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# Parody of Power: Determining the Violence Levels of Hegemonic Transitions

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Parody of Power:

Determining the Violence Levels of Hegemonic Transitions

(TITLE)

BY

Dane R. Ecton

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## ABSTRACT:

While established literature defines the terms in which a hegemonic transition would occur between great powers, it does not define the precise process. This thesis argues that the perceptions of the rising power affects the violence levels of the transition. The perception of hegemonic action as well as the rising power's role in the world fundamentally affect the way in which transitions do occur. These perceptions are formed through a knowledge of the internal intentions of the rising power which can be explored through the history of the country, the foreign policy decision-making structure, as well as external cues given to the hegemon. This is established through two prior examples of hegemonic transitions as well as an analysis of the likely future transition between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

*“Wait a second, hang on. You’re telling me that foreign policy of this magnitude is conducted through Sam, and I’m still alive? {laughs}” – Admiral Fitzwallace, The West Wing, Episode 319.*

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## Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Chapter 1. Introduction, Literature, and Argument</b> .....                | 1  |
| Literature Review .....   | 3  |
| Argument .....  | 16 |
| Methodology .....   | 19 |
| <b>Chapter 2. Peaceful and Violent Transitions</b> .....                      | 30 |
| Peaceful Transition: The United Kingdom and the United States .....           | 30 |
| Violent Transition: Germany's Failed Hegemonic Transitions .....              | 46 |
| <b>Chapter 3. The Rise of China and the Future of American Hegemony</b> ..... | 55 |
| Philosophies Guiding the Chinese State .....                                  | 59 |
| Chinese Foreign Policy Decision-Making Structure .....                        | 62 |
| Issues Facing the Future of China-US Relations .....                          | 67 |
| Process of Transition .....   | 79 |
| Conclusory Remarks .....  | 81 |
| <b>Works Cited.</b> .....   | 83 |

## List of Tables and Figures

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Table 1. Modelski's Five Cycles of Leadership .....  | 9  |
| Table 2. Framework of Traditional Power Transition Theory .....  | 16 |
| Table 3. Adapted Power Transition Framework .....  | 17 |
| Table 4. Determinates of State Intentions .....  | 18 |
| Table 5. Effects of Interstate Relationship .....  | 21 |
| Table 6. Starting Point of British-American Relations, 1776-1845 .....                                 | 32 |
| Table 7. Shift Caused by Trade Policy Development .....  | 42 |
| Table 8. Shift Caused by American Involvement in Venezuelan Crisis, 1895 .....                         | 45 |
| Table 9. Relations between Germany and British/American Order, 1919-1945 .....                         | 47 |
| Table 10. German Parliamentary Election Results. 1919-1933 .....                                       | 50 |
| Table 11. Current Status of Likely Sino-American Transition .....                                      | 57 |
| Table 12. Chinese Politburo Standing Committee Membership, 2017 .....                                  | 64 |
| Table 13. Limited Listing of Important Chinese Foreign Policy Think Tanks .....                        | 65 |
| Table 14. Influential Behaviors of China's Think Tanks based on the Social Structure<br>Paradigm ..... | 66 |
| Chart I. Chinese Foreign Policy Decision-Making Structure .....  | 69 |
| Figure 1. Map of Disputed South China Sea with Respective Claims .....                                 | 72 |

## Chapter 1 – Introduction

The rise of the People's Republic of China onto the world stage has spurred endless debate and raised fundamental questions as to the reliability of current international relations theories. The academic community is sharply split on the implications of a rising China (Friedburg, 2005). Many see it as a danger to world order (Bernstein & Munro, 1997; Nathan & Ross, 1997; Christensen, 1999; Gries, 2004) while others claim that China is simply rising to its former post as hegemon of Asia (Keohane, 1984; Richardson, 1994; Johnston & Evans, 1999; Shambaugh, 1999, 2004; Lampton, 2001; Johnston, 2003; Goldstein, 2005).

The election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States has increased the need for an alternative stabilizing force in the world as the administration appears unable or unwilling to continue to maintain its global obligations. Trump's focus on "America First" promotes relative isolationism over the current norms of global American involvement. While at the same time, China has begun expanding its influence. Politically, China is pushing into regions that were traditionally under the American sphere and promoting policies that the United States has abandoned. Economically, Trump has attempted to initiate a trade war by creating tariffs on imported goods. Scientifically, it has begun taking the lead on climate research while Donald Trump appointed a climate change denier in charge of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The unassailable truth is that China is rising on many fronts, and the American political environment is unwilling to effectively counteract. Barring accidents of history, the trends indicate a shift in the distribution of power away from the United States and toward China at some point during this century. The real question is what will happen when China surpasses the



United States on the world stage. The implications for such a transition vary from benign to catastrophic.

Some political science scholarship suggests that violent conflict will erupt at some point between the interests of the United States and China<sup>1</sup>. Prior literature points to two causal factors for this sort of power transition: difference of power level between the two powers and the dissatisfaction of the rising power. These assumptions are incomplete since it is possible to have a peaceful transition (DiCicco & Levy, 1999). The explanation for such a case might rest within the internal foreign policy decision making mechanisms within both the rising power and the hegemon. Internal policy mechanisms coupled with the perceptions of individuals within the system are capable of preventing or instigating violent conflict. This is a result of the nature of power transitions being purposefully started by decision makers when they perceive the time is appropriate. Once this decision is made, perceptions of leaders within the rising power are vital. This thesis argues that the perceptions of the rising power influence the violence level of hegemonic transitions. In particular, the actions of individuals within the foreign policy decision making system can determine the actions taken by both the rising power and the hegemon. This will be demonstrated utilizing two of the most recent power transition attempts as well as the probable future case of China.

The remainder of this chapter will outline the literature and the methodology this thesis will utilize. The second chapter will explore the standard cases of peaceful transition between the United States and United Kingdom as well as the violent transition attempt by Germany in the Second World War. The third chapter will explore the likely case of the rise of China against the United States.

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<sup>1</sup> Notable exceptions include Mueller (2007) and Pinker (2011).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature of global order is extensive and based on broad theoretical strokes. They are based on historical examples of power systems that have developed periodically. The goal of explaining how these structures have emerged is to attempt to predict the future systems of the planet. This literature review will focus on two broad theories that form the basis of this thesis: power transition theory and foreign policy decision making processes. Other theories will be covered briefly with an explanation as to why they are not sufficient to explain changes in the world order.

This thesis does not utilize the theories of power balance and long cycle. Each of these theories has serious limitations that are incompatible with the cases studied. Despite this, they are useful as a comparative tool and to show the progress towards a more complete theory of world order through the literature.

Power balancing assumes an ordered system that eventually balances between many powers. Unipolar systems tend to be countered over time by the other states, though this has not occurred since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Balancing is also subject to differences in definition. As such, it does not provide a stable view of the world.

In a similar sense, long cycle theory limits itself to adapting other theories into a cyclical world history based on hegemony rising then being crushed by opposition in regular predictable patterns. It made strong predictions about the downfall of the United States following 1973 that has not come to fruition. It also focused on hegemony as innovators rather than military powers.

Power transition shows the most promise but is rooted in realist assumptions of state behavior that simply do not prove accurate in practice. While many of its assumptions provide a complete picture for the world order, complex interdependency blocks pure power-based state

interests. The main area of objection is the violent roots of power transition itself. While wars are quite common, hegemonic wars are, by definition, extensive and radically change the political environment afterwards (Gilpin, 1981; 1988). Violence does not always occur during transitions and the level of violence that does is mitigated by individual actors within the state.

### *POWER BALANCING*

Power balancing theory was originally developed by Waltz and is based within the realist school. It argues that anarchical international systems develop stability over time due to a relatively equal distribution of power among states (Waltz, 1979). When one state accumulates more power than others, the other states in the system tend to band together in order to counterbalance the powerful state or individually develop their resources to counter the state. This is accomplished through the mechanism of self-help.

One of the many serious issues with this theory is the definition of balancing. Schweller (2006), Wohlforth, et al. (2007), and Paul, et al. (2004) each have separate definitions that range from hard to soft. In his wide-ranging analysis of the theory, Paul, et al. (2004) provides for the distinction between three types: hard balancing, soft balancing, and asymmetric balancing that allow for a broad range of activities to be considered balancing.

Schweller argues for the nature of hard balancing. “[B]alancing exists only when the stakes concern some form of political subjugation or, more directly, the seizure of territory, wither one’s homeland or vital interests abroad... Balancing requires that the states target their military hardware at each other in preparation for a potential war” (Schweller, 2006, p. 9). This form of hard balancing can be expanded to include preventing the emergence of a hegemon or undermining its position (Paul, et al., 2004, p. 3). There is no middle ground for diplomatic

efforts, as even peaceful efforts rely on the threat of military force to bring negotiators to the table.

Asymmetric balancing involves the utilization of non-military resources to balance against indirect external or internal threats. This can be expanded to include efforts by subnational units or groups to weaken state actors through subversive means such as terrorism (Paul, et al. 2004, p. 16-17). According to Nexon, this is similar to David's theory of omnibalancing that allows for weak regimes to balance between internal and external threats (David, 1991). This allows for a better understanding of alliance policies rather than simply examining foreign relations (Nexon, 2009, p. 341).

Soft balancing "involves tacit balancing short of formal alliances. It occurs when states generally develop ententes or limited security understandings with one another to balance a potentially threatening state or rising power" (Paul, et al; 2004, p. 3). These may include regional training programs, limited arms buildup, and mutual cooperation on other issues. They also have the ability to transform into hard balancing policies should the external threat become more substantive.

This type of balancing has been criticized for including activities outside of military involvement (Wohlforth, 2004), but as Nexon (2009, p. 343) argues, even the strictest definition of state coercion involves many activities outside of military force (see the definition of soft power, discussed in Nye, 2004). Critiques over the definition of balancing has led to an academic call to eliminate the theory all together or adapt it to a much broader definition (Wohlforth, et al. 2004; Nexon, 2009) while others have defended the theory as justified and useful in its current form. (Paul, et. al., 2004; Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2009). Schroeder (1994) provides a thorough

critique of power balancing theory as a whole. Through a historians' perspective, he argues that the assumptions put forth by power balance theorists cannot be supported by historical fact.

The first assumption is that states seek self-help against threats by acting on their own (see prior discussion of Waltz). Instead of focusing entirely on self-help, European states had multiple forms of responses to serious threats that would cost too much to mitigate on their own. States had the option of either "hiding" from threats through neutrality, taking a defensive position, or allying with one side of a conflict; "transcending" the risk by developing an institutional constraint on the actors to prevent a recurrence; bandwagoning by allying with the stronger side (Walt, 1985); or acting on their own through self-help as a rarely used backup to more successful policies (Schroeder, 1994, p. 117).

The other primary assumption of power balancing is that only the relative power of individual states determines their role and status in the system. Schroeder argues that power is not important to roles. Specialization can be produced willingly by states through either historical accident or willing policy by leaders. States are capable of specializing in a certain role while other states accept this role (p. 124). These roles were rarely created through security arrangements, but instead were only loosely related to the security of the state (p. 127).

Foreign policies were directly affected by these roles as well. Schroeder argues that the Hapsburg Empire best exemplifies this idea. While many of its functions and roles were security-related, such as maintaining the post-Napoleonic Vienna balance, it also kept the pre-nationalist groups suppressed within its borders (p. 128). If they were able to develop their identities, the system would collapse and broad forces of racial identity would reshape Europe once again.

The example of the Hapsburgs provides abundant evidence that power alone does not determine roles. The more important factor is the special requirements of individual states which

collectively agreed to develop a stable regime with specialized roles and functions that ensured peace for decades. Without stable assumptions that work with prior examples, the balance theory is incapable of explaining future events.

Other scholars have noted the non-falsifiability of the theories of balancing behavior (Lakatos, 1970; Vasquez, 1997) and the multiplicity of theories that scholars can utilize in their search for an explanation (Schweller, 1997). These explanations also extend away from pure balancing behavior into other actions by states such as bandwagoning (Waltz, 1979; Walt, 1987; Schweller, 1997), buck-passing, and chain-gaining (Christensen & Snyder, 1990), among others.

The inability for balancing theory to explain a majority of interstate interactions without relying on an expansion of the original theory is troubling. It may be that European systems were unique in their level of cooperation and lack of formal balancing behavior. This is unlike due to the histories of other regions. East Asia has almost always been dominated by a Chinese state with bordering states paying tribute to the central empire that never balanced against it (Mosher, 2000). Even the rise of Japan did not see balancing behavior towards the Chinese empire. Islam unified the Arab world into one state for a substantial period. Infighting only emerged after the state was shattered by foreign invasion. Despite this, no balancing behavior existed up through the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

Scholars tend to focus on European systems for the sole reason that the arena was complicated enough and provides enough examples to experiment with different explanations of state behavior. A relatively small territory with numerous competing actors is a perfect area for international relations scholarship.

The theory provides no explanations for complicated decisions of foreign policy by decision makers nor has it been able to explain peaceful transitions of hegemonic power

throughout history. Historical analysis by various scholars shows that major conflicts within Europe had limited balancing behavior unless they were physically attacked, as in the case of Napoleon (Vasquez 1997, p. 908; Rosecrance & Lo, 1987). These realities prevent this theory from being used to effectively explain hegemonic transition.

### *LONG CYCLE*

Long cycle theory makes the assumption that history repeats itself over a set timetable. Modelski argues that a periodic hegemonic war produces a world leader who presides over the international system for a certain period. This leader will establish the rules of the world order but will eventually collapse because of “deconcentration” of power (Modelski, 1978).

His theory sees five distinct cycles of power since 1494. Each cycle is broken into three phases that last approximately one hundred years apiece. For clarity of description, they are displayed in Table 1.

The leadership cycles described by Modelski are based on those states that provide innovation in methods and modes of behavior rather than military or economic strength. This is why the challenger never becomes the leader at the end of the conflict. The transfer of power is always peaceful, albeit motivated by global conflict. The peace is rooted in becoming a large naval power that limits conflict as well as the political structure being composed of two political parties that necessitate political compromise instead of outward aggression (Modelski, 1978).

Since this theory was established in the middle of the Cold War and the Soviet Union was not seen as weak enough to collapse, this theory has lost much of its legitimacy of prediction. Global war has not occurred despite more than two decades since the collapse of political communism and no state seems close enough to challenge the United States on any military, economic, or innovative front. It seems that global conditions might have eliminated the need for

Table 1: Modetski's Five Cycles of Leadership

| Global War Phase  | World Power Phase                    | Phases of Delegitimization and Deconcentration |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1. 1494-1516<br>France is the challenger during Italian and Indian Ocean Wars           | 1516-1540<br>Portugal is leader      | 1540-1580                                      |
| 2. 1580-1609<br>Spain is the challenger during Spanish-Dutch wars                       | 1609-1640<br>Netherlands is leader   | 1640-1688                                      |
| 3. 1688-1713<br>France is the challenger during wars of Louis XIV                       | 1714-1740<br>Britain is leader       | 1740-1792                                      |
| 4. 1792-1815<br>France is the challenger again during Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars | 1815-1850<br>Britain is leader again | 1850-1914                                      |
| 5. 1914-1945<br>Germany challenges during World Wars                                    | 1945-1973<br>United States is leader | 1973-?   |

Source: Rosecrance, R. (1987). Review: Long Cycle Theory and International Relations. *International Organization*, 41(2) p. 288.

a hegemonic war to motivate changes. Nuclear weapons, mass communication, and the entrenched institutionalization of the post-WWII economic system have seemingly eliminated the ability for a challenger to push against the current leader.

Seeming to lack an answer to this critique, Modetski (1987) is neutral on when and how a hegemonic war will occur in each cycle and even claims that a peaceful transition is possible without a global conflict. Rosecrance (1987) argues that a lack of a causal variable for hegemonic war is difficult to explain away, especially when the hegemon chosen is by no means the most powerful actor (p. 296). There must be some form of causal mechanism to establish a new hegemon. The value placed on legitimacy is also criticized. Being a legitimate power is by no means enough to maintain a certain type of order. In a similar vein, innovative ideas can and will be copied by rivals thus eliminating the hegemon's ability to continue its role over an extended period.

Long cycle provides limited benefit to the cases explored in this thesis. While it does provide a unique way of explaining why certain states become relatively powerful over others, it does not provide a convincing view of hegemonic displacement or creation due to its



fundamental assumption that all major wars are hegemonic in nature. According to Rosecrance (1987): “cycles of warfare do not correlate with cycles of leadership” (p. 296). Wars can occur during a hegemon’s apogee of power. In a similar line, peaceful transition is possible between leaderships as evidenced by the creation of new orders by states not involved in the prior hegemonic conflict.

### *POWER TRANSITION*

Power transition theory was originally developed by Organski and argues that states are organized around a four-tiered hierarchy based on collections of political, military, and economic power. Hegemons are the peak of this system. They are capable of affecting the domestic and foreign policies of other states through their influence. They also generally set up institutions that assist in guaranteeing their power. The secondary powers are great powers that assist in maintaining the system through their influence and are also potential rivals if the dominate hegemon begins to weaken. These states have hegemonic influence within their regions but are incapable of directly challenging the hegemon. The third-tier states are middle powers capable of spreading limited influence on a regional level while the fourth tier are the remaining states that have no influence over others (Organski, 1958).

The stability of this system is ensured by the presence and influence of the hegemon. The lack of financial or political leadership in the state system tends to increase the chances of conflict as the world reverts to an anarchic system in search of order (Organaki & Kugler, 1980). This stability is produced by the production of a public good whether it be free trade or security arrangements against broad threats (Snidal, 1985, p. 581). The presence of a powerful actor allows for a stable regime of free trade and the creation of institutions that maintain the system. Smaller states tend to benefit by not being required to assist in the security of trade systems

while the hegemon extracts benefits of cooperation and business interests being drawn to its central market. This system has been criticized by some scholars since it argues that all states must enjoy the benefits of the regime in order to not feel chaffed by the hegemon (Snidal, 1985).

Power transition occurs when one or more of the secondary powers directly challenges the hegemon and succeeds. These rising powers are states which “have grown to full power after the existing international order was fully established and the benefits already allocated” (Organski & Kugler, 1980; p. 19). If the hegemon is unwilling or unable to adapt to the demands of the dissatisfied power, then the state will attempt to make its own rules by overthrowing the system. This attempt tends to be violent and generally takes the form of a hegemonic war. Gilpin argues that hegemonic wars will occur when: “the differential growth of power in a state system would undermine the status quo” (1988; p. 596).

Gilpin argues that: “A hegemonic war generally involves all of the states in the system; it is a world war. Whatever the immediate and conscious motives of the combatants...the fundamental issues to be decided are the leadership and structure of the international system...Such wars are at once political, economic, and ideological struggles. Because of the scope of the war and the importance of the issues to be decided, the means employed are usually unlimited. In Clausewitzian terms, they become pure conflicts or clashes of society rather than the pursuit of limited policy objectives” (p. 600-601). The ultimate end result of hegemonic wars is a change in the fundamental order of the system. How exactly these changes will occur are unpredictable due to the nature of policy makers in crises to decide policies based on immediate needs.

Following a hegemonic war, the victors will construct a new system that stabilizes the world order as well as prevents a similar war from occurring. The United States constructed a

comprehensive financial system, an international forum for solving global issues, and created a solid military alliance with the defeated challengers following World War II. Great Britain developed a global trading regime and excluded those that violated it. The ancient Romans conquered the known world and accepted former enemies into their ranks in order to instill their values into other cultures. These examples highlight just some of the mechanisms that secure a hegemon's power.

There are several reasons why conflict would probably not erupt in a modern period during a power transition. The first is obvious: nuclear weapons. Any form of major conflict between two great powers is bound to involve the utilization of their nuclear arsenals. The devastation on both sides of the war would result in no clear victor and the ultimate point of the conflict is eliminated. The conception of mutually-assured-destruction may not be enough to prevent nuclear weapons from being used. Despite this, nuclear weapons have a solid taboo on their use decreasing the likelihood of initial assault by nuclear weapons (Tannenwald, 1999). It is worth noting that the taboo has not been tested in an environment of sustained conflict between two nuclear powers.

The second core reason war is unlikely is the entrenched nature of the current international institutions and organization. The United States set up the system in order to maintain its own power but allowed some processes for change in order. The rules and regulations currently in place could theoretically allow a group of great powers to take the place of an American-based unipolar system (Kupchan, et al, 2001). No matter the formal changes in global order and barring some unforeseeable collapse of the American state, the United States will retain a strong position in the global order for at least another century.

Any state wishing to challenge this system will have to eliminate it entirely and replace it with something equally beneficial to weaker states. This monumental task was accomplished by the United States and its allies following one of the most destructive wars in human history. Any challenger wishing to replace the current system will be forced to win a war of even greater proportions. The most likely route will be to work within the system to shift the leadership position away from the United States and towards a rising power. In order to change the game, a state must play the game.

Power transition assumes that hegemonic war is the only outcome of power parity between a rising state and a hegemon. The theory argues that power will inevitably become unequal due to accidents of history or concerted efforts within states. Despite these assumptions, there have been cases of peaceful transition including from the United Kingdom to the United States in the late 1800s. There have also been very destructive wars involving many world actors that did not result in a hegemonic transition.

Lebow & Valentino (2009) provide a rare critique of the fundamental assumptions of power transition theory while also providing straightforward answers to explain these issues. Barring their technical critiques for definitions of rising powers and hegemons, they find little evidence of proper hegemons in the European system (Kaufman, Little, & Wohlforth, 2007). Powerful states have been unable to coerce other states into following their norms. Hegemonies are rooted in colonization of other cultures. This runs counter to traditional theory which argues that other great powers are controlled by the hegemon. They argue that “negotiated compromises between *multiple* powers” (emphasis in original text) are more likely than hegemonic control of a region (p. 393).

DiCicco and Levy (1999) also provide a theoretical opening for further analysis. Through a Lakato methodology of scientific research programs, they find a series of core arguments as well as positive heuristics that can be utilized to support the core arguments. One of these incorporates “mitigating factors such as the challenger’s potential, the speed of the challenger’s rise, the dominant power’s flexibility, and friendly relations between the dominant power and the challenger” (p. 688). DiCicco and Levy go on to demonstrate that each of these factors are weak or otherwise difficult to analyze. This provides an opening for further analysis with unconventional ideas.

These difficulties show strong weaknesses with the power transition theory. As this thesis argues below, the variables missing from power transition theory are rooted in the perceptions of the rising power against the hegemon. Perceptions are formed through individual leaders and foreign policy decision makers as well as history and cultural norms.

#### *FOREIGN POLICY DECISION MAKING*

The decision to carry out a hegemonic war does not come about by accident. Internal policy makers must decide whether to attempt a power transition. Military growth, economic policies that expand the power of the state’s currency and trading resources, and political policies to create an alliance system are examples of actions used in order to develop a more powerful state.

These concerted efforts are fueled by the internal policy making mechanisms within the government. The structure of the decision-making system is a determining factor of foreign policy decision making. An executive has the choice of how to effectively gather information, provide analysis, and direct internal debate over issues (Renshon & Renshon, 2008, p. 518). How this gets accomplished depends on the process utilized.

A large amount of literature seeks to explain foreign policy decision making. The field was originally explored by a variety of scholars in the mid-1960s<sup>2</sup>. They provided the argument that the environment of decision makers affects foreign policy outcomes. Instead of simple balancing behavior or assuming black boxes, states have individual members capable of influencing foreign policy. As with any attempt to explore a complicated situation, the literature has developed into numerous branches of study.

Rational choice assumes that “nations are led by rational, forward-looking, expected-utility-maximizing leaders” (Mesquita & Lalman, 1990, p. 751). It also assumes that rationality is predisposed towards the maintenance of the domestic status quo, namely continuance in office (Mintz & DeRouen, 2010, p. 59). Because of this, the decisions made may not lead to the best outcome (p. 58). Other scholars have noted that this logic may only be “bounded” insofar as the environment in which decisions are made prevent every possible option from being considered (Simon, 1955 & March, 1984).

Building on other concepts, poliheuristic theory argues that decision makers utilize mechanisms to simplify complex foreign policy decisions (Mintz, et al, 1997). This is generally accomplished in two stages. A filtering mechanism eliminates the options that are unreasonable to the state and a cost-benefit analysis narrows the field to the most economical solution (Mintz, et al, 1997). This field also notes the political aspect of decision making and has provided a perspective on multiple foreign policy decisions (Freedman & Karsh, 1991; Taylor-Robinson & Redd, 2003; DeRouen, 2003; James & Zhang, 2005; Redd, 2005).

Bureaucratic systems assume that a group of individual organizations proposing ideas that benefit their vested interests will influence policy. Based on Allison’s 1972 analysis of the

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<sup>2</sup> See Hudson (2005) for an overview this history.

Table 2: Framework of Traditional Power Transition Theory

|                           | <i>Power Parity</i>      | <i>Not Parity</i> |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| <i>Satisfied State</i>    | Neutral                  | Content           |
| <i>Dissatisfied State</i> | War (Transition Attempt) | Discontent        |

Cuban Missile Crisis, this branch argues that leaders will arrive at policy ideas through a series of bargaining games. These games are institutionalized within the system with preselected actors and processes. This bargaining behavior is rooted in achieving the most influence (Allison & Halperin, 1972). Actors within these games tend to promote well defined organizational preferences (Drezner, 2000).

While conflict is inherent between these groups (Mitchell, 2005), representatives tend to act outside of the formal process in order to achieve their goals, e.g. salami tactics, leaking, and coercion, among others (Moaz, 1990; Garrison, 1999). While this field of study has been criticized (Krasner, 1972; Caldwell, 1977; Kasza, 1987), it has provided a relatively accurate view of foreign policy decisions within democratic systems (Smith, 1984; Hollis & Smith, 1986).

These theories do little to interpret the tough decisions foreign policy decision makers must take outside of crisis situations. They all provide a reasonable analysis of normal foreign policy decisions, but decision makers are long-term thinkers or grand strategists. Deciding whether to attempt a power transition can be as simple as stopping a naval vessel for a routine inspection or as dramatic as launching a preemptive nuclear strike.

### *ARGUMENT*

The prior literature on power transition can be placed into a simple framework based on the two causal factors of power transition theory: the level of parity with a hegemon as well as the satisfaction of the rising power. This is shown in Table 2. Once a state reaches power parity

Table 3: Adapted Power Transition Framework

|  |                 | Rising Power's View of the Hegemonic Action |                    |
|--|-----------------|---|--------------------|
|  |                 | <i>Positive</i>                             | <i>Negative</i>    |
| Rising Power's View of their Role in the World | <i>Positive</i> | Peaceful Transition                         | Polarity Shift     |
|  | <i>Negative</i> | Adaptive Transition                         | Violent Transition |

with a hegemon, it must be satisfied with the current order to prevent a violent confrontation and a transition attempt. The prior literature assumes structural conditions explain violent hegemonic conflict. If violence (or lack thereof) cannot be explained, power transition theory allows for mitigating factors to explain this rise (DiCicco & Levy, 1999). This thesis utilizes one such mitigating factor: perceptions.

Perceptions of individual actors within a system are a critical part of any analysis of foreign policy decision making. The most critical act of any state is the decision to undertake a hegemonic power transition against an already existing regime. To this end, the perceptions of those actors would determine the direction this policy would take.

Two distinct types of perception determine the level of violence shown during a transition. These are based on the perceptions of the rising power. The perception towards hegemonic action highlights distinct levels of trust. The perception towards the rising power's current role in the world highlights the level of satisfaction with global order. Trust of the hegemon and the status of the global order are the fundamental blocks of foreign policy for the rising power. These perceptions are determined by the internal foreign policy decision making system as well as cultural history, the political system, and external cues. This thesis will work under the assumption that power parity has been achieved and the rising power is dissatisfied.

A framework is presented in Table 3 that outlines four distinct outcomes that result from a combination of two dichotomous factors: the rising power's view of hegemonic action and the rising power's view of their current role in the hegemonic system. Focusing on the rising power



*Table 4: Determinates of State Intentions*

|                            | <i>Description</i>  | <i>Effects</i>  |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| <b>History and Culture</b> | Past events that define the background of the people and provide a vision for the future.                                 | Shapes foreign policy and trade relations, especially with <u>historically challenging states</u> .   |
| <b>Political System</b>    | The structure and process of foreign policy decision-making.  | Regulates the speed of policy implementation as well as the <u>complexity</u> .                       |
| <b>External Cues</b>       | Information spread by non-official channels or official actions that can <u>only be understood in a broader context</u> . | Shifts the reaction by foreign powers to policy implementation and can <u>change foreign policy</u> . |

as the independent variable is useful since hegemons are expected to act in a rational self-interest in order to preserve their reign. Rising powers have much greater flexibility in their actions and more variance in their perceptions of the world<sup>3</sup>. In this light, the violence level of the hegemonic shift itself is the dependent variable. It can range from completely peaceful to massively violent. It is also worth noting that the transition may not even occur depending on outside political factors or accidents of history.

Each of these factors requires an understanding of internal intentions of the state. Determining these intentions is a difficult prospect (Yarhi-Milo 2013; Rosato, 2014). Both the hegemon and the rising power must be capable of looking inside the other actor to determine policy goals and attitudes. To this end, this thesis argues that three distinct factors can lead to a reasonable understanding of the intentions of other states. These are 1) the history and cultural heritage of the state, 2) the political system, and 3) external cues made in international organizations or with their actions towards other states. The first two are readily understood by intelligence systems while the latter relies upon individual experts or leaders within the diplomatic corps. The nuances of these factors are expanded in Table 4.

<sup>3</sup> This is counter to a majority of power transition literature (Organski, 1958, p. 334-37), which indicates a hegemon would maintain a much more flexible foreign policy compared to the rising power in an attempt to ensure its rule. This thesis assumes a hegemon must utilize a majority of its resources maintaining the international order rather than attempt to stop a rising power's challenge.

Heritage can determine the basis of how states see each other, how world order is supposed to be structured, etc. The political system determines how outside interests can shape the intentions of a single leader or provide cover for his deception. Actions include arms purchases, withholding certain votes in the UN, or slipping a note while at a meeting. Focusing on actions allows for a focus on foreign policy decision making processes.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The system explored within the literature review provides a general framework for understanding the power transition system. This methodology section will fill in the details of the concepts laid out in the argument. This section includes a list of definitions, an expanded explanation of the adapted power transition framework, the definition of the independent variables, and the implications of each quadrant.

### *DEFINITIONS*

Definitions of terms such as “hegemon” and “power” are sometimes host to a litany of debate among academic researchers. There is no set definition for the concepts being discussed within this thesis, especially when comparing different time periods. Despite this fact, it is important to define certain parameters, sometimes arbitrarily, in order to best explore the processes at work in power transition.

Whether the strength of the state emerges from military capacity (De Soysa, et al., 1997) or economic production (Organski & Kugler, 1980; Lebow & Valentino, 2009), the definition of **power** is critical to determining when a transition occurs. Military strength tends to overemphasize the role of defense in determining power structures and rarely indicate the ability to dictate policy to other states. Economic measures, if properly done, are capable of showing relative strength. Raw figures such as gross national product are poor indicators of power,

especially when not controlling for population and economic developmental factors. Other measures such as membership in international organizations or legitimacy are far too vague to be compared over time and rarely highlight hegemonic tendencies. The definition of power within this thesis is the *capacity* of a rising power to instigate a hegemonic transition. This allows for flexibility for when rising powers have an inadequately developed economy, military, or culture. It also allows for a perspective where the state perceives itself as superior to the hegemon.

For the purposes of this thesis, a **hegemon** is defined as a state that has two distinct attributes. It must be one of the most powerful states in the system by most objective measurements, including but not limited to military strength, economic capacity, and cultural dominance. It must also be the lynchpin or founder of a regional or global system of norms. This can include a trade regime dominated by a single state-controlled company, institutions that regulate economic activities between states, and an overarching level of governance with the hegemon as a powerful player. A rising power is a state that is growing economically and militarily to parity with the hegemon as well as attempting to gain more influence within the current global order, especially with rival norms. This definition allows for additional flexibility for states that would otherwise not be equivalent in strength to hegemons to challenge the overall power structure.

**Hegemonic action** is how the state orders the system and what benefits it provides to its members. Stability, free trade, international forums, and military protection are just some benefits. Taxes, tributes, loss of sovereignty, and forced acceptance of foreign norms are just some examples of the costs of order.

There can also be more than one hegemonic system in the world at a time. Due to the vast nature of the planet, especially prior to modern transportation systems, multiple polarities can

Table 5: *Effects of Interstate Relationship*

|                 | <i>Towards Hegemonic Action</i>   | <i>Towards Role in World</i>   |
|-----------------|---|--|
| <i>Positive</i> | Trade deals, military cooperation, treaties covering mutual behavior, coordination in international organizations, membership in said organizations | Cooperation within international organizations, applies international norms to nation, aims to go beyond the minimum of what is expected by said norms |
| <i>Negative</i> | Tariffs on certain goods, lack of or low-level diplomacy only, military buildup near allies   | Rival international organizations founded, establishment of rival norms  |

form each with a surrounding system of loyal states. To this end, hegemonic transition can simply be a transfer of leadership from one state to another of an existing system, a redesign of the global order to better fit the rising power's needs, or even a splitting of an existing order between two powers. This thesis makes little distinction between these options, as the end result is the same: one rising power becomes more powerful than the existing hegemon in the system.

These definitions allow for a clearer picture of the roots of violence within power transitions. Violent tendencies of states that are normally considered dissatisfied can be tempered with the perceptions of the policymakers within a rising power. These perceptions fundamentally transform the actions of the state and have the ability to influence decision makers within the hegemon. Internal pressures are also capable of changing policy, especially within a democratic system. Policymakers may find themselves under threat of electoral defeat or popular overthrow if certain policies are not changed relating to a hegemon.

The view of hegemonic action is equivalent to the measure of satisfaction used within power transition literature. It measures the overall trends of public opinion or individual leader opinion about the policies and objectives of the hegemon. The view of the rising power's current role measures the broad policy objectives of the rising power. Whether the views are positive or negative affect the violence level of transitions. Historical events and reactions of the hegemon are also capable of influencing what course of action the rising power will seek. These actions

are likely to affect the perceptions of the rising power as well. Therefore, this is not a one-cycle game but is based on repeated iterations of interaction.

For simplicity and clarity, the independent variables are operationalized by the terms **positive and negative**. Positive feelings towards hegemonic actions would imply cooperation between the rising power and the hegemon. Coordination with intergovernmental organizations or military alliances is useful indicators of positive views of hegemon. Negative feelings towards hegemonic actions imply harsh rhetoric and even harsher actions against their interests in the region. Funneling materials and money to insurgent groups around the world is a solid sign of distrust as is maintaining a separate financial system from the hegemonic system. It is also possible to have a mixture of both occurring simultaneously. The way in which the rising power balances these agendas determine the feeling towards hegemonic action. The balance tends to be based on historical circumstances and prior interactions on divisive issues.

Positive feelings on the rising power's place in the world order are the equivalent to satisfied power. The rising state is unlikely to directly challenge the hegemon over many controversial issues. There would still be negotiations and pressure over issues that are of vital importance to the rising power and accommodations would be likely. The broad goals of content powers only involve accommodation and cooperation with the hegemonic order. In this case, the rising power believes the leadership of the current order is satisfactory and has no plans to change it towards any idealistic goals.

Negative feelings imply opposite trends. Discontented powers will work against the hegemonic order and will most likely attempt to break it down in lieu of their own system. The rising power would most likely ally itself with states not within the hegemonic order to attempt to counter the influence of the hegemon as well as to further strengthen economic and cultural

strength. Broad policy objectives are likely to involve the removal of restrictive rules through a mixture of diplomacy and sheer political and economic pressure. The level of appeasement required to make a rising power satisfied is dependent upon the individual leaders within the rising power and their perceptions of the situation. The definitions of positive and negative are left intentionally vague in order to provide flexibility under differing historical circumstances.

The goal of any rising power is to limit the expenditure of resources in order to gain additional power. Since hegemony is difficult to maintain, the rising power is unlikely to want to use force to gain its power, though it will use it if necessary. With the opposite logic, the hegemon must balance between the use of resources to block the ascendance of the rising power and the maintenance of its current order (DiCicco & Levy, 1999, p. 688). A violent transition attempt is the least desirable option for both the hegemon and the rising power. Despite this logic, hegemonic wars do occur periodically and are based purely of missteps by both sides that fuel negative perceptions.

A vast majority of scholarly literature fits well into one of the four quadrants. While the framework focuses on the end result, the journey to the quadrant is important as well. It is possible to transfer between the four quadrants based on the reaction of the hegemon towards the actions of the rising powers. Thus, this framework is not simply a one-time event; it develops over time as both sides realize what is occurring. Each side reacts to the trends, and this in and of itself shapes the end result.

As shown in Table 3, the framework provides four distinct outcomes to an attempted power transition. Peaceful transitions are relatively rare and involve mutual understanding of the hegemon and the rising power. Hegemonic war is the classic case of destructive conflict that devastates both parties but a victor emerges with a new hegemonic order. Adaptive transition

sees a middle ground between the two extremes. There is likely to be some tensions and possibly some minor direct conflict but eventually a forced accommodation will be made between the rising power and the hegemon. A change in polarity is incredibly unlikely since negative feelings towards a hegemon and a positive feeling of the world order tends to quickly redirect towards dissatisfaction with a current role.

### *PEACEFUL TRANSITION*

If a rising power has a positive view on both categories, then the outcome will be a peaceful transition of power or an enmeshment of the rising power into the current global order. Which of these occurs is dependent on multiple political factors that fall outside the purview of this thesis.

The scholarly study of peaceful transitions is rather weak since, by definition, the lack of a war is a nonevent. Kupchan, Adler, Coicaud, and Khong (2001) argue that peaceful power transition occurs when a rising power and a hegemon have “benign images” of each other. After a mutual understanding is developed, both states must agree on the new international order as well as legitimize this new order for other states within the system. One of the few cases of a peaceful transition emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century with the transition between the United Kingdom and the United States. This case will be explored in greater detail in the second chapter.

There are two distinct end results from an attempted peaceful transition. First, the leadership role could transfer to a new state. This would be considered a successful transition. The new hegemon would establish a new order with the former hegemon closely connected. The other end result is a failed power transition where the status quo is maintained but the rising power remains friendly with the hegemon. Failed transitions of this type are likely to lead to a successful adaptive transition.

### *HEGEMONIC WAR*

Distrust of hegemonic action and dislike of role is likely to result in a classic hegemonic war. Utilizing Gilpin's theory, this thesis assumes that hegemonic conflicts will be devastating and will result in a reshuffling of global order. Even failed hegemonic transitions will provide incentive for the hegemon to recreate its order by reinforcing alliances as well as establishing an economic or military system of deterrence to other rivals.

Multiple cases throughout history have shown the hegemonic war narrative to be relatively accurate. Wars such as the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), and the Anglo-Dutch Wars (1648-1810) are used as examples of hegemonic wars, since they meet the criteria for transfers of military and economic power (Gilpin 1988, p. 606-610). A modern example of hegemonic war is the European theater of World War II where Germany attempted to overthrow the post-Great War US-centric hegemonic order. This case will be explored in more detail in the second chapter.

The traditional form of violent transition has become implausible due to the development of nuclear weapons. Despite this, a heavy conventional armed conflict in modern times would be devastating regardless of the utilization of nuclear weapons. With current American involvement in a complicated alliance system spanning most of the planet, any potential challenger would have to contend with a global effort to defeat the current system.

### *ADAPTIVE TRANSITION*

If a rising power has a positive view of hegemonic action but a negative view of their role in the world, the end result should be a form of adaptive power transition. This process will see a rising power adapting the current international institutions to meet their own policy goals. There is no need to create alternative institutions as the current ones are quite capable of spreading the rising



power's form of order. In this regard, there is little need to overthrow the existing order, as the rising power is satisfied with the leadership of the hegemon.

Unlike peaceful transition, there will be tension between the rising and hegemonic powers but should not involve a hegemonic-level conflict. A perception of not being taken seriously by the hegemon despite their positive views might result in certain tense situations that could degrade into limited conflict. Sensitive issues perceived to be critical to security and situational deferment of leadership in particular arenas are prone to this sort of boisterousness. This thesis argues that the future likely Chinese transition is a candidate for this sort of transition against the United States. The details of this argument will be elaborated within the third chapter.

#### *CHANGE IN POLARITY*

If a rising power has a negative view of hegemonic action but is satisfied with their role in the world, the result will be a change in polarity, whether it is the formation of a regional hegemony or a bipolar system. The rising power believes a different power can run the current system better than the hegemon but does not wish or is unable to change its global position. Organizations that rival the functions of the existing order would be developed to maintain the material benefits of being a rising power without the responsibilities of maintaining the world order.

Changes in polarity are rare and are not technically transition events as the hegemon remains in power. The only notable example that did not degrade into hegemonic conflict is development of a bipolar order between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and United States in the late 1940s. This case is special due to its origins following a separate hegemonic war as well as the role of nuclear weapons and will not be used as a case study due to the complicated origin of the polarity shift.

Any other case where a transition shift seemed plausible failed due to the rising power becoming dissatisfied with the role in the world system when their attempts to become more powerful were rebuffed or the development of a rival system failed. The dislike of hegemonic action nearly guarantees this eventual slide into hegemonic war. Barring a sudden process of trust-building, polarity shifts remain unlikely to occur in the future.

### *INTERNAL FACTORS*

The selection of positive or negative perceptions of causal factors is rooted in three separate factors that are determined by internal foreign policy decision makers. These are the history and cultural heritage of the state, the political system, and external cues made in international organizations or with their actions towards other states. Each provides competing influences on the decision makers and the end result will be determined by a combination of the three. Since every situation and state is unique, this provides enough interpretive room to explore the nuances of the institutional variables within the government.

The *history and heritage* of the state is the combination of cultural milieu and historical precedent set by prior interactions with major powers. Even if the hegemon had had little contact with the rising power, their history may still be filled with examples of great powers conquering or destroying the countryside. Culturally, a state may have a history of maintaining its own civilization for a period of hundreds to thousands of years. This sort of history would imply a negative relationship with great powers as well as a psychological need to maintain power structures independent of outside influence. A state with little cultural heritage and a relatively friendly history with foreign powers may imply a solidly positive view of great powers and a stable order.

The influence of the *political system* on foreign policy varies depending on system, time period, and the personalities of leadership. Factors such as public opinion, the role of the military, bureaucratic structure, and strength of the head of the government all determine how and why decisions are made. States with democratic values are heavily influenced by public opinion and the competing interests of individual representatives. Foreign policy decision making in these cases tend to be moderate, and strong stances on non-critical issues are rare and depend on the public's mood. Authoritarian systems are based in personality of the leader more than traditional diplomatic discussions. These cases are relatively predictable, especially if the psychology of the leader is well-understood.

The middle grouping of semi-authoritarian or communist foreign policy shows a bit of variation. Some cases have a level of public input while many cases do not. The decision makers are bureaucrats and maintain their own vested interests and perceptions on the world view. Individuals are much more important to the overall process since there is rarely a single leader that makes final decisions.

*External cues* are a form of diplomacy between high level actors who are unwilling or unable to directly communicate to one another. This is the process of "back channels" that are a stable feature of diplomacy between enemy states. Cues are made through diplomatic decisions, such as votes in organizations or state visits by certain nations, or much subtler, such as odd wording in a letter between leaders. Ensuring the message is accurate and the correct actions are made provide an immense challenge for both sides. The foreign policy decision making apparatus must be capable of adapting to these sorts of informal messages as well as replying appropriately. How these systems adapt provides the influence on perceptions of another state. In

some cases, these sorts of back-door approaches are critical to preventing or encouraging a major conflict.

The following chapters will examine the cases of the rise of the United States against the hegemony of the United Kingdom, the attempted transition attempt by Germany against the United States, and the potential transition of China against the hegemon of the United States. The factors outlined here will provide theoretical support to an adapted form of power transition theory that does not assume a violent transition between great powers.

## **Chapter 2 – Peaceful and Violent Transitions**

The extremes of history provide the basis of more moderate events. The peaceful hegemonic transition between the United States and the United Kingdom is defined by a series of seemingly unrelated events that shifted American perceptions and ultimately led to a deep diplomatic friendship. Utilizing the framework developed in the prior chapter, this case highlights the role institutional actors provide in shifting perceptions as well as the dynamics required for peaceful transitions.

The violent attempted transition of the Second World War will be explored through the origins of the conflict, namely the events within Germany from 1918-1939. Since these events alone would have likely instigated a formal conflict regardless of leadership composition, this section will primarily focus on the role of personality on the shape and direction of hegemonic conflicts.

### PEACEFUL TRANSITION: THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE UNITED STATES

Relations between the United States and the United Kingdom<sup>4</sup> emerged with a strong sense of hostility caused by the violent nature of American independence, unclear borders, and belligerence of key actors. These issues were only exasperated by the development of an American sense of uniqueness with a self-seen sphere of influence in South America as well as a highly reactive public and free press. Over a period of twenty years, the threat of war between the two nations transitioned into a close-knit alliance. This transformation in relations has raised fundamental questions of the basis of international relations.

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<sup>4</sup> Before 1801, the nation was known as the Kingdom of Great Britain. Following the Acts of Union in 1800, the nation was known as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. This thesis focuses its study on times covering both states. To limit confusion, this thesis utilizes the shortened name of “United Kingdom”.

Realist theory points to the gradual increase of American material power relative to the United Kingdom (O'Brien & Pigman, 1992) while liberal international theory note the increase in free trade that lead to formal interdependence. Other scholars argued that the British Parliament was pressured into settling border disputes with the United States by internal business interests due to the raw physical potential of development within the American west (Merk, 1934).

Each of these theories does not explain the peaceful nature of the great power shift that occurred. Utilizing the framework developed in the previous chapter, this section argues for a mutual gradual shift of perceptions between the United States and the United Kingdom. Trust was gained once border delineations were agreed upon and the American political system stabilized. The American role in the world was gradually expanded through mutual discussions over critical issues and finally British acquiescence over the American hegemony in Latin America.

#### *BASELINE RELATIONS – NEGATIVE VIBES*

Beginning with the American struggle for independence, early relations between the United States and the United Kingdom were outright hostile. While the movement was ultimately successful, most serious issues between the states were not resolved with the 1783 Treaty of Paris. Neither side necessarily followed the treaty, with individual American states refusing to return British property seized in the war and the British military building additional fortifications in the relinquished territories west of the Appalachians.

While these initial issues were resolved with the later Jay Treaty (1794), American political discourse developed into how best to approach European affairs, especially the continuing conflicts between France and Britain. Over time, the American political system

Table 6: Starting Point of British-American Relations, 1776-1845

|  |                 | Rising Power's View of the Hegemonic Action |                    |
|--|-----------------|---|--------------------|
|  |                 | <i>Positive</i>                             | <i>Negative</i>    |
| Rising Power's View of their Role in the World | <i>Positive</i> | Peaceful Transition                         | Polarity Shift     |
|  | <i>Negative</i> | Adaptive Transition                         | Violent Transition |

decided to remain neutral towards European affairs in order to maintain a free trade system with as many states as possible.

The British attempted to control the growth of their independent colonies by limiting their trade with Revolutionary France, boarding American merchant ships and seizing their sailors, as well as sponsoring Native American raids on American settlements in the ceded territory east of the Mississippi River. These actions infuriated the American public to the point of declaring war in 1812<sup>5</sup>.

The war concluded with the American perception of victory despite no actual territorial changes. The Treaty of Ghent was plagued with the same problems as the 1783 Treaty of Paris and failed to settle substantive differences in shipping rights, territorial control within Oregon, as well as border issues on the northern end of the Louisiana territory (Bourne, 1967).

Negative perceptions from both sides prevented any significant progress towards a general peace. The foreign policies of the two states were focused on which power should control the continent. While the British worked to block American expansion, the Americans pushed heavily for development of their newly acquired territories of Louisiana and the Northwest Territory. Through shrewd political maneuvering, the United States continued to

<sup>5</sup> The war itself was relative minor in composition due to the ongoing Napoleonic Wars. This is probably lucky for the infant American state, as a complete focus on the conflict by the United Kingdom would likely have collapsed the United States. See Latimer (2007) and Stagg (2012) for a thorough history of the conflict.

expand rapidly. This steady expansion and the failed British attempts to stop them formed the basis of American mythology.

#### *THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE EARLY UNITED STATES – GO WEST, YOUNG MAN*

The War of 1812 created a sense of strong American patriotism. The relatively peaceful years following this war led to the settlement of the western territories as well as the formation of a strong American mythos that bound the new nation together. The key feature of this mythos was the concept of American exceptionalism which was rooted in the notions of manifest destiny and the Monroe Doctrine. Each of these was instrumental in defining the American superpower in its later years.

Manifest destiny argued that the expansion of the United States to the Pacific coast was divinely predestined, and the movement was characterized by a religious zeal towards the positive sense of American values and the reshaping of the west to fit these values (Stephanson, 1996). While this was heavily disputed in American political discourse (Merk & Merk, 1963, p. 144-156), the concept promoted the annexation of a vast portion of then-Mexico and half of the Oregon Territory through military conquest or threat thereof.

The Monroe Doctrine was written in 1823 by US Secretary of State John Quincy Adams and defined American foreign policy through the Cold War. Under the policy, the United States would be the protector of the newly independent states of Latin America and would block any further colonization by European powers. This was an attempt by the early American government to create a sphere of influence against Europe. While functionally impossible to maintain with the weak American military, it nonetheless gave the United States leeway to conduct foreign policy that was popular with the public. Britain also had a vested interest in



keeping other European powers out of Latin America to maintain their system of free trade that did not rely on direct colonization (Herring, 2008, p. 153-155).

This mythos was the basis of strong tensions between the United States and Great Britain. Left alone, conflict was inevitable between these two poorly-connected, bickering, and stubborn nations. Within the power transition framework, the United States had a very negative impression of British use of force as well as its role in the system. It was considered a backwater by Britain and utilized force to ensure its interests. While the United States was weak, this was a viable option, but when it grew in power it became more difficult to do so.

Through the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the relations between the two states normalized. This process was two-stepped. Borders were formally delineated between British Canada and the expanding United States through a negotiation mechanism. This was followed by a mutually beneficial trade arrangement that fueled the American industrial revolution.

#### *BORDER DELINEATION CONFLICT RESOLUTION – OREGON AND TEXAS*

Clear border delineations are critical to establishing a stable relationship between neighboring states. Unclear boundaries based on vague treaties or uncharted territories create tension when a natural resource is discovered nearby. Border claims tend to stretch from one extreme to the next, and settlements will always meet somewhere between those extremes (Simmons, 2005).

The westward expansion of the United States and its steadily increasing legitimacy and economic power in the 1840s provides an excellent case study. Border delineation negotiations between British Canada and the United States along the Oregon territory allowed for the creation of a mechanism that resolved later crises. This mechanism fostered the development of a

stabilization of relations in the 1890s known as the Great Rapprochement (Perkins, 1968; Campbell, 1974; Jones & Rakestraw, 1997) and eventually led to a hegemonic power transition.

The Oregon Question rose to American consciousness during the early 1840s, spurred by a sweeping Manifest Destiny and the presidential campaign of James Polk, which argued for strong integration of Texas and a hard push to consolidate American control of the Pacific coast (Merry, 2009). Oregon was jointly occupied by the British and Americans through an 1818 treaty, but a northern border of American influence was never established. Negotiations of the issue took place over twenty years and were stalled by political maneuvering within Congress, diplomatic disputes within Britain, accidental deaths of key players, as well as a distracting Texan independence movement.

The timing of this question was not coincidental. Regional power in the far northern territories of Mexico was weak and the region of Texas aimed for independence. Whether it would fall under American or British influence would determine the eventual fate of the modern southwest, especially the city of San Francisco (Bourne, 1967, p. 121).

The feverish push that defined the American political culture at the time was met with a lukewarm reception from the British government. With British troops, trading forts, and citizens firmly implanted in the Oregon region, the British were capable and had a level of willingness to declare war over the issue (Cramer, 1963, p. 371; Matzke, 2001). Despite this willingness, British internal discussions indicated that the territory of California would be a valuable negotiating chip on the border issue in Oregon (Merk, 1967, p. 394-401).

Certain diplomats nonetheless worked to avoid the possibility. President John Tyler (1841-1845) utilized Edward Everett, the American ambassador to Britain, to negotiate with the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Lord Aberdeen. The Americans offered

functionally the border that exists today: a straight line along the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel with an enclave to allow the entirety of Vancouver Island to remain British (Jones & Rakestraw, 1997, p. 184-185).

The agreement never reached an official status due to the boisterous nature of Congress. Strong rhetoric and legislation in favor of a large swath of territory reaching 54° 40' N was introduced by a bloc within Congress (p. 186). Senators argued that the current arrangement of peaceful joint use of the territory was the only item preventing full scale conflict (p. 187). Cooler heads managed to avoid sparking a war, with the British ambassador concluding it was directed to the public for electioneering.

By 1841, the British ambassador Richard Pakenham was determined to negotiate with a willing partner. The Texan struggle for independence distracted American political institutions away from the Oregon issue. Secretary of State John Calhoun as well as the Tyler Administration believed that the British were intent on maintaining an independent Texas free of slavery and open to free trade. They argued that if supposed British intrigue succeeded, there would be war. Congressmen accused Pakenham as using the Oregon issue as a ruse to distract the American public from Texas (p. 188). This issue led to a deep distrust by the British ambassador and threatened to undermine a peaceful resolution of the Oregon issue.

Following the annexation of Texas in 1845, another push occurred to rapidly consolidate the vast western territories of the American continent. Settlers set off in vast numbers to colonize the region through the now-famous Oregon Trail. Congress passed legislation that built forts and settlements along the route. At the same time, the British navy was expanding to counter a threat from the French but also to prepare for a possible conflict with their former American colonies. The election of the strongly pro-expansionist Democrat James Polk led to a British fear that negotiations would never occur in earnest.

The British found themselves in an untenable position. On the one side, the British public was emboldened by the American rhetoric over Oregon and wanted war. On the other, a plank in the ruling Democratic Party platform was focused on lowering tariffs to British goods. Any derail on Oregon would risk this beneficial business arrangement. In addition, the French were split between supporting their American allies and maintaining the status quo with Britain. Despite these serious issues, a degree of honor was brought into the process with British leaders being verbally disgraced by their American counterparts and calling for conflict to restore a sense of honor. These opinions were not universal. British negotiators Pakenham and Aberdeen believed a peaceful settlement could be found (p. 210). Understanding the negotiating background in this light shows the British were much more open to negotiations that would not entirely exclude them from the region. The only item preventing successful negotiation was the lack of a viable American partner.

The stubbornness of the Polk Administration (1845-1849) was met with an incredibly frustrated new Peel government. The British foreign policy under Peel was based on several distinct points. At the time, the British were averse to gaining additional colonial territories to focus on economic gains (Matzke, 2001, 20). They also believed that overwhelming naval power could ensure a stable system that produced free trade (p. 22). As for the United States, the British were comfortable with a sectionalist political system that produced little more than heavy rhetoric and compromises on serious issues. Trade with the nation was also of vital importance due to the vast territories controlled by the United States and access to raw materials. These interests laid the groundwork for British reaction to internal American politics.

The Polk Administration was simply unwilling to compromise on the Oregon issue. After rejecting a compromise offer from the British with an arbitration agreement, he appointed several

of his most vocal supporters of the 54° 40' line to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as well as maintaining his bellicose language during a State of the Union address (Merk, 1934; Jones & Rakestraw, 1997, p. 201-214). Being rebuffed at every level gave Peel little to negotiate over. He increased naval spending and dispatched a naval vessel to “peacefully” visit the Columbia River (Matzke, 2001, p. 33). He also threatened to accede to the bloc in Parliament willing to declare war with the backing of the British public (Merk, 1934).

By 1846, the new American ambassador Louis McLane delivered this change in policy to the dismay of the Polk White House. The United States was unprepared for a conflict with the world's preeminent naval power, and a moderate bloc within Congress reacted by blocking any push to war by extremists. Polk himself became more moderate and argued that free trade between the two states would be beneficial (Jones & Rakestraw, 1997, p. 243). The British believed that the strong show of force encouraged a compromise position to develop within the United States as well as appease the British public similarly engrossed in war fever (Jones & Vinson, 1953; Matzke, 2001, p. 37).

This moderation on its own was not enough to encourage a swift resolution. By early 1846, an American conflict with Mexico over the still-undefined border with Texas seemed inevitable, which gave Polk strong pressure to wrap up one crisis to focus on the other. In a period of two days, the political situation radically changed. The Oregon joint-occupation agreement was voided on 23 April 1846 and negotiations began formally over the new border. The first battles of the Mexican-American War were fought on 25 April. The pressures of this war ensured swift passage of the treaty after it became clear that stretching the negotiation out would result in the possibility of British support to the failing Mexican military (Jones & Rakestraw, 1997, p. 262).

The formal treaty was signed on 15 June 1846 and gave the Americans the exact line on the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel the British had rejected initially. The British policy of naval containment placed pressure on the American government, but it was a direct nationalistic conflict over the southern border that forced the Americans to act or risk a formal containment by British troops in both Oregon and Mexico.

While the role of domestic political pressures was important for the proper mechanisms of policy change, the broader concept that fueled this change was the frustration of British leadership to messy American democracy. Their perceptions towards the Americans were mostly as errant children unable to control their impulses (Bourne, 1967; Campbell 1974). The British public were outraged by the brash language utilized by the Americans. Instead of focusing the issue on the broader foreign policy debate, the British government utilized an economic argument expounding upon the benefits of free trade and the relative worthlessness of the antiquated fur system (Merk, 1932; 1934). In combination with the politically unpopular repeal of the Corn Laws, this treaty also benefited the internal British political climate, as it opened peaceful access to western Canada for free trade and avoided a costly conflict (James & Lake, 1999). It was a firm compromise for both sides. The resolution of the boundary dispute without bloodshed proved to the United Kingdom that the excesses of American democracy could be moderated by institutions and wise leadership. This win-win situation was the continuation of the British trend to pursue mutually satisfactory resolutions, which is what allowed them to remain a hegemonic leader for decades.

Despite this apparent policy victory for the British, the Americans came out much stronger militarily and diplomatically. They obtained Texas, much of the modern southwest and northwest, San Francisco, and Puget Sound. Even more effectively, the victory over Mexico

highlighted British acquiescence towards American hegemony over North America (Bourne, 1967, p. 170-173).

The resolution of the Oregon Question established the framework for settling of future policy disputes. Britain would continue to pursue win-win scenarios while America would continue to rise in economic power and political clout. The process of negotiation forced the British to contend with a demagogic political class that was tuned to the moment and not to grand diplomacy. The only way the British could gain peaceful relations and maintain free trade was to compromise and work to build a professional network instead of relying on rhetoric. To this end, later British governments would utilize key individuals chosen for their connections in American government to determine the intentions of the American politician. Once these intentions are known, crises can be avoided or resolved peacefully (Glasner, et al. 2015).

#### *PERCEPTION SHIFT – TRADE POLICY*

The border resolution began the process towards shifting perceptions by the rising power towards the United Kingdom. Once seen as an antagonistic enemy of American independence, American views began to see them as a viable trading partner, unwilling to interfere with a sphere of influence in Latin and South America. At the same time, British policy shifted to accept the American state as an expanding power. The British goals against the United States were originally to contain its expansion westward as well as develop deep trading ties to placate the government. The Americans resisted at every point to ensure independence. Over time, both sides realized the containment policy established during the colonial period was ineffective due to a combination of steady American economic growth as well as British internal political shifts.

The political interdependence of the two states grew to include a reciprocal free trade system over several decades. Prior to this system, a complicated network of tariffs on imported

goods regulated the prices for items only produced in a select region or secrets of a manufacturing technique. This system encouraged a mercantilist process of trade that saw a circular trading regime. Starting in 1820, Britain slowly began moving towards a more open system with limited reductions in tariffs (Stein, 1984, p. 361).

This created a problem for revenue due to Britain's reliance on fees to fund government systems. Other countries, including the United States, were also unwilling to lower their tariffs to encourage free trade (Cain & Hopkins, 1980). This led to a large trade deficit that was filled by British capital into the early industrializing United States (Stein, 1894). This infusion forced cooperation between the two nations and heavily influenced the developmental pace of America (Brayer, 1949).

The American reaction to this shift was very positive. Instead of a strong colonial power, they began to see Britain as a solid partner for free trade that was committed towards a mutually beneficial policy of economic development. A rapid development of the interior of the expanded nation was the market where British steel and machinery would find its biggest share which only strengthened ties. The only remaining step to ensuring peace was the development of a new role for the United States in the world.

This shift was the first step to creating a peaceful hegemonic transition. The British reliance on tariffs for governmental income prevented flexibility in foreign policy. Once Britain was firmly entangled in the American economy, they were bound by its economic obligations to remove any obstacles to American growth. Due to this, American foreign policy became bolder and began to rub against the interests of Britain.



Table 7: Shift Caused by Trade Policy Development, 1845-1900

|  |                 | Rising Power's View of the Hegemonic Action |                    |
|--|-----------------|---|--------------------|
|  |                 | <i>Positive</i>                             | <i>Negative</i>    |
| Rising Power's View of their Role in the World | <i>Positive</i> | Peaceful Transition                         | Polarity Shift     |
|  | <i>Negative</i> | Adaptive Transition                         | Violent Transition |

### *PERCEPTION SHIFT – 1895 VENEZUELA BORDER CRISIS*

New international orders are developed over time through a confluence of events and policies that eventually shift global orders, even if it is accomplished through a massive conflict. While trade and economic considerations were vital in shifting perceptions about the hegemon's actions, the establishment of a new role for a rising power as well as its satisfaction with this role is critical for peace.

The new role can be explored through a border dispute between the newly independent state of Venezuela and the British Colony of Guyana in 1895. This crisis nearly saw a formal war until the United States unilaterally moved in as an arbitrator under the Monroe Doctrine. The implications of British acquiescence to American involvement highlight the sphere of influence promoted by a more powerful and relatively unrestrained American military as well as British acceptance of a slowly shifting global order.

The dispute began with a vague border established between the Spanish and the Dutch colonies on the South American shore. When the Dutch ceded Guyana to Britain in 1814, the border issue remained unresolved due to lack of settlements and inaccurate surveys. After the failure of negotiations in 1887, Britain declared their claim to be final and Venezuela severed relations. Both sides established military checkpoints within the disputed region and the threat of war was constant.

The repeated calls for American involvement by Venezuela went unanswered until they utilized a former American ambassador William L. Scruggs to petition the American Congress. He produced a pamphlet arguing the British aggression was violating the Monroe Doctrine and pushed for legislation to counter the threat. A resolution (H. Res. 252; 53<sup>rd</sup> Congress) calling on arbitration of the border dispute was introduced by a friendly congressman and became policy by a unanimous vote by both houses and signed by President Cleveland on 22 February 1895.

In May, the Nicaraguan crisis caused an American outrage over the heavy use of British military force so near to the United States<sup>6</sup>. Secretary of State Richard Olney sent a letter to Parliament that argued the border arbitration should be resolved peacefully and with American assistance under the logic of the Monroe Doctrine claiming that “today the United States is practically sovereign on this continent, and its fiat is law upon the subjects to which it confines its interposition” (Herring, 2008, p. 307). The British were outraged by the broad interpretation of American superiority in the Western Hemisphere and considered the commission a threat of possible conflict if they did not acquiesce (Gelber, 1966, p. 3). President Cleveland pushed the issue by establishing a commission to study the boundary dispute under the assumption the region was under the American sphere of influence and European activities were limited by American power.

The strong increase in war rhetoric simply backfired on Cleveland. Every major actor outside of the Administration was strongly opposed to these moves. The press ridiculed the idea, the business community was enraged, and his own Democratic Party allies stood opposed to it. In a similar sense, the British also did not wish for conflict over a minor border dispute. A large membership in Parliament moved to ensure arbitration (Zakaria, 1998, p. 151). An agreement

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<sup>6</sup> See LaFeber (1998), 218-29 for a study of the Nicaraguan crisis in American foreign policy. Also see Bourne (1967) p 181-185 for the British perspective.

was reached in November 1896 settling the border dispute and establishing an arbitration panel that eventually ruled heavily in favor of Britain.

This episode highlights the lengths the United States was willing to take to ensure a broader more powerful role in the world. By threatening war with the hegemon at the perceived height of its power, despite their interconnectivity, the Americans highlighted their need to be involved in regional affairs. The reaction to counter this move on both sides of the Atlantic highlights the distinct shift in perceptions.

By the 1890s it was clear that the United States was a global power economically due to its underdeveloped interior and relative lack of population. Relative to the rest of the world, the United States surpassed every other state in every measure of production. Paul Kennedy argued that the United States “seemed to have all the economic advantages which some of the other powers possessed in part but none of the disadvantages” (Kennedy, 1987, p. 201).

Despite its growth, its military and diplomatic corps were minuscule following the Civil War. This was a result of the intentionally designed decentralization of the American government (Zakaria, 2008, p. 55). While the president was considered in charge of foreign relations, Congress controlled the development of formal policy and the fiscal resources to handle diplomacy. This led to an ambivalent foreign policy that didn't favor any particular side unless the public demanded a response. In affairs generally outside the boundary of American interest, foreign policy was limited to the whims of Congressional oversight. Essentially, the weakness of this system benefited the long-term stability of the American state. It avoided unnecessary conflicts, limited alliance entanglements, and brought a stable relationship with Great Britain. Once the bureaucracy was professionalized and the State Department became the

Table 8: Shift Caused by American Involvement in Venezuelan Crisis, 1895

|  |                 | Rising Power's View of the Hegemonic Acton |                    |
|--|-----------------|--|--------------------|
|  |                 | <i>Positive</i>                            | <i>Negative</i>    |
| Rising Power's View of their Role in the World | <i>Positive</i> | Peaceful Transition                        | Polarity Shift     |
|  | <i>Negative</i> | Adaptive Transition                        | Violent Transition |

focal point for diplomacy<sup>7</sup>, the United States could define its role in the world as a quiet hegemon through the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The peaceful development of the American hegemon against an established power is nonetheless odd in history (Kupchan, 2001). Its relative isolation, abundant natural resources, and democratic system allowed it to avoid foreign entanglements while promoting an expansionist agenda. The 19<sup>th</sup> Century American foreign policy decision-making apparatus heavily utilized back channels to ensure that domestic rabble rousing did not turn into formal conflict. This was accomplished through proper diplomats or special envoys as low-level individuals would be unable to gain access and proper international institutions did not exist. Eventually, a win-win scenario was constructed to allow both sides to save face when making serious compromises. This process repeated itself multiple times until both sides were comfortable acting outside of their governments' wishes to ensure peaceful relations.

This process changed after the professionalization of American foreign policy decision-making. Proper diplomatic channels were opened and ambassadors were exchanged with nearly every nation. Congress was mostly cut out of the process and the President became the foreign policy implementer with the Secretary of State as the chief diplomat. This allowed for more formal discussions and cemented the friendly relations between two great powers.

<sup>7</sup> The nuances of this change are well outside the purview of this thesis. See Zakaria (1998) p. 48-55 for a solid overview.

## VIOLENT TRANSITION: GERMANY'S FAILED HEGEMONIC TRANSITION

The clearest example of a modern hegemonic war is the case of the Second World War. Germany rose from the ashes of a humiliating military defeat to fight an even bloodier war against its perceived enemies: The United States and the United Kingdom. This section will focus on the slow shift away from any possibility of peaceful relations with its neighbors through the enforcement of the Treaty of Versailles, the resulting economic crisis and lack of relief granted, the slow rise of Nazism, and the war that Adolf Hitler created. The war itself will not be analyzed directly as the minutia of Germany's eventual loss is well-tread. In the presented framework, it is the origins of the hegemonic transition attempt that are important.

The War emerged from the firmly negative perceptions of the German leadership towards the post-Great War global order that was designed to prevent German development of industry and expansion of trade. France in particular wished to avoid a powerful German state. Hitler's ability to increase economic capacity and militarization gave an opening for Europe to reintegrate Germany into the overarching system peacefully with only mild territorial concessions. This section argues that the closed autocratic system within Nazi Germany defined by Hitler himself prevented these attempts from succeeding. War was likely following Versailles, but the scope and direction of the war was directly shaped by the perceptions and philosophy of Hitler. His philosophy prevented any form of accommodation with the hegemonic order and forced the hegemon to destroy the violent rising power. Unlike the previous section, there will be no shifts in the adapted transition framework. The only actors that could have prevented an attempted violent transition did not have the decision-making capacity to accomplish it.

Table 9: Relations between Germany and British/American Order 1919-1945

|  |                 | Rising Power's View of the Hegemonic Action |                    |
|--|-----------------|---|--------------------|
|  |                 | <i>Positive</i>                             | <i>Negative</i>    |
| Rising Power's View of their Role in the World | <i>Positive</i> | Peaceful Transition                         | Polarity Shift     |
|  | <i>Negative</i> | Adaptive Transition                         | Violent Transition |

This section will proceed as follows. First there will be a discussion of the historical background of the German state and how the Treaty of Versailles motivated a shift towards authoritarian dictatorship. This will be followed by a description of the political dynamics of the Weimar Republic that led to a consolidation of power by the NDSAP. Following this will be an analysis of Hitler's political philosophy and personality in order to demonstrate that there was no chance of peace under a Hitler-led Germany.

#### *BACKGROUND OF THE GERMAN WORLD WAR*

Founded formally in 1871, Germany was a powerful empire emerging from the ashes of the Holy Roman Empire. It maintained strong central leadership with an effective and efficient bureaucracy. With the competent leadership of Bismarck, it developed a delicate balancing system that avoided major European war for decades. Despite these efforts, the system collapsed and the Great War destroyed the German Empire in 1918. Germany emerged from the Great War humiliated and weakened. Its government was reformed into an ineffectual pacifist republic and its people bound to economic reparations to the victors.

The treaty that dictated terms to the Germans was signed in Versailles in 1918. It was universally regarded as harsh towards Germany (Boemeke, et al. 1998). It limited the physical number of troops, airplanes, and naval ships that Germany could produce, demilitarized the border region along the Rhine, confiscated all overseas colonies, forced the transport of several industrial factories to France, and forced a series of repayments to the victorious allies. Outside of the obvious impact of the loss of economic capacity, the treaty humiliated the German people.

A constitution was adopted in 1919 in the city of Weimar. It established a proportional parliamentary system with a popularly elected head of state. The democratic parties gained plenty of support, but the heterogeneous nature of the German state ensured numerous outlier parties would have support within the system (Friedrich, 1933). At every point through the political history of this republic, the major political parties slowly pushed the state back towards authoritarianism, as only a weak coalition could govern the state effectively<sup>8</sup>. The internal debate was focused on the slow repudiation and possible renegotiation of the Versailles Treaty.

Economically, the government was unable to quickly react to the economic depression that swept the world in the 1920s and ultimately the reparation system collapsed<sup>9</sup>. Politically, the system was stymied by a multi-party system that rarely formed a stable government and eventually was overtaken by radicalism. Culturally, the German people were familiar with democratic processes (Anderson, 2000) and understood the balance between efficiency and freedom. They nonetheless desired a stronger government to match the relatively strong state that existed (Anderson, 2000, p. 400-415).

### *THE STRUCTURE AND FAILURE OF WEIMAR*

The Weimar republic was a system forced upon the public as a way of eliminating the influence of elites within Germany and Prussia (Anderson, 2000). It was designed around a parliament (the Reichstag) with proportional representations and maintained a popularly elected president that acted as head of state. The president was reliant upon a stable majority in the Reichstag to act outside of emergency procedures under Article 48<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> See Hiden (1996) for an excellent history of the collapse of the Weimar system.

<sup>9</sup> The nuances of the economic slump are analyzed in a variety of economic texts, especially James (1986).

<sup>10</sup> Article 48 allowed the president to act outside of the authority of the Reichstag under emergency circumstances. These orders were countersigned by the Reich Chancellor who acted as the head of government and was accountable to the Reichstag. Before Hitler, it was utilized heavily to ensure the stability of the state in extraordinary economic conditions. Of note, Hitler gained dictatorial powers through Article 48 and emergency laws passed by President Hindenburg. The Weimar constitution still existed and functioned through the war.

The democratic parties were split between the SPD (center-left) Zentrum (also called Centre), DDP (progressives), and DVP (liberals). Two primary coalitions developed over time, but their ineffectiveness gave rise to the extremists who sought to eliminate the republic. The country had a strong fascist movement (NSDAP) as well as an equally powerful communist movement (KPD). As with most communist movements, infighting was common, and it was never able to find an electoral path that allowed it many seats in the Reichstag (Hiden, 1996 p. 63-8). Fascists always had stable leadership and a commanding voice in Adolf Hitler. Its support slowly rose over time and eventually resulted in the end of the Weimar system.

This highlights the historical divide that existed in the German Empire between socialism and the democratic conservatives and liberals. Every party had a very narrow interest to serve and acted in a majority only with certain issues. Each vote was comprised of differing majorities. This was an inefficient system yet only two governments faltered under a no-confidence vote (Hiden, 1996, p. 86).

Much like modern federal systems, different regions maintained local administrative systems, called *Länder*. These regions maintained control over education, judicial systems and the police forces (Hiden, 1996, p. 81-2). While Reich laws maintained precedence, the semi-independence of the Lander allowed for a more stable administrative body so the chaos in the Reichstag did not spread to the public.

The government maintained regularly scheduled elections, but due to the nature of the coalition-reliant Reichstag, snap elections were held regularly. In its fourteen-year life, there were eight elections. Table 10 shows the results from each election until the National Socialist seizure of power in 1933. Out of these elections rose twenty-one differing governments between 1920 and 1930 and very few received approval to govern from the Reichstag (Hiden, 1996, p.



Table 10: German Parliamentary Election Results, 1919-1933

| <b>Election</b>   | <b>SPD</b> | <b>Centre</b> | <b>DDP</b> | <b>DNVP</b> | <b>KPD</b> | <b>NSDAP</b> |
|-------------------|------------|---------------|------------|-------------|------------|--------------|
| 19 January 1919   | 37.90%     | 19.70%        | 18.60%     | 10.30%      | –          | –            |
| 6 June 1920       | 21.70%     | 13.60%        | 8.30%      | 15.10%      | –          | –            |
| 24 May 1924       | 20.50%     | 13.40%        | 5.70%      | 19.50%      | 10.50%     | 6.50%        |
| 7 December 1924   | 26.00%     | 13.60%        | 6.30%      | 20.50%      | 3.60%      | 3.50%        |
| 20 May 1928       | 29.80%     | 12.10%        | 4.80%      | 14.20%      | 10.60%     | 2.60%        |
| 14 September 1930 | 24.53%     | 11.81%        | –          | 7.03%       | 13.13%     | 18.25%       |
| 31 July 1932      | 21.58%     | 12.44%        | –          | 5.91%       | 14.32%     | 37.27%       |
| 6 November 1932   | 20.43%     | 11.93%        | –          | 8.34%       | 16.86%     | 33.09%       |
| 5 March 1933      | 18.25%     | 11.25%        | –          | 7.97%       | 12.32%     | 43.91%       |

Source: Nohlen & Stöver (2010).

81).

The economic instability of 1923 caused a fundamental transformation of Weimar politics. A massive inflationary process was forcefully ended through massive government intervention (James, 1986), the public began to distrust the government's ability to manage foreign affairs (Childers, 1983, p. 263), and the membership of political parties began to shift away from traditional democratic ideals towards the reactionary concepts promoted by the communists and fascists (Broszat, 1981; Childers, 1983). Hitler found support in most every social category, including the former middle class, the blue-collar worker, the retired classes, and even large portions of the established cultural elite (Childers, 1983, p. 264-266). Despite this broad support, the expectations of economic security and national prestige could never be accomplished during an electoral cycle. The NSDAP position was electorally untenable, which forced consolidation of power in 1933.

Ultimately, the nature of the National Socialist movement was to ensure that the public was continuously motivated to act against a perceived threat (Hiden, 1996, p. 77-79). While this threat originally was against the ineffective Weimar governmental bureaucracy and their

economic policies, it soon turned towards a racial hatred of the Jewish population. This successful strategy was heavily motivated by the opinions and philosophies of one man.

### *ADOLF HITLER*

Adolf Hitler became Chancellor through political pressure and parliamentary trickery (Broszat, 1981, p. 57-96). The passage of the Enabling Act in 1933 eliminated the effectiveness of the democratically elected Reichstag and allowed Hitler himself to authorize laws under the emergency powers listed in the Weimar constitution. Over time, the bureaucracy fell to his influence with the steady replacement of opposition members with National Socialist supporters (Broszat, 1981, p. 97-132). Despite the slow march towards consolidation of power, the primary tool to ensure compliance of the population was through the rhetorical power of Adolf Hitler.

Hitler's mannerisms, rhetoric, and policy positions were the driving force behind the conflict and its eventual course (Bullock, 1991; Kershaw, 1998). His early views were focused on the apparent role of the Jewish people to cause a German military defeat (Weinberg, 1995, p. 32). He believed that these forces controlled the Weimar republic and would be rooted out by a nationalist population. This conspiratorial Social Darwinist philosophy continued into his general speeches when arguing that recent immigrant groups were only diluting the racially superior Germans that held out against the outside forces (p. 33).

The second category of Hitler's philosophy was based on geographic space. A large amount of German territory was annexed by its neighbors to limit its industrial capacity. In Hitler's philosophy, this limited the ability of the German state to maintain its culture and self-sufficiency. He also believed war was a justifiable policy rather than a last resort (Weinberg, 1995, p. 37; Bullock, 1991 p. 176). Hitler justified this attitude with the public's disgust for the Treaty of Versailles (Bullock, 1991, p. 173; Hitler, 1926).

He also firmly opposed communism and liberalism. Only by focusing the entire population towards ensuring the stability of the state, he was able to eliminate any rivals to his dictatorship. The leadership of the various parties fled to other nations or were eliminated through political assassination while democratic levers of power were slowly turned over to Hitler himself (Broszat, 1981, p. 294-327). He became the focal point of all governmental function. He became the Third Reich.

#### *APPEASEMENT AND CONFLICT*

Once Hitler was in power, his rhetoric unsettled the European powers. Policies emerged to renege on certain treaty stipulations including allowing the rearmament of the Rhine region, negotiating over German ownership of the Sudetenland, and tolerating the merging with Austria. The European powers, especially France and England, strongly opposed these moves, but understood the need for substantive changes in Germany to avoid outright war. The British Prime Minister from 1937-1940, Neville Chamberlain, was especially vocal on these points (Gilbert & Gott, 1963). He believed the rise of Hitler to be a logical reaction to the combination of the Great Depression and the harsh terms of Versailles. To this end, he was willing to compromise with the Germans on a multitude of issues.

The success of these policies only increased Hitler's confidence and his support within the German public. With domestic politics completely under National Socialist control, he shifted his rhetoric against the communists. Hitler saw the greatest threat from the Soviet Union (Hiden, 1996, p. 227-31). He believed the nation was founded by a Jewish conspiracy and it would act against German expansionism in the Balkans.

Hitler had no negative intentions towards the British system and wished to ensure neutrality during a war against the common communist threat (Hughes, 1988, p. 290). The only

way to ensure this neutrality was through bilateral negotiations. To avoid meddling from other Allies, he withdrew Germany from the League of Nations and ignored international conferences on disarmament. This poor maneuvering by Hitler only led to British hostility. The lack of multilateral institutional involvement led to the general lack of communications as well as a cloud of uncertainty over the intentions of both Britain and Germany.

During this time, the United States remained firmly neutral in international affairs. As previously established, it was a quiet hegemon who would have to have its public motivated to fight the threat of fascism in both Asia and Europe. The American public was sympathetic to the German cause prior to Hitler, but were surprised when the system collapsed into a dictatorship (Weinburg, 1995, p. 182). Hitler saw the United States as a powerful adversary that would be drawn into the war eventually and motivated the public to stand opposed to outside aggression by the United States (Hildebrand, 1973, p. 21). The American government under Franklin Roosevelt knew the dangers of Hitler and understood his intentions clearly, yet were unwilling to involve themselves unless directly attacked (Weinburg, 1995, p. 187). This gave Hitler enough reason to ignore the American threat until he was ready to strike.

Ultimately, the NSDAP failed to secure a hegemonic victory against the combined might of the American-British military. This was entirely due to the consolidation of German power into one individual. As the ultimate gatekeeper, Hitler was unable to maintain a balanced broad policy agenda that could accomplish his goals. His sheer hatred of his enemies ensured that no opposition to his whims would exist. His resentment towards foreign powers ensured no peace could occur. His diplomatic gestures backfired, and he had no knowledge of the intentions of his possible enemies. This case highlighted the violent type of hegemonic transition, but it also showed that not all hegemonic transition attempts will be successful.

## COMMENTS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter has highlighted the extreme examples of hegemonic transitions: entirely peaceful and fully violent. Each case fits well within traditional power transition literature as defined by Organski (1958), but the theory alone is not sufficient to explain the peaceful nature of the American transition. This chapter has demonstrated that perceptions do fundamentally affect the violence level of historical transition attempts.

Organski argued that British acceptance was due to American support of the British-French system (DiCicco & Levy, 1999, p. 688 footnote 36). This thesis argued that American acceptance of a European system was unsustainable to the fiercely independent American public. It required a fundamental shift in perceptions to ensure any level of peaceful interaction. This involved a sustained effort on the part of the American foreign policy decision-making system. The European powers attempted a similar approach with the rise of Nazi Germany, but it failed due to the uncooperative processes built into the regime as well as the equally stubborn philosophy of its leader.

The ideas of Organski (1958), Organski and Kugler (1980), and DiCicco and Levy (1999) appear to be mostly correct. The adaptations developed by this thesis provide additional clarity to the nuances of the transition process. The evidence provided by historical examples allows for a more accurate analysis of the likely future case of the transition from the United States of America towards the People's Republic of China, which will be demonstrated in the following chapter.

### **Chapter 3 – The Rise of China and the Future of American Hegemony**

The previous chapters have established the baselines for violence levels of hegemonic transitions. This chapter will describe the process in which the People's Republic of China (PRC) will become the global hegemon by the end of the century following a steady decline of American power. The process is not likely to be entirely peaceful as Sino-American relations are stressed by several complicated issues.

A violent transition is not desired by either nation. Nonetheless, a rising power is capable of initiating violent action if the hegemon is unwilling to compromise. The internal political system of the PRC is based on Communist Party-centric leadership guiding the heavily regulated economy and military. While the consumeristic behavior of the United States currently fuels the PRC economy, a slowly rising middle class has begun to shift the interests of the Politburo. These changes will change the behavior of the government and allow greater flexibility in foreign policy decision-making. The PRC is only interested in maintaining the economic and political independence of the country as well as continuing to expand its geopolitical interests in the region.

The United States currently has economic, military, and cultural supremacy over all other nations, much like Britain in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Unlike Britain, it has built a system of international organizations that ensure its stability and compliance from deviant actors. The United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and World Trade Organization all assist in American hegemony.

The election of Donald Trump to the American Presidency has ignited a debate on America's role in the world. The American foreign policy establishment has been blindsided with

wild rambling inconsistent and inflammatory statements of its commander in chief<sup>11</sup>. A large number of critical posts remain unfilled within the State Department and the diplomatic corps. The administration has also eliminated the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal, reneged on the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA), began implementing tariffs on certain imports, began renegotiation over the North American Free Trade Act, and withdrew from the Paris Climate Accords.

Despite these changes, the United States is in a strong economic, military, and social standing. While one man cannot destroy a hegemon from the inside, the fact that such a man can be freely elected and allowed to continue this charade of competence indicates to China and the rest of the world that the United States is truly beginning to falter on its own. This provides an opening for a steadily rising power to assume more responsibility on the world stage. China has begun the process of a similar trade deal to the Trans-Pacific Partnership with a focus on Chinese trade, has founded and expanded an alternative to the World Bank, and is taking large steps towards ensuring compliance with the Paris Accord's climate change requirements. It appears to be slowly setting up an alternative system and taking initiatives on issues that the United States is leaving behind.

This thesis argues that the PRC is generally pleased with the system and the role the United States is playing, yet it stands in the way of broader ambitions. Therefore, assuming there are not any accidents of history, the rise of the PRC will be generally peaceful as they seek to provide an adaptive transition. The structure will not change, but the leader will.

This chapter will utilize the framework developed to show that the Chinese government is aiming to work within the current global system to benefit its long-term development and resolve geopolitical issues in its favor. This will culminate in the resolution of long-

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<sup>11</sup>For numerous examples updated nearly daily, see <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump>

Table 11: Current Status of Likely Sino-American Transition

|  |                 | Rising Power's View of the Hegemonic Action |                    |
|--|-----------------|---|--------------------|
|  |                 | <i>Positive</i>                             | <i>Negative</i>    |
| Rising Power's View of their Role in the World | <i>Positive</i> | Peaceful Transition                         | Polarity Shift     |
|  | <i>Negative</i> | Adaptive Transition                         | Violent Transition |

standing issues including the status of Taiwan, a North Korean peace deal, settlement of delineation of the South China Sea, formation of a solid intellectual property regime, and a normalization of human rights issues.

The remainder of the chapter will proceed with a brief history of the Chinese civilization focused on its hegemonic role in the region as well as modern interpretations of this role. Then there will be an analysis of the current foreign policy decision making structure within China and its attitudes on foreign policy. This will be followed by a discussion of the public statements and policies made by the Chinese government. This will all be connected into an analysis of the current geopolitical issues facing the Sino-American relationship.

## HISTORICAL NORMS

Chinese historical norms are rooted in three interconnected factors: the sheer length of its history, the cyclical nature of its stability, and the centralization of China to the culture of the region. Recorded Chinese history began with the Xia Dynasty (2030-1600 BC) and gradually developed into more sophisticated cultures under the Shang (1600-1046 BC) and Zhou (1046-256 BC) Dynasties. The Zhou Dynasty saw the development of the Mandate of Heaven, which grants legitimacy to the Chinese leadership<sup>12</sup>. Over time, the semi-feudal system began to collapse as various military leaders began to vie for regional control. Known as the Spring and

<sup>12</sup> The Mandate of Heaven was based upon the concept of "heaven" controlling natural forces and will of the universe. If an unfortunate series of natural disasters would occur, riots would develop and overthrow the ruler, as the people felt the will of the heavens was lost. See Ming-ling (2012) for a nuanced discussion.



Autumn Period (722-476 BC), this period saw the development of traditional Chinese philosophies, including Confucianism, Taoism, and Legalism.

Slowly, the collapsed states began to coalesce into several large states that began to compete for complete dominance. This chaotic period is aptly called the Warring States period (476-221 BC) and saw the advancement of mathematics. Ultimately, the states were combined into the Qin Dynasty (221-207 BC) by Ying Zheng. He settled much of central China into a cohesive empire under the Legalist system. He also utilized a bureaucratic structure that eventually developed into the imperial examination system, which emphasized individual excellence in calligraphy and general knowledge of the Imperial Chinese structure<sup>13</sup>.

This stability remained through the Han Dynasty (202 BC-220 AD). China expanded through military conquest while mathematics and trade flourished on the Silk Road. Ultimately, a series of foreign invasions, natural disasters, and economic collapse shattered the system with a series of short-lived dynasties until an eventual consolidation under the Tang Dynasty (618-907). This time is considered the pinnacle of Chinese civilization (Hucker, 1975, p. 139-147). Massive population growth occurred due to the relatively equal distribution of land, fair military conscription system, and economic connectivity with the world. Once again, the system collapsed with a series of rebellions and small dynasties until the relative peace under the Song Dynasty (960-1279) was ended by the Mongol invasions.

When the Chinese were rid of the Mongol influence, the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) turned inward and became xenophobic to any external influence. The state regressed into agrarian society and the government became much more authoritarian, yet maintained a strong bureaucracy stubbornly opposed to change. These factors as well as the general weakness of the

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<sup>13</sup> A fascinating book on the subject is found in Elman (2000).

military resulted in a successful Manchu takeover of China. This Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) was the final dynasty before the subjugation of the Chinese by the West and was noted for corruption, ineffective governance, and resistance to Western influence at any cost (Hucker, 1975).

Europe established a republican form of government upon China in 1912. The central government was never able to fully control the entire country. A variety of warlords, rebellious groups, and an insurgent communist front formed and waged a series of wars against each other and the central government. Japan made aggressive moves into the region with an invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and towards the whole nation in 1937. By 1950, the communists had taken full control over the country and established the People's Republic of China which still exists.

Ultimately, the history of China can be shown in a series of cycles with a consolidation of power under a single state, a stagnant rule, internal rebellion, and reformation into a series of minor states struggling to reform into the whole. There were few, if any, outside nations to interfere or invade Chinese territories. If they did exist, they were considered barbarians and not recognized outside of their ability to pay tribute to the empire (Dikötter, 2015). The Chinese culture was based on a centralized philosophy and common language. The emperor retained sole authority under the Mandate of Heaven and conflict only erupted when this authority was challenged. This is in deep contrast to the concepts developed within Europe. After the fall of the Roman Empire, nation states developed with distinct languages, cultures, and philosophies. Conflict was inherent between these states on historical claims of land or personal grudge.

### **PHILOSOPHIES GUIDING THE CHINESE STATE**

The foundation of Chinese decision-making is based upon its need for independence from all outside factors (Steinberg & O'Hanlon, 2014). The leadership has primarily focused upon the supremacy of the ruling Communist Party, developing economic strength, and ensuring historical

territorial sovereignty. This is accomplished through traditional values supplemented with the concepts developed by modern communist philosophers.

China has been governed by three competing philosophies: Confucianism, Legalism, and Taoism. Taoism considers human action to be contrary to nature (Lao Zi, Book II, 48). Governments should do as little as possible to interfere with the natural order of humanity. Confucianism pushes for the opposite. They believe that all of society is structured into a hierarchy under the order of the heavens (Mingming, 2012). This concept developed into the complicated role of the Mandate of Heaven within Chinese society. Government must be careful to ensure careful social order to avoid retribution from above.

Legalism expands upon these philosophies into a positive philosophical and legal framework. All laws must be developed to apply equally to all within society. These laws reward positive behavior while punishing negative behavior. The hierarchy of the Confucianists can be corruptible when the powerful behave poorly with no consequences (Weng, 1996, p. 334). As such, the individual has no place within society other than as a subject of the law. Individuals work towards the best interests of the whole or, in particular, the state and its apparatus (Kane, 2001, p. 48).

While Imperial China utilized Confucianism extensively, the modern Communist state utilizes Legalism (Weng, 1996, p. 336). The modern variant developed by the PRC eliminates the individual entirely. The state is thus superior to and must control the individual's purpose and role within society. The state is not abstract as it is in the Western system. The concept of the state has developed in terms of particular institutions, and individuals measure their effectiveness in terms of social order and how well the public is mobilized (Kane, 2001, p. 48).

The functions of the state are thus functional rather than philosophical. Morality and idealism is beyond the purposes of the state. Social order and general productivity are considered important in the philosophies of both the traditional Legalists as well as the current PRC government (Wing-Tsit Chan, 1963, p. 252-257). The PRC has entrusted the Communist Party apparatus to ensuring social order through ideological consistency and productivity through massive projects such as the Three Gorges Dam and the economic development program<sup>14</sup>. This is summed up with the full quote associated with Mao Zedong's truism: "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun. Our principle is that the Party commands the gun, and the gun will never be allowed to command the Party."

Other leaders have continued this sentiment. While Deng Xiaoping radically shifted the economic and political framework of the PRC, he still focused heavily on ensuring Communist rule. He defined the Four Cardinal Principles: The Socialist road, the dictatorship of the Proletariat, the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, and Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought. Each of these emphasize or support Party leadership (Kane, 2001, p. 48). Every leader since Deng has emphasized the role of Communism within government<sup>15</sup>. Even Xi Jinping has supported the continual role of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism in ensuring Chinese independence from outside influences, namely capitalism (Xi, 2014, p. 27-33).

The distinct policies that the PRC pursues are based on a series of statements and policies developed over decades. The most important of these are the Five Principles of Peaceful

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<sup>14</sup> Historically, the Chinese state has utilized these sorts of projects to maintain social order. The Great Wall and the Grand Canal are just two examples of the massive ancient projects that maintained imperial rule.

<sup>15</sup> Deng Xiaoping: "If China does not hold up socialism, it will be turned into an appendage of the capitalist countries." (Whiting, 1995) Jiang: "In other words, peaceful evolution and bourgeois liberalization are aimed at not only overthrowing our socialist system but, fundamentally, at depriving us of our national independence and state sovereignty." (Whiting, 1995) Xi: "In the whole history of mankind, no nation or state has been able to rise to power and rejuvenate itself by relying solely on external forces or blindly following others; doing so inevitably leads to failure or subservience." (Xi, 2014).

Coexistence signed between the PRC and India in 1954. Chinese foreign relations will pursue that mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and cooperation for mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. These statements build upon the vested interests of the PRC regime.

Everything done by the PRC is done to ensure the stability and growth of the PRC. Economic reforms ensure economic stability and wealth, political reforms ensure public support of the regime, and philosophy is utilized to educate the public as to the rightness of the state. Foreign policy is utilized as the direct tool in this battle of independence. The legalist structure of Chinese philosophy and its Marxist adaptation leads to a simple conclusion that Chinese foreign policy decision making will continue to maintain a logical approach that ensures independence and growth of the Chinese state.

### **CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE**

Xi Jinping, the current president of China, has managed to transform the state to suit his will<sup>16</sup>. His philosophy has been placed into the CCP's charter, his anti-corruption regime has eliminated political rivals, and his rhetoric is becoming the new guiding principles of the Chinese state. Despite these powerful statements, he still must deal with the bureaucracy that maintains his rule.

Foreign policy in China is developed under a complicated bureaucratic system that involves agents within the Communist Party and academic communities. Unlike economic matters or domestic policies, foreign policy has not been decentralized (Xuanli, 2006, p. 15).

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<sup>16</sup> Xi's rise to power is covered by Ramzy (2018) while his style of government is covered by Economy (2014) and He & Feng (2013).

While many actors are involved, it is a close-knit group that fully decides how China is to approach the world<sup>17</sup>.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is the body that is responsible for diplomacy and officially implementing decided foreign policy. It is composed of several subdivisions that focus on specialized areas such as external regions, internal management, and consular departments (Lu, 2000, p. 26-7).

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is the armed forces of the Chinese government. They maintain the security of the mainland as well as ensure popular compliance to the Communist government. The PLA maintains strict subordination to the CCP and has little influence in the decision-making of foreign policy (Segal, 1981).

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is ingrained in every level of government. Leaders are high ranking members and ideological purity is paramount. Following the separation of formal decision-making powers in the early 1980s, the CCP dealt only with high level policy discussions and did not manage routine diplomatic issues, though their influence is evident regardless.

Outside of the two powerhouses of policy implementation, the Politburo is the leadership body of the Chinese state. It is composed of CCP members who have earned a position with past endeavors. The Politburo itself is sub-composed of working groups and various committees that are formed as needed. The most vital of these is the Standing Committee which functions as the true leadership of the Politburo. Currently, it is composed of seven members ranked in order of protocol. Outside of official meetings, members of this committee do not communicate with one

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<sup>17</sup> The closeness of these groups is defined by the concept of "Guanxi". See Gold, Guthrie, and Wank (2002), for a detailed analysis of how the interpersonal network system functions within Chinese society and government.

Table 12: Chinese Politburo Standing Committee Membership, 2017

| <i>Rank</i>     | <i>Name</i> | <i>Positions Held</i>   | <i>Roles</i>  |
|-----------------|-------------|---|---|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> | Xi Jinping  | President of the PRC, Chairman of the PRC Central Military Commission, General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee, Leader of the Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reform, Chairman of the National Security Commission | “Paramount Leader”; ultimate veto point; no political rivals  |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> | Li Keqiang  | Premier of the State Council of the PRC, Party Secretary of the State Council, Deputy Leader of the Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reform, Vice Chairman of the National Security Commission                             | Maintains daily affairs of the government   |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> | Li Zhanshu  | Party Secretary of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress   | Foreign Affairs, personal liaison to Xi on foreign trips  |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> | Wang Yang   | Party Secretary of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, Chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, Vice Premier of the State Council of the PRC   | Backer of economic reforms (Guangdong model); emphasis on non-profits and trade unions  |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> | Wang Huning | Secretary of the Central Secretariat of the CPC   | Political theorist; foreign policy leader; assisted in policy that allowed entrepreneurs, capitalists, and intellectuals in the CCP |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> | Zhao Leji   | Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection   | Economic guru; former upper position in the Organization Dept.  |
| 7 <sup>th</sup> | Han Zheng   | Vice Party Secretary of the State Council of the PRC, First Vice Premier of the State Council of the PRC  | Former Shanghai mayor, lead city’s modern transformation  |

Source: Scott et al (2017).

another (Lu, 2000, p. 38). All foreign policy emerges from this committee and is implemented by organizations below them.

Like most major nations, no leader is knowledgeable on all subjects. While democracies utilize public academies and numerous staffers, the authoritarian government utilizes think tanks of a different sort. Chinese think tanks are semi-autonomous groups of experts that act as academic-style research institutions and produce policy analysis (G. E., 2014). Think tanks provide evidence and arguments to break ties between differing institutions (Scobell & Cozad, 2014). If they come to a conclusion different than the Politburo, the policy idea quietly ends.

Table 13: Limited Listing of Important Chinese Foreign Policy Think Tanks

| <i>Name</i>   | <i>Supporting Agency</i>   | <i>Personnel</i> | <i>Influence Area</i>                               |
|---|--|------------------|---|
| China Institute of Contemporary Int'l Relations (CICIR) | Foreign Affairs Leading Group (Standing Committee); Ministry of State Security | ~400             | Public influence and relations, leadership advisory |
| China Institute of Int'l Studies (CIIS)                 | Ministry of Foreign Affairs  | ~90              | Internal MFA advisory                               |
| Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS)               | State Council: CPC Propaganda Dept.  | ~180             | Academic background for leadership                  |
| China Institute for Int'l Strategic Studies (CISS)      | Non-governmental; deep connection to PLA                                       | ~30              | Military issues, general policy concepts            |
| Shanghai Academy of Social Science (SAAS)               | Shanghai local government; MFA   | ~80              | Policy issues in broader language                   |

Information compiled through Abb (2013) and Xuanli (2006).

They are subordinate to the bureaucratic organization in which they are under but allow for open debate in a contained environment that will not affect the broader civic culture. Think tanks can also be based in an academic setting, entirely private, or completely enclosed by government bureaucracy.

Chinese think tanks are different than the Western counterpart. Instead of remaining independent, most think tanks within China are controlled by individual government agencies: their membership and role are mostly unknown to outside observers (Xuanli, 2006, p. 69-99).

Table 13 provides a list of notable think tanks. They are influential due to a combination of expert membership, administrative support, and personal ties between government members and leaders of the think tanks (Zhu, 2009).

There is debate over the role of think tanks in China. Some argue they are simply metaphorical holding bins for intellectuals (Ming-Chen & Stone, 2004), while others have suggested the intellectuals in think tanks are given a level of independence that is sorely lacking from Chinese civil society (Tanner, 2002). They are capable of providing opinions on substantive policy issues without fear of reprisal so long as they do not spread the opinions to the general public.



*Table 14: Influential Behaviors of China's Think Tanks based on the Social Structure Paradigm*

| <i>Social Structure</i>            | <i>Literal</i>  | <i>Nonliteral</i>   |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Decision-maker (nucleus) influence | Research reports, policy consulting research report, and regular internal reference | Hearings, accrediting experts, consultative seminars on policy, and government lectures             |
| Social elite (center) influence    | Academic journal articles, issue academic periodicals, and publications             | Attend academic conferences, hold academic conferences, training, and large-enterprise consultation |
| Public (periphery) influence       | Publish media articles, other research results quoted by media, and create websites | Accept TV, websites, newspaper interviews, and do talk shows  |

Source: Zhu, X. (2013). *The Rise of Think Tanks in China*. New York: Routledge, p. 96.

Their arguments are only effective if they are able to influence the administration. Zhu argues that Chinese think tank influence can be measured through three distinct social structures: the nucleus, the center, and the periphery (Zhu, 2013, p. 96). Zhu's framework encompasses the more commonly utilized tools of think tanks as modes of influence. These are split between formal and informal influences. The nucleus is the decision-making elite that are influenced formally through research reports and policy consultations as well as informally through hearings and lectures. The center is composed of the social elite that are influenced by academic journals and other publications and informally through conferences. The periphery is the general public influenced through general media and websites. The nuances of this framework are shown in Table 14.

The influence of the think tanks is driven in a cyclical pattern. The decision-making elite direct the think tanks to investigate a particular policy option. Once formulated, it is reported back to the decision-makers as well as integrated into presentations for the social elite. If the decision-makers do not adopt the suggestion, it survives with the social elite which then influence the decision-makers on later issues.

Truly measuring the independence of think tanks is difficult (Dror, 1984; Luo, 1991; Hamrin & Zhao, 1995; Lu, 2000; Glasner & Saunders, 2002; Xuanli, 2006; Feng, 2007; Zhu &

Xue, 2007). Think tanks may be acting collaboratively in order to spread a policy idea elsewhere or it could simply be an effort to expand the analysis in an academic environment not hampered by political considerations.

The policy implementation process is simple. Information is placed into a central repository. Think tanks take this information and formulate a series of competing policy ideas to present to the upper leadership. Through deliberate debate and a series of meetings, a final policy is decided. This idea is thus sent back through the bureaucracy with instructions as to how best to accomplish these tasks decided by each department. Should policy implementation disagreements occur, the same deliberate debate and series of meetings ensures compliance with the policy.

## **ISSUES FACING THE FUTURE OF CHINA-US RELATIONS**

The foreign policy decision making system must contend with a list of serious issues most notably the independence of Taiwan, South China Sea delineation, Korean nuclear efforts, intellectual property issues, and human rights considerations. The way in which the PRC resolves these issues will determine the level of violence in the likely future hegemonic transition. Ultimately, they will have to be resolved regardless or the PRC will be unable to move beyond relatively minor internal debates and handle serious broader concerns. Each issue will be discussed with a brief history of the issue, the stances of the various actors, and the likely resolution. Intellectual property and human rights are based on internal issues yet do affect outside relations. These sections will focus on how the internal structure of the PRC is adapting to maintain positive relations externally.

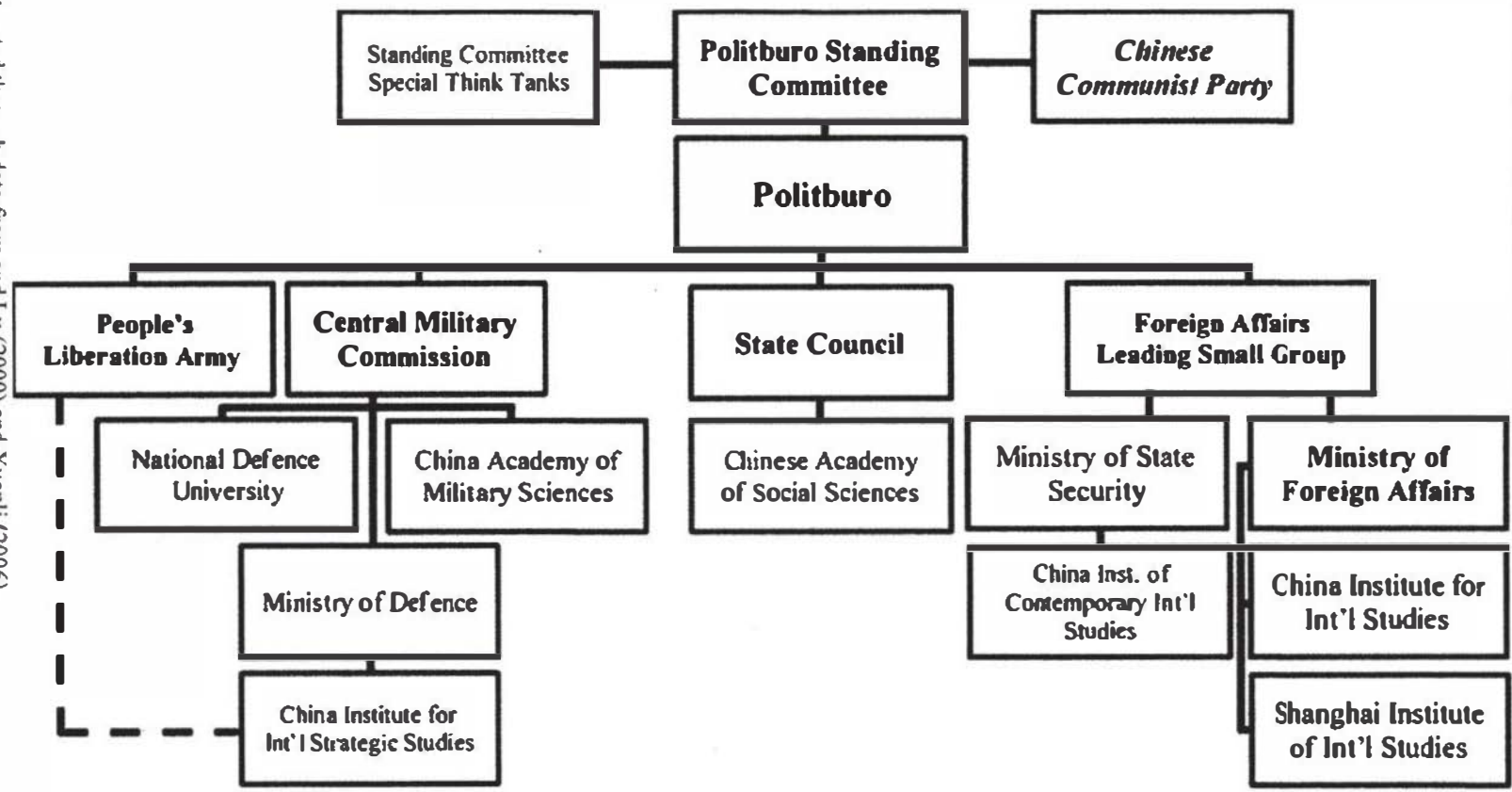
The issue of **Taiwan** has been a focal point of Chinese foreign policy since the cessation of hostilities between the Republic of China (Taiwan) and the People's Republic of China in

1949. Taiwan represents the remnants of the previous government of the mainland and still claims its original territory. Relations between the two are based on the One-China Policy. This policy eliminates diplomatic relations with any state that recognizes one over the other. There are eighteen nations who currently recognize the ROC and dozens maintain an informal relationship out of pragmatic necessity. While Taiwan debates their role internally (Wang, 2000), the PRC has consistently maintained a hard line on full integration (Yahuda, 1996).

The status quo is likely to maintain until one actor develops enough trust to shift the stalemate. This will likely be accelerated should the United States begin to limit its support of the status quo. A much stronger PRC and a weaker United States would likely force an American withdrawal from the region at some point. Should this be a peaceful withdrawal, a peaceful resolution would be possible. Neither the Americans, Taiwanese, or the Chinese wishes a military confrontation as both Taiwan and a sizable portion of mainland China would be devastated through traditional warfare.

The likely end result would nonetheless involve a massive process of trust-building and cooperation on a variety of issues between Taiwan and the PRC. At some point, the PRC would open direct communication with Taiwan, thus recognizing it on the international stage. In exchange, the PRC would insist on the ending of the American alliance and a limited form of membership within the PRC as a special administrative region, similar to Hong Kong. Taiwan would agree only because of the ineffective American military might in the region as well as the likely ambivalent objections to such a maneuver. Ultimately, the PRC would integrate Taiwan under subtle threat of outright invasion or economic ruin through a blockade that no international actor could functionally oppose.

Chart 1: Chinese Foreign Policy Decision-Making Structure



Source: Constructed through data from and Lu (2000) and Xuanli (2006).

An American war would be the next likely scenario. If China maintains its hostile stance, the Taiwan Strait would be the last location abandoned by the waning American military. Chinese invasion attempts would be met with a devastating conventional military strike by the American alliance system. Depending on how far the conflict extends, the end result could be thermonuclear warfare. Ultimately, China would not pursue this path unless forced.

The other scenario is incredibly unlikely but nonetheless possible. It would involve heavy negotiation between the island and the mainland with neutral third parties ensuring implementation of any agreement. In exchange for the complete withdrawal of the United States from the area and a ban on arms sales to Taiwan, China would recognize the island as independent. Taiwan for its part would drop any territorial claims and disarm all offensive capabilities and then recognize the mainland government. This is a wildly optimistic scenario that is unlikely to occur, especially with Chinese insistence on the settlement of the issue in their favor.

The delineation of the **South China Sea** is a matter of territorial integrity for China as well as a matter of national security (Scott, 2012). The region contains an unknown amount of petroleum reserves and due to its position, several nations including Vietnam, The Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei have made claims under various international norms. The PRC has disproportionately claimed a territory much larger than any other nation. The Chinese justify their claim based on a historic line drawn in 1947 (Zou, 1999). The line has been justified with the construction and militarization of artificial islands throughout the region (Watkins, 2015).

International law in this area is defined by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Ratified in 1982, it defines economic claims on the ocean as extending for 200 nautical miles from land. Despite the clearness of the law, China has refused to accept decisions made by

international institutions. Since China has veto power within the UN Security Council, it can block any attempt by that body to act in the region. The International Court of Justice has decided a case against Chinese claims, but the country refuses to accept the decision (Phillips, 2016). The Law of the Sea is similarly impractical as political considerations that tend to outweigh the practical application of the law (Burgess, 2003). The United States has attempted to settle the issue within a variety of regional forums structured around the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)<sup>18</sup> system. These have been also blocked by China due to its distrust of the United States. China sees the dispute as between individual states and wishes to settle them in a bilateral fashion through regional institutions.

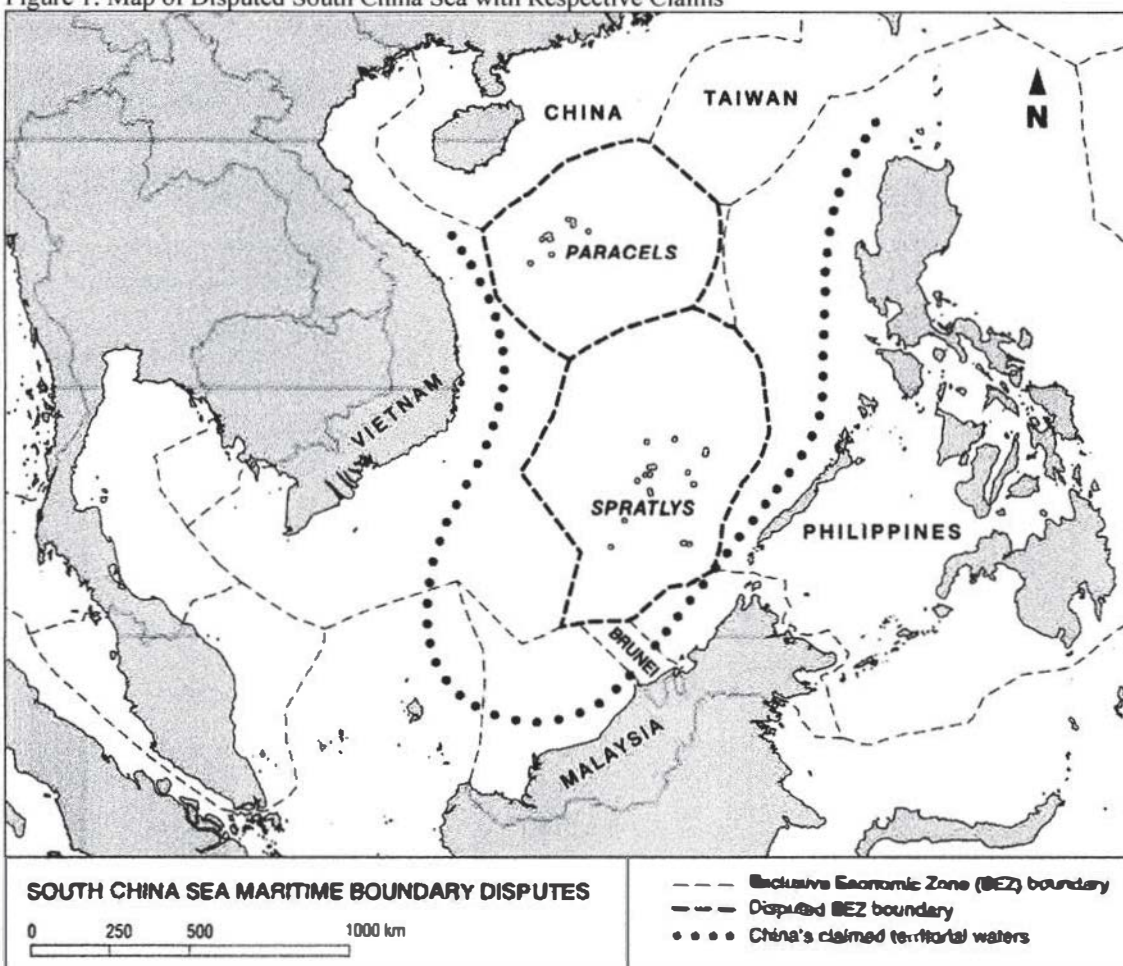
ASEAN agreed upon a code of conduct for the South China Sea in 2002. The organization recognized the Law of the Sea while promoting cooperation with navigation, combating transnational crime, and environmental protection. It urged all signatories to exercise self-restraint in matters that would increase tensions and to agree peacefully in a bilateral or multilateral fashion to settle border disputes. Several scholars see the deal as a positive first step to settling the disputes in the region (Fravel, 2011; Thayer, 2011; Womack, 2011).

The purpose of this agreement was two-fold. First was to centralize pressure on China to avoid damaging bilateral relations with the PRC. The second was to force the PRC into living up to its statements promoting peaceful coexistence. If it failed to do so, the organization would increase its military pressures, especially with outside American assistance (Lee, 2005). Despite the historical success of such an approach, China has not changed its behavior over the South China Sea.

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<sup>18</sup> The Members of ASEAN include Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam with two observer states of Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea. The Organization has extended relationships with ASEAN Plus Three: People's Republic of China, Japan, and South Korea; and the East Asia Summit with India, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and Russia.

Figure 1: Map of Disputed South China Sea with Respective Claims



Source: Rice, et al. (2016).

The problem with diplomacy in the South China Sea is due to a perceived link to national security (Scott, 2012). By discussing areas that do not touch on national security or sovereignty, diplomatic efforts have been incredibly successful. China and regional partners utilize Track 2 diplomacy<sup>19</sup> for most of their discussions. Elite interactions build trust and foster cooperation, especially on issues like environmental concerns and safe navigation (Weissman, 2009). These Track 2 efforts have led to substantive discussions in Track 1 forums, including ASEAN. These discussions are limited due to the nature of ASEAN as being a forum for discussion rather than

<sup>19</sup> A solid introduction to the Track system of international negotiation can be found in Diamond & McDonald (1996) and Fisher (2006).

for resolution (Swanstrom, 1999). Nonetheless, nothing substantive has been agreed upon since China appears to be unwilling to compromise with their stated goals. China's consistent policy on border delineations has been to focus upon bilateral discussions (Weissman, 2009; Scott, 2012). Any other attempts provide a facade of dialogue in favor of substantive discussion.

Vietnam's policy on the islands have been consistently opposite that of China. Since a normalization of relations with the Land Border Treaty (1999) and the Gulf of Tonkin agreements (2000), China and Vietnam have both been competing over physical control over the Spratly Islands. Several incidents have occurred involving cutting of Chinese undersea cables and consistent fishing in Chinese claimed waters. Each state has fired upon fishing boats and have made serious rhetorical threats to send out formal naval vessels or air force in response.

Since Vietnam has been unable to militarily counter China with the assistance of ASEAN, it has begun to grow ties with the United States. The US position has been relatively neutral over the claims but has focused primarily on regional security and stability (Scott, 2012, p. 1030). Upon the election of Rodrigo Duterte as president of The Philippines, the steady alliance with the US has begun to fade. Outsized language similar to Trump's rhetoric has indicated a shift towards China on a variety of issues (Baviera, 2016). Outside of the US, Vietnam has allied with the Philippines to counter China in the region despite the mutual disagreements over sovereignty of islands.

The Philippines has a similar history of friction with China. After initial agreements of joint petroleum exploration and development between state oil companies expired, a general deterioration in relations led to increased tensions and military modernization. This modernization includes upgrading a valuable airstrip on one of the Spratly Islands as well as an increase in naval capabilities. At every step, China has continued to dispute the legality of the



claims made by other states and has called American involvement in the region “suspicious” (Scott, 2012, p. 1034).

China's growing shadow in the region has the variety of other actors scrambling for mutual assurances and alliances with outside actors to protect their claims. The harsh rhetoric coming from China has not assisted resolution. The rhetoric has been backed by political statements, legislation, and military actions aimed at legitimizing the claims in the South China Sea. The state petroleum companies have also pushed for greater access to the region while the government has attempted to block foreign deals with other states in the region (Scott, 2012, p. 1038). Despite the increase in military might by all powers involved, direct military confrontation will be limited by the high cost of a general war, despite the petroleum reserves (Womack, 2011).

China has shown the ability to delay substantive response while the historical claims can be further legitimized and it can approach bilateral negotiations with a greater sense of strength. The options ahead are limited by China's reluctance to embrace them. The general approach has been towards mutual development without discussing the sovereignty issue, but even this has failed in the short term. Track 2 conferences have seen the greatest success and theories exist to validate the concept a being a necessary step to greater cooperation as it socializes the elites to one another. Under this, scientific research, environmental issues, and marine safety including combating piracy and illegal trade seem to be relatively easy issues to cooperate on. Unfortunately, so long as the power balance remains relatively equal between the US-regional state alliances and China, the most common prediction is towards the maintenance of the status quo.

Should China become more powerful and develop closer ties with its neighbors, a resolution of the situation would be forced upon the region either militarily or through economic pressure. Without American involvement, the PRC would be able to negotiate a bilateral solution with individual neighbors to its net benefit.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (**DPRK**) has maintained a nuclear arsenal for more than a decade yet has only recently managed to place them onto warheads. A rouge nuclear state is incredibly destabilizing to the region, especially if Chinese influence cannot counteract the newly assertive regime of Kim Jong-Un. Despite these moves, the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang created an opening for diplomatic maneuvers by the Kim regime including a likely meeting between the Korean governments. President Trump accepted an invitation for a potential meeting between the two leaders and China has seen a renewed willingness to negotiate from its once loyal ally.

Despite these maneuvers, it is unlikely Kim will eliminate his nuclear weapons under any circumstances. Strategically, the nuclear arsenal allows the regime to negotiate on the same level as the United States and prevent preemptive invasions. The situation on the peninsula has been stagnant for nearly seventy years with periodic thaws in relations. These diplomatic efforts have faltered in the past, so any optimism should be set aside.

The goals of diplomacy are not to ensure a nuclear-free Korean peninsula but to pressure the ROK into strategically aligning with the PRC. The ROK should highly consider the opportunity as American involvement in the region will slowly diminish over time with a combination of PRC pressure and the eventual deaths of all involved in the Cold War strategic logic that maintained American troops in ROK.

The likely future in the region would involve a substantive deal that excludes the United States completely. The ROK would likely attempt to include the US within the framework, but political infighting and stubborn refusal to negotiate with the DPRK without nuclear elimination would block these efforts.

Nonetheless, the utopian version of a final resolution is a general opening of the DPRK economy into a Chinese style state-economy in exchange for a limited reduction in offensive nuclear capabilities. Under the logic, the regime's economy becomes entangled into the world system (Keohane & Nye, 1977). China would play a key part in this negotiation. While the US would take credit, the PRC would work behind the scenes to ensure the Kim regime agrees to these terms under threat of complete isolation or military intervention. A hostile regime with nuclear weapons is an unacceptable risk to global economic stability as well as the rule of the Communist Party within the PRC.

The alternative is a full American invasion or heavy missile strike undertaken by a future president following heavily escalation in tension or an active use of a nuclear weapon. The PRC would be forced to prop up the failing regime with a full invasion from the north. Should American and Chinese troops meet within the state, a firefight is likely and a nuclear war could occur if measures are not taken to avoid it. This alternative is not unreasonable due to the inconsistent nature of leaders on every side of this conflict.

The Trump Administration has attempted to create a **protectionist trading policy** towards China, undoing the traditional free trade norms established after the Second World War. Depending on the final tariffs levied, the economic effects could be devastating to both economies as well as triggering a wave of protectionism beyond the region. These moves are part

of the continuing American retaliation towards China's inability to moderate intellectual property theft (IPT) by domestic companies.

Intellectual property theft is a common issue among developing economies (Rapp & Rozek, 1990), though China's case is somewhat different. It has maintained a strong legal framework for combatting IPT as well as implementing the Outline of the National Medium to Long-term Plan for the Development of Science and Technology 2006-2020 which called for an economic solution to the issue. Despite these efforts, progress has been limited and American patience appears to be wearing thin.

China appears to be politically unwilling to implement the rhetoric it has espoused (Lejeune, 2014, p. 700). Politically, China is a unitary state (Lieberthal & Oksenberg, 1988). It is highly unlikely that China is not actively implementing legitimate change. As noted earlier, the legitimacy of the Chinese state is based on how well rhetoric is implemented into substantive policy. The PRC would be damaging internal credibility in order to avoid implementing policy that would benefit the state and its economy in the long term (Segal, 2005). They have also developed special bodies in which to implement the laws (Mertha, 2005).

There also might be a cultural explanation. As noted, China has maintained a long history outside of Western legal and political thought. The concepts of the rule of law and intellectual property remain outside of the philosophical language utilized by the PRC (Alford, 2005; Lehman, 2006). This is not based purely within the government, proponents of this theory claim the civilian culture maintains similar attitudes. This is supported by educational efforts developed by the Chinese government (Lejeune, 2014 p. 705).

The PRC is also facing a structural problem. While foreign policy remains entirely centralized, economic policy implementation has been entrusted with lower levels of government

(Lampton & Lieberthal, 1992). Despite the legal frameworks, the lower levels of government either have no incentive to implement them or are too corrupt to accomplish the task. Lejeune (2014) argues that China maintains two distinct bureaucratic classes which compete for influence. The top layer constructs the law while the lower level implements the law. Each layer develops deeply intricate networks of allies and friendships which assist in the required processes. This guanxi system prevents any level of checks and balances. The top layer has aimed to eliminate this by frequently shifting the local leadership into other positions, but this only limits accountability as well as blocking any long-term policy implementation (Lejeune, 2014, p. 708). These local officials are also eager to be promoted through any means. As they are judged solely on economic growth, they have an incentive to maintain the IPT system.

Monitoring the implementation of the legal systems to ensure the security of external intellectual property seems to be a high priority. Both to ensure cooperation with international free trade efforts and to stabilize the domestic political situation through a stronger rule of law. Ultimately, they must accomplish a full level of implementation both as a means of ensuring internal development and to develop as a hegemonic player.

The current international norms of **human rights** are viewed as lacking within the PRC (Nathan, 1994). Its own citizens lack a fundamental right to freedom of speech, assembly, or press. Political dissidents are jailed or expelled from the country, and internal policy debate is limited. Externally, China has maintained strong support of the human rights regime within various international organizations (Primiano & Xiang, 2016). The contradiction is a large hinderance to the political and economic rise of the regime. While signaling support of human

rights assists in Chinese diplomatic efforts, the lack of freedoms especially within the minority regions of Tibet and Xinjiang provide endless ammunition for Western critics<sup>20</sup>.

The contradiction is answered with an understanding of the internal mechanics of Chinese policy making. As noted, independence from external influence, stability of the country, and maintenance of communist rule are the three pillars of PRC policy. Human rights threaten all three. Human rights are promoted heavily by Western powers. Allowing these rights interferes with the stability of the Chinese regime as well as supporting representative democracy (Tao, 2015). Ultimately, this thesis argues that Western pressure will become increasingly ineffective with the steady rise of Chinese influence around the world.

## **PROCESS OF TRANSITION**

The future of the American-led hegemonic system is vulnerable to outside influence. The PRC is fully capable of ensuring its self-interest through economic expansion, diplomatic endeavors, and cultural exportation. Its political and economic system has become a new standard for underdeveloped nations that are unwilling to rely upon market forces or dictatorial powers to ensure stability and development.

China is utilizing a patronage-type system wherein Chinese capital flows into underdeveloped countries in Latin American and Africa in exchange for access to mineral and natural resources (Alden, et al, 2008). Unlike deals with Western nations, there is no expectation of domestic policy shifts or obligations to abide by international norms. China will not provide the traditional public good of security and would not meet the classical definition of a hegemonic power.

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<sup>20</sup> There is some level of Western hypocrisy in this area. Western nations tend to focus more on political and social rights, which China is weak, and forgive democratic states with similarly poor records (Peerenboom, 2005, p. 76).

Once this system is firmly in place and its domestic raw material needs are met, it will be capable of matching any rival it may face in the post-American led world. India maintains a democratic system that is mired in corruption and a massively underdeveloped economic base. Europe is hindered by its makeup of nationalist countries. Russia is a minor power limited by its reliance on petroleum production. Most other regions have become reliant upon American protection and would be unable to balance against Chinese growth.

Contrasting previous transitions, the violence of a hegemonic war is unlikely in our modern world. A combination of nuclear weapons and economic interdependence ensure a truly horrifying war will not occur. A much more limited conventional version is more likely, especially if the PRC moves away from its relatively nonchalant views on foreign affairs and resolves its regional issues in a more forceful manner. With a lack of American pressure and an increase in Chinese hubris, anything is possible.

The spread of Chinese power must be articulated into a policy framework to ensure a stable global transition. It will likely be based on the historic legacy of Imperial China's All Under Heaven doctrine. This doctrine will support infrastructure development in underdeveloped nations, promote guarantees of mutual noninterference and independence, as well as extend its culture and philosophy to the world. In this enterprise, the outsiders would be coequal and issues between them would be settled in the established international institutions. Hard international laws would not be implemented without the full consent of all involved (Tao, 2015). China will not dictate terms to other nations. The guarantee of independence for all nations is the common good that the PRC would be able to support.

## CONCLUSIONARY REMARKS

This thesis has proposed a perception-based model towards hegemonic power transitions. The model has found that the future transition involving the United States of America and the People's Republic of China will be based upon an Adaptive concept, wherein the PRC will work within the American-led system to increase its own power and implement its policy agenda. This is in contrast to the scholarly assumptions that a hegemonic war would occur between the two powers. Organski (1958) stated that his theory was incomplete and later authors should expand upon his work (p. 6). This thesis has provided a new avenue for research based upon the foreign policy decision making literature and the perceptions of actors within these "black boxes". Through an analysis of history, culture, foreign policy decision making structures, and external cues of rising powers, this thesis has developed a new framework for later authors to refine or critique.

The case of the American rise demonstrated the developmental path of peaceful relations between the United Kingdom and the United States rooted in perception shifts. The case of the Nazi rise highlighted the perceptual roots of the failure of Nazi appeasement. The likely case of rising Chinese influence highlights the uncertainty of predicting the future in a changing global environment.

Despite these difficulties, this thesis established that the Chinese policy agenda currently focuses mostly on regional political affairs and would not pose a threat to fundamental American interests outside of the region. The PRC primarily wishes to ensure its own domestic stability and increase its economic development. To this end, should the United States wish to avoid a broader conventional conflict over Korea, Taiwan, or the South China Sea, it should articulate



these aims directly and clearly with a deep understanding of the history and the decision-making system within the PRC.

By the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, it is very likely that that PRC will either be equal to or exceed the might of the United States, if not on the globe, in the Asia-Pacific region. Should this occur, the PRC would still insist that it is not a hegemon in the American sense. It will move to become the leader in international organizations. The United States would likely remain host to most of these organizations but would not enjoy the level of influence that it enjoys presently. Presently, the regime is content with the United States despite some complaints over its hypocrisy on human rights and international entanglements. The American foreign policy decision-making system would be wise to ensure that the United States will resign its powerful position peacefully, much as Great Britain did not so long ago.

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