order, authority, and the need to redefine them given the changes wrought by globalization. We readily use, and contest the meaning of, such terms as governance, global governance, world order, and architecture (Biermann, Pattberg, and van Asselt 2009). And we pay considerable attention to how key institutions such as the UN may reshape thinking and action on key global governance challenges (Weiss and Thakur 2010).

Leaders of major powers, however, resist such formal redefinition and seem reluctant to change their mental maps, particularly when it comes to basic questions of the location of authority. It is not surprising that heads of national governments continue to assert emphatically that both legitimate authority and actual power remain in their hands, despite the claims of global governance scholars otherwise.

Chinese and Indian discourse about the core concept of Westphalian sovereignty strongly asserts an absolutist definition of it based on inviolability, reciprocity, and mutuality. Given the history of long periods of humiliating

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[1]One theoretical approach that has yet to figure significantly in the IR literature but which may help to convert cacophony into a modicum of musical sense, and thereby help answer Lake's (2010) call for a broad theory of governance, is the notion of polycentricity, introduced half a century ago by Vincent Ostrom and colleagues, in their investigation of whether the existence of multiple public and private agencies with overlapping mandates to provide public services in metropolitan areas led to conflict and chaos, or whether they found ways to interact and positively function even in the absence of formalized cooperation or hierarchical coordination. In a recent interview, Ostrom (2010) laid out the intellectual history of the institutionalist work that led to her Nobel prize, describing issues that are familiar for scholars grappling with the conundrums of global issues whose management depends on the cumulative activities of multiple actors.

[2]This section draws in part on the discussions at the Workshop on Concepts of Global Governance, held in conjunction with the "Conference on Governance of a Globalising World: Whither Asia and the West?" (December 2008). The workshop brought together scholars and analysts from Asia, Europe, and North America to debate the changing nature of sovereignty and world order, global governance, and the effectiveness and legitimacy of the multitude of actors and mechanisms involved in managing the world's most pressing global issues.

subjugation to external powers, both countries are deeply suspicious of anything that looks like an effort to undermine their hard-won autonomy. Chinese policy-makers have backed up their vociferous insistence on a state-centric, sovereignty-based world order with specific signals of displeasure at any interference with that sovereignty. In 2008, for example, China cancelled its summit with the European Union because of the alleged interference by French President Nicholas Sarkozy in China's internal affairs. In May 2010, President Hu (2010) framed his opening address to the US–China Security and Economic Dialogue with reference to a re-assertion of the fundamental role of sovereignty. "To the Chinese people, nothing is more important than safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity."

However, sovereignty is emphasized primarily with regard to issues related to China's conception of its territorial integrity. US arms sales to Taiwan or suggestion that the outside world might have a legitimate say in how Tibet is governed have always caused Chinese officials to bristle angrily. And China's growing stature is giving those officials increased confidence about objecting to such interference.

At the same time, however, China appears to be hewing closely to many liberal prescriptions about the potential for advancing national interests via cooperation in a rule-based order. It has taken significant steps toward incorporating itself into this order, rather than challenging it (Ikenberry 2009). But the relatively free-market system that the existing rules are meant to support may face competition from an emerging Chinese model of state-led capitalism and an authoritarian system of domestic governance (Bremmer 2010). Moreover, China's domestic governance evolution is intensely pragmatic, focused around questions of what works, in a fundamental shift from its previously ideology-based claim to legitimacy. To be pragmatic at the national level and ideological abroad is an inconsistency that may prove hard to maintain, given the near impossibility of succeeding at the domestic level unless the processes of global governance improve dramatically.

To a degree that has not yet been widely recognized in the West, China has for the past two decades made concerted, and successful, efforts to develop a much-enhanced capacity for IR scholarship (Qin 2007, 2009). Hundreds of Chinese scholars have earned IR Ph.D.s in leading North American and European universities, and a large number of key Western IR texts have been translated into Mandarin. Numerous workshops and conferences have brought together Western and Chinese IR scholars in recent years to begin building bridges. Yet, the number of articles available in English by Chinese IR scholars remains relatively small. The relative paucity of English-language output currently makes it difficult to assess from that literature alone how the conceptual debate is progressing within China's IR community.

A series of research interviews conducted with leading Chinese international relations scholars beginning in 2008 has provided some insights.[3] These interviews demonstrated a general consensus that China is not ready to play a substantially greater role in global governance, either in developing theory and new thinking, or in the policy arena. The academics held mixed views about the state of Chinese IR theory. One described the landscape as a "big forest" without internal coherence, generally dependent on structures drawn from Western sources. Another argued that there is potential for the development of a Chinese world view based on a web of relationships as an alternative to the Westphalian state-centric approach, but acknowledged such development has not yet happened. Several noted that political science in China is focused primarily on studying Chinese experiences. However, the scholarly community is well ahead of the government in the willingness to discuss global governance issues.

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[3]These interviews were conducted with Yeling Tan.

In explaining why they thought China was not ready for a bigger role in the world, various academics suggested that China remains focused on internal economic development—a point that is revealing of key assumptions. The underlying premise seems to be that the responsibilities of global governance are separate from the priorities of national development and that such responsibilities should be assumed only after a country has reached a certain degree of national strength. They also tended to think of global governance in terms of inter-governmental organizations and Bretton Woods-type arrangements, rather than alternative arrangements such as networks of regulators or "multi-stakeholder" networks. Not surprising, if that bigger role is equated with the role that the United States has been playing since 1945—that of a global stabilizer and dominant player in inter-governmental organizations and regimes, with commensurate investment in human and financial resources—a country with China's massive internal needs and relatively low per capita income would indeed be severely challenged to take it up.

Despite the relatively nascent stage of Chinese IR theory development and the government's defensive assertions about the inviolable nature of sovereignty, the interviews made clear that there is ample room for engaging Chinese scholars and policymakers about China's role in global governance, by discussing specific issue areas. China faces the challenge of engaging intellectually and practically with its substantially altered position in the world, at the same time that many of the conditions under which the traditional notions of world order evolved are changing dramatically. The same leaders who are insisting on sovereignty also face immense pressures to deal with practical problems that readily disrupt any absolutist ideas. That is why several interviewees noted that when it comes to pragmatic problem solving, the Chinese government might well be willing to make "discounts on sovereignty," as one leading scholar put it, on a case by case basis in specific issue areas.

While China has clearly set out to develop the capacity to engage on an equal basis with Western IR intellectual communities, India finds itself in a quite different situation. Despite the substantial numbers of important IR scholars of Indian origin in leading departments in many countries, within India itself there are major problems with tertiary education in all but a few pockets of excellence. The international studies (IS) and IR fields are in particularly poor shape.

In the carefully nuanced language of the organizer of a recent workshop (held in Singapore) on the state of the field within India:

> International studies in India, however, have not kept pace with the changing scope and content of India's IR that now must address a new set of challenges, threats, and opportunities in a wide range of domains including economics (trade, investment, finance), climate change, security (traditional and non-traditional), and regional and global governance. Despite a strong beginning in the early decades after independence, IS programmes and institutions in India are not fully able to meet the changing and complex demands facing the country. In comparative terms, India, which had the more developed IS programmes and institutions in Asia, has fallen behind East Asian countries, particularly China. This is an unanticipated development in light of India's many advantages—an open society, freedom of thought and expression, and competence in the English Language, etc. (Alagappa 2009, p. 7).[4]

The workshop's cochair expressed concern about the impact of this lack of capacity for India's ability to become a producer of knowledge in this field and thereby to successfully engage with the world:

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[4]The workshop was framed broadly in terms of IS, including IR, comparative politics, international political economy, international economics, business and law, world history, and geography.

> …India's self-image has been constructed around having a distinct view of its relation to the outside world. In what sense will India be different from the rising powers of the past? What new strategic innovations will it bring to the world? How will it contribute to solving a whole series of global deadlocks? The world is looking to India to provide answers to these questions. But it is hard to imagine India being able to take on its historical responsibilities if it does not have a proper research and academic base on subjects of vital importance (Mehta 2009, p. 9).

As one prominent Indian IR scholar, Kanti Bajpai (2009), has noted, despite some notable improvements in IR capacity over the past decade or two, India has been outpaced by Asia's other major powers. By and large India's IR scholarly community has chosen not to engage with the Western-dominated IR communities, with relatively few going abroad for training and then returning, and even fewer foreigners coming to India to teach political science or IR (Bajpai 2009; see also Bajpai 1997 regarding the historical development of IS within India). He contends that the country faces significant obstacles to developing a rich and flourishing culture of IR research.

One such obstacle is the absence of clearly defined puzzles that attract the attention of scholars. IR theory develops in response to questions that need answers—what strategies could ensure that the Cold War did not turn into a hot war? How to understand international political economy in the context of the end of the original Bretton Woods system? How can major powers or other actors address planetary scale environmental externalities that can threaten civilization? In India, Bajpai argues, appropriate puzzles have yet to be clearly identified to create a strong research agenda. The range of global governance challenges and the wide range of approaches to addressing them may increasingly appeal to Indian scholars, as India (like China before it) finds itself under ever more intense pressures to engage on the global governance agenda.

The other key obstacle that Bajpai identifies is what he calls "the neglect of theory," resulting in research that tends to be richly descriptive rather than systematically analytical. He contends that the lack of theory has meant that India's focus on "relational studies"—India's relations with other countries—has "not added up to any very interesting prepositions about the overall conduct on Indian foreign policy" (Bajpai 2009, p. 114).

To the degree that this characterization of India's current capacity and constraints is correct, it is possible to identify ways to encourage a more effective engagement between Indian scholars and those outside, keeping in mind that significant changes in Indian academe will and should remain the responsibility of scholars within the country. That said, foreign scholars—and policymakers—have clear incentives to encourage India's engagement on major questions of world order and the management of global issues. It is in everyone's interest to consider how to support the development of a rich and flourishing culture of academic departments and think tanks with expertise appropriate to India's growing stature and the increasingly urgent need to engage India in the broader debates over global governance. With regard to theory, as China demonstrates an increasingly impressive capacity to engage in rigorous development and application of IR theory, the attitude Bajpai describes in India may change. And those of us raised in Western traditions will need to be open to ideas that may emerge from the different contexts of the two Asian giants.

What Next?

Virtually, every concept associated with IR theory is contested. This is nothing new—everyone in the discipline has experienced the joys of trying to impose conceptual coherence on a stubbornly resistant literature. But the nature of the

contestation is changing. As scholars and policymakers struggle to find workable conceptual bases for world order in the twenty-first century, the very status of IR as a separate discipline has come into question. Globalization, both by deliberate action and as unintended consequence of technology and the sheer scale of human impact on the planet, has demonstrably increased the need for border-crossing rule systems and coordination. Those same trends have also made possible the explosion of roles for a variety of nonstate mechanisms and actors to compensate for an increasingly inadequate state-centric system. The concepts that increasingly animate debate over the management of the world are the same as those long familiar in debates over domestic governance—transparency, accountability, participation, democracy.

China and India are thus being drawn into debates whose contours are very poorly defined. The most fundamental principles and issues are in question—what does sovereignty mean, and under what conditions does and should it vary? Which actors have legitimate say in making the rules that govern the world, and on what claim to legitimacy? Is there consensus around the nature of the international economic system that cross-border cooperation should aim to support, or do we face new debates between open liberal systems and a model based on state capitalism?

The days when Western, and particularly American, intellectuals and policymakers could set the terms for the debates over IR and the management of global issues are over. What their counterparts in China and India think, and choose to think about, will matter enormously to the future of world order. This article is meant to provide preliminary impetus to a much broader discussion between Asia and the West.

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