Updating Schweller & Pu's "Three Scenarios" for China's Rise

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ABSTRACT: To be written after another revision?

Introduction. How will rising China affect the liberal world order when its power surpasses America's? Few questions in contemporary international relations (IR) are so large, pressing, and ripe for speculation. Much of the guesswork stems from a dearth of data or distrust of official statements from the People's Republic of China (PRC) and its ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Both the state and its regime appear to behave inconsistently in international institutions, and scholars now speculate that China has no grand strategy other than a regime-preserving pragmatism dating to the early Reform Era led by CCP Chairman Deng Xiaoping. Absent a strategic desire to replace its cultural values with liberalism or impose its own neo-traditional systemic preferences upon the world, a preponderantly powerful PRC would be just as likely to "shirk" ordering responsibilities in an otherwise hegemonic future as before the global financial crisis, which scholars pinpoint as the moment when China entered a new era of "assertiveness." This review of academic literature addressing China's possible effects on the international system draws on both IR theory and area studies, taking special note of when context-independent theory contradicts the positions of context-specific expertise. In short, the present study not only argues a thesis in response to the central question but also takes a stance on whether China should be treated as a nomothetic unit highly comparable to others in the system or as an idiographic entity whose uniqueness confounds general theories and models.

This review's central research question makes at least two major assumptions which will guide the analysis. First, the question assumes that a "liberal world order" exists and is the predominant way which most or nearly all state leaders view the world. The question of how China might alter world order is of little interest without establishing a "status quo" which will change, and so, an entire section of the paper is devoted to establishing a liberal "global community" or "international society" as the world we currently live in. Second, the question and tripartite framework for answering it assume that China's power will surpass that of the U.S. in the not-too-distant future, certainly within the

21st century. Embedded in the second assumption are the definitional problems of "power," which political theorists may never cease to grapple with, and equal uncertainties that China will continue to rise and we will know when the moment of transcendence occurs.[1] We may know with some confidence that China's GDP at Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), the standard for measuring economic and sometimes total power, has already eclipsed the U.S., but other relevant forms such as military, soft, and meta-power are far more difficult to gauge or compare definitively. As will be shown throughout the paper, GDP is only the most quantifiable indicator of power, and if scholars are unanimous on anything, it is the observation that the PRC has a very large gap to close with the U.S. in other forms of influence just mentioned.

Considering the phenomenon in terms of hegemony privileges realism in the analysis, so extra care will be taken to incorporate insights from liberalism, institutionalism, and constructivism. As a framework for departure, Randall Schweller & Xiaoyu Pu's 2011 article offers three scenarios for how the PRC might position itself in the world, if its power should eclipse that of the current U.S. hegemon.[2] These three possibilities, described below in terms of their prominence in the literature and consequences for liberal international order, label a potentially dominant PRC as a "supporter, spoiler, or shirker." This review adds an "inauspicious fourth" section with scenarios highlighting "China skeptics" who dispute the PRC's potential to eclipse the U.S. or believe the BRICs may do so instead.[3]

This essay states and defends the position that China is an idiographic and highly problematic entity,[4] confounding not only state-to-state comparisons as "like units" but especially the conceptualization of the state as a "unitary actor" with clearly defined interests and empirically verifiable strategies for achieving these interests. This position underlies the CCP regime's stated objections to using a "Beijing Consensus" as an alternative development model to the "Washington Consensus" favored by neo-liberal institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

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[1] These problems are, of course, connected to the difficulty of measuring power empirically.

[2] Defining hegemony is inseparable from the indicators which determine hegemonic status, so to avoid tautology in ordering states' status one may refer to Cameron Thies's Table 1, on pg. 9. His "Terminology of Statuses" defines seven ranks from Novice to Hegemon, including importantly China's designation as somewhere in the upper middle range between a Regional Power, a Rising Power, and a Great Power. I would offer one additional between the sixth and seventh, a Superpower, which most accurately describes China's current status, while still leaving the U.S. in the top global position.

[3] The BRICs, consisting by acronym of Brazil, Russia, India, and China may represent a rising South as a whole or a cohesive group of "large, uneven developers" in the words of Mark Frazier (in Kennedy, Ed.). That Indonesia and other countries may or may not be included in the group belies the group's fluidity and unlikelihood that it may have a collective identity or agenda.

[4] See John Agnew (in Dittmer & Sharp), pg. 231-3 on Chinese particularity. As a critical scholar, he rejects the possibility of any *one* state existing in the "modern geopolitical imagination" of China and the West, rather defusing the debate on comparability. Whether the BRICs or, as Mark Frazier prefers (in Kennedy, 2011, and Perry 2014), "large uneven developers" are a better category for comparison than states in general is certain, but this review responds that even others in the category can't claim as strong a self-centered historic tradition or contemporary academic articles speculating about "re-emergence" as a global hegemon. While points in Kennedy's comparative book are well taken, I really do think China is special.

The PRC's bristling reluctance to behave consistently, to reveal itself as driven by a recognizable ideology or even inviolable principle other than regime survival, leads to the main argument of this paper, that a preponderantly powerful PRC would most likely "shirk" hegemonic responsibility rather than replace the U.S. as either a liberal champion or anti-liberal revisionist. The extreme pragmatism found at home by Sebastian Heilmann and Elizabeth Perry explains much of China's international behavior as well, including apparent ambivalence toward the liberal world order. As will be clear throughout the essay, this paper will reemphasize "shirking" as Schweller & Pu's most likely scenario, though adding that shirking hegemony does not preclude global "leadership." This seeming contradiction will be clarified in the following sections.

The International System and the Liberal World Order. What do IR scholars mean when they use the terms "international system," "world order," or modify the order to be a "liberal" one? The international system usually refers to the highest "level of analysis" in IR,[5] one which is privileged especially by structural realist theories. Structural theories assume that the system's permanent anarchy gives rise to states' immutable imperative of self-help. As Huang and Patman helpfully point out, if the international system is seen as constant and indeed impossible to change, the scholarly endeavor of comparing different world systems over time will be a fruitless nonstarter.[6] Thankfully, other major theoretical approaches exist precisely to describe the significant changes a hegemonic successor might enact. Liberal and constructivist paradigms treat the anarchic international system as an institution which can be altered, thereby mitigating atavistic interstate competition and ordering the world to make cooperation more likely than conflict. For structural realists, either a balance of power or a hegemon may be responsible for bringing peace and order to the system, but whether at peace or war the system remains intact and of primary importance. While this study employs realist analysis in recognition of the importance of power, it begins with a mildly controversial but standard assumption that liberal forces since the end of World War II have constructed an imperfect but functioning liberal world order.

[5] See Singer's classic article. Levels of analysis should not be confused with units of analysis, such as nation-states or the basis of a much different order, Huntington's civilizations. Importantly, only if the units in the international system are taken to be empires, something close to Mearshimer's offensive realism attains, and hegemonic ambition may be correctly assumed. Virtually all other major IR theories reject this assumption.

[6] See Huang & Patman, pg. 2, where they claim that structural and societal theories are powerful for explaining the systemic effects on states' international behavior but "do not recognize the legitimacy or even possibility of new international systems, and seem to rule out the chance that China's rise could bring a fundamental change to the international system itself."

Liberals, according to Georg Sørensen, seek to establish an order which is "rule-based" and thereby built increasingly upon *institutional* rather than solely state power.[7] Sørensen pithily states the distinction between a liberal and a realist world order as a much-preferred "rule-based order" versus "an order without rules."[8] While sharing with constructivism a strong affinity for international institutions which build trust and facilitate cooperation, liberalism itself should not be equated with institutionalism. Institutions, both domestic and international, may be decidedly illiberal or antiliberal—the perhaps hackneyed, orientalist, yet still useful depiction of Asia favoring collective rather than individual rights being one relevant example.

For the purposes of this paper, the order which China would be assumed to affect is the one favored by *liberal institutionalists*. Institutions include organizations like the UN, IMF, and a rapidly blooming array of NGOs as well as laws, rules, and norms which structure international relations. While the notion of ideas providing structure continues to confound realists, finding global support is not difficult. Sovereignty in its various forms is perhaps the most important example, one in which the PRC is particularly invested and outspoken.[9] Under Sørensen's central concern with the "tensions within" liberalism and Kupchan's observation that world orders reflect the values of the states which created them, such institutions are far from the Rawlsian ideal of neutrality.[10] Instead, they exist not only to foster cooperation and moderate conflict, but also to spread liberal values under Sørensen's order of "imposition."

This essay's analysis will, thus, be useful and interesting to the reader to the extent that s/he believes that institutions matter and are not simply tools to advance the material interests of powerful states. If one believes international institutions to be no more than "the velvet glove on the iron fist" of state power, changing the material of the glove from velvet to Chinese silk will be of little consequence. Even realists like Stephen Krasner now openly state,

[7] Liberalism of Moravcsik, Doyle, and others rejects pure realism's assumptions that all states have the same, fixed preferences. Instead, what Waltz called "second-image" domestic factors such as cultural values and ruling coalitions strongly influence states' international behavior.
[8] See Sørensen, Ch.1 and pg. 141.
[9] See Krasner for a discussion of sovereignty's four forms: international, Westphalian, domestic, and interdependence. Carlson prefers to divide the concept into four "faces": territorial, jurisdictional, sovereign authority, and economic. Both of these add to the general distinction of "internal" and "external" sovereignty.
[10] Rawls famously suggested that a fair system of governance, generally applied to domestic democratic theory but also applicable to the international system which is presumed to be much more difficult to democratize, would be one which might be chosen by any member as if under a "veil of ignorance." This is to say that benefits and disadvantages to members in the system would inevitably fall to some members more than others, yet all members would continue to support the system because of its inherent non-discrimination. That is, the rules of the system would not *systematically* favor one or more of its members over any other.

however, that while power should not be forgotten, it is insufficient to understand contemporary international relations.[11]

Critics like Alice Amsden and Amitav Archarya, in contrast with realists, do not reject the possibility of a liberal world order but question whether any such order has ever been in place. Amsden finds the American order to be a more carefully marketed version of imperialism, leading either to the outright control of developing countries or, only slightly less directly, the imposition of a neoliberal Washington Consensus upon the world. Calling liberal hegemony a myth, Archarya notes that the liberal sheen of American hegemony largely glosses over coercive elements, and no order worthy of the name ever existed until possibly after the end of the Cold War. Fukuyama's seductive "End of History" moment ushered in a so-called *Pax Americana* which was nonetheless accompanied by wars intended to spread liberal democracy to Iraq and Afghanistan. New concepts like the "responsibility to protect" and "targeted killing" have been viewed outside the West less as spreading liberal values than as concepts circumventing sovereignty and enabling new imperialism. A true liberal system, by the accounts of critics which include commentators from the PRC, would return to a "liberalism of restraint" including all states in global governance, regardless of their illiberal status.

By Sørensen's account, contemporary liberalism is wrought with tensions between imposing its culture and systems of government and respecting the diversity of sovereign states, many of which continue to reject the universality of liberal values. Sørensen argues that the U.S. under the second Bush Administration gave in to the temptations of hegemony, which transformed the liberal system of rules into a two-tiered order which required illiberal states to follow international law yet justified the interventionist acts of the U.S. and other liberal states as bringing outsiders into line with global norms, including the globalized economy.

In terms used by Roberts, Secor, and Sparke, under a liberal world order, the "danger" in the system is not of interstate war but "defined as disconnection from the global system" as in failed and "pariah" states. If a "democratic peace" is to wash over the world, such states must first be democratized.[12] Furthermore, war can now be included as a

[11] See pg. 340 of Krasner's festschrift *Back to Basics* (Finnemore & Goldstein, Eds.) for his admission that "[t]his [power-based] conventional analytic perspective is not analytically useless for understanding the major challenges of the contemporary world, but it is not fully adequate either." Throughout his chapter, he notes various "big changes" which have taken place since 1945 which invite analysis of factors other than material power.

[12] Authors like Niall Ferguson and Daniel Kliman's more recent book largely agree with this, though recent events at least make Kliman more circumspect about the limits of democracy promotion.

tool to "remove barriers to globalization."[13] China would naturally find the formation of a League of Democracies to be highly confrontational, inferring that a league could only be formed to contain its rise, yet many liberals find encouragement in the PRC's full scale support of free trade and growing participation in IGOs like the IMF and World Bank.[14] Sørensen believes that the way back to viability for the liberal world order is to rein in expansionist tendencies and return to core ideas of tolerance, ideas which Mark Leonard and Lisolette Odgaard find the PRC promoting.

In summary, the liberal world order faces a number of challenges, from realists in terms of ontological possibility and from critics espousing different values as well as liberal critics who fault the system for failing to live up to its own standards. For the purposes of this paper, however, such an order is assumed to exist, in however flawed a form. As the following section explains the framework, it should be kept in mind that China's rising power is almost certain to have consequences for the existing liberal order.

Schweller & Pu's "Three Scenarios" for China's Rise. In summer 2011, Randall Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu published an article in *International Security* which portrayed the PRC as rising *within* the current order while also attempting to delegitimize the U.S. hegemon. The article was partially notable for the acknowledgment that China is not rising in a realist vacuum devoid of morality or structuring yet dynamic institutions with independent power and interests. From a realist perspective, the authors describe the deligitimation strategy as a substitute for balancing against the U.S. As Martha Finnemore's article on unipolarity notes, hegemony entails more than simply a preponderance of power; being a true hegemon requires that other states accept the legitimacy of hegemonic leadership and the resulting world order.[15] In the latter half of their article, Schweller and Pu offer three clear ideal types for how China might challenge U.S. hegemony more substantially, as when Chinese power becomes conclusively greater than America's. They describe Chinese visions of a future order as mapping onto "three potential strategies":

> "China might (1) embrace deligitimation, functioning as a spoiler with a competing view for how the world should be structured; (2) emerge as a supporter of the existing system, working within the existing rules of the game and contributing its fair share to global governance; or (3) continue to shirk some of its international commitments and responsibilities,

[13] Roberts, Secor, and Sparke (in Dittmer & Sharp, Eds.), pg. 213-4.
[14] See Duggan's chapter in Dessein's edited volume, pg. 261-3.
[15] Schweller & Pu, pg. 57, also note that "[h]egemonic orders rest on both material and ideational bases." Ian Clark also goes into considerable depth to differentiate between a straightforward power transition and a far more complicated and momentous hegemonic succession, concluding that the latter is not foreseeable in the short or medium-term. Beeson, 2013 pg. 235, also draws a distinction between leadership, which China wants, and hegemony, which it does not want, claiming that America has enjoyed both. Ikenberry's 2011 *Foreign Affairs* article concludes that the U.S. will continue to "lead" even after it is no longer able to "rule" the world.

> focusing on internal development and consolidation, contributing selectively to global governance, and seeking to implement its vision of global order gradually."

Schweller & Pu conclude that the third scenario is most likely, resulting in a "negotiated order" in which power diffuses due to the new superpower shirking hegemonic responsibilities, in a manner similar to how the U.S. flirted with isolationism in the early 20th century. The present study agrees with their assessment but contends that books, articles, and events since "After Unipolarity" offer much new evidence to modify, support, and challenge each of the three "strategic visions." The continuing relevance of Schweller and Pu's argument is clearest in that Western scholars continue to find the PRC's intentions all but inscrutable, even as popular media builds a case for a "new assertiveness."[16]

There are several reasons why their framework is valuable and in need of an update. Assuming the liberal world order exists and that China's ascent will continue, choices are largely exhausted by the three very straightforward and almost deceptively simple scenarios, extremely helpful to focus a literature review. Dozens of books and articles on the topic have emerged, and the PRC has been involved in several international incidents involving disputed territories in the East and South China seas. Taking new information into account, it would be surprising if Schweller & Pu's proposals and conclusions do not require major modification. First and foremost, the role of the U.S. as a regional or global hegemon needs to be considered in light of the Obama Administration's "pivot" to Asia and ongoing economic recovery.[17]

The liberal world order required a liberal hegemon, the U.S., for creation and consolidation. Internalization of the order, deepening its acceptance among illiberal or anti-liberal states, would probably require the U.S. to maintain primacy in the world as the most forceful promoter of liberal values. Many such as Sørensen and Nye would prefer that the U.S. return to a softer power of attractiveness to promote liberalism, and until the American economy fully recovers from the Great Recession, hard power may not be an option to coerce any state to adopt liberal political institutions.

The necessity of a liberal hegemon to *maintain* the order is less clear. A liberal but pluralist "order of restraint," in Sørensen's terms, would still be dependent for funding and military backing on supportive, liberal states, but having

[16] See Johnston's 2013 article and the 2014 response by Dingding Chen & Xiaoyu Pu.
[17] Published concurrently with Schweller & Pu and perhaps prescient compared to Layne's 2012 article, MacDonald & Parent expect the U.S. to recover fully after a period of "retrenchment."

long been established, such an order has likely assumed many self-sustaining elements.[18] In the absence of any hegemon, whether liberal or anti-liberal, the order could be expected to endure for some time. Were a hegemon such as the PRC to replace the U.S. and create alternative institutions reflecting traditional Chinese and anti-liberal values, the liberal world order would be gravely threatened, first being degraded to a liberal bloc and then fading to a liberal minority among competing visions of world order.

The remainder of this paper reviews academic literature, mostly since Schweller & Pu's article was published, attempting to show where certain scholars fit in or speak directly to the assumptions or predictions of the three "scenarios." As the liberal order has just been discussed at some length, the supporter scenario has been shuffled to the front in a modification of the original sequencing.

Supporter. The most optimistic scenario for the West foresees the PRC upholding the liberal world order, even after China's power surpasses the U.S. conclusively. Most scholarship to date portrays the PRC as benefitting greatly from economic globalization, especially free trade and capital markets, but harboring serious objections to the cultural and political values of liberalism. Studies which believe that China may one day fully support the liberal world order[19] generally require the PRC to make fundamental changes in these regards, and such changes minimally require guidance and may not happen without external encouragement or coercion. Throughout this section, it should be kept in mind that enfolding China into the liberal system could be accomplished by emphasizing the obligations of great powers to contribute to global order, peace, and development. In this sense, the PRC may only be choosing whether to meet the putative responsibilities heaped upon it rather than choosing to follow liberal precepts. The latter would be a much thicker, liberal transformation, but both routes could lead to the label of supporter.

Books from the mid-2000s by Lanteigne[20] and by Wu & Lansdowne show that the PRC gains many large, tangible benefits from participation in multilateral institutions, and many liberals would be satisfied if a hegemonic China kept these robustly in place. Ian Clark may have prematurely found in 2011 that "a convincing consensus that China, for the

[18] On pg. 165, Sørensen describes institutions as powerful but *not* self-sustaining, creating a dilemma that a liberal hegemon may be necessary to provide institutions with "a stable power basis," yet hegemony invites the abuse of power for illiberal adventures of imposition.

[19] Support includes full participation in international organizations and financial contributions to keep these successful in their respective missions. The PRC has, in the past, been non-supportive in terms of financial contributions and often preferred to bypass multilateral institutions in favor of bilateral negotiation. For details on the gradual socialization of China into the global community and its international institutions, see Johnston's *Social States*.

[20] See Lanteigne, pg. 15-30 especially, for a list of benefits, including most importantly the providence of a stable global environment for economic development.

moment at least, is largely supportive of the existing order," as today China's position is ambiguous.[21] From the perspective of a politician rather than an IR theorist, former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's chapter frames the realization of this scenario via multilateral institution-building in Asia as a liberal *imperative*. The stakes involved are not only survival of the current order but also to prevent another world war.[22] David Kang's assessment is that even if China returns to its traditional place atop the Asian hierarchy, true hegemony requires legitimacy which today can only be attained by "adjusting" to the prevailing global norms and institutions.[23] If one agrees that world peace requires China to internalize global, generally liberal norms, Martha Finnemore's observation that the PRC impugns U.S. legitimacy with criticism based on international law is encouraging. Supposedly anti-liberal China's use of international law against the self-avowedly liberal hegemon should not be taken lightly, and Finnemore's article strongly states that a "unipole" cannot afford to ignore challenges to its identity and legitimacy, especially from a potential great power challenger.[24] There is, in short, more to hegemony than power.

G. John Ikenberry is also among the foremost advocates of drawing the PRC into the liberal system as a "global stakeholder" or "responsible player"[25], at least partially based on the logic that "[t]oday's Western order […] is hard to overturn and easy to join".[26] Peer pressure to join in stately reindeer games may yet have an effect on red-nosed China, according to David Shambaugh:

> "One of the key motivational drivers for China's behavior in international relations is […] driven by the normative symbols of appearing to be a globally respected power—as this plays directly back into the CPC's domestic legitimacy. […] China is vulnerable to losing "face" internationally and is hypersensitive to being 'shamed' in the international court of public opinion. China does *not* like to be seen as an 'outlier' and repeated case studies show that China will carefully monitor other major nation's [sic] positions on sensitive issues and cling to a dissonant position only as long as others do (e.g. Russia), but will quickly 'swing' behind majority opinion when it senses it is being viewed as an outlier or spoiler."[27]

[21] See Clark, pg. 25, on the non-so-convincing consensus of one paragraph, followed by reservations about liberal progress on the next page.
[22] See Rudd's chapter, "Lessons from Europe 1914 for Asia 2014: Reflections on the Centenary of the Outbreak of World War I" in Rosecrance & Miller (Eds.). Charles Glaser, pg. 87, finds the comparison to WWI apt, believing that "a large war between the United States and China is most likely to escalate from smaller disputes that were not initially intended to overturn the system, including a conflict over Taiwan." This fits the unintentional spoiler scenario described as the "Thucydides Trap" described in the next section.
[23] See pg. 44 in Aggarwal & Newland (Eds.) for the need to adjust, in Kang's chapter, "China, Hegemony, and Leadership in East Asia."
[24] Finnemore notes that a unipole's legitimacy is conferred or denied by others in the international system. Perceived hypocrisy is damaging to the unipole's reputation, no matter how dominant over other states, and the resulting concern for legitimacy effectively restrains the unipole from doing just as it pleases.
[25] See Scott's article for use of the term. U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick, in 2005, is credited with early statements that molding China into a "responsible stakeholder" in the global order should be a U.S. and Western priority.
[26] See Ikenberry, 2008, pg. 24.
[27] See Shambaugh's chapter, "Chinese Thinking about World Order" in Huang & Patman (Eds.). The quoted section is on pg. 22-3, emphasis in the original.

Existing institutions which China has come to appreciate are thus the best arena to observe the struggle to incorporate China as a full supporter, where disengagement or active subversion would definitively discredit this scenario.

Samuel Kim, Wang Gungwu, and A. Iain Johnston have all traced the PRC's "socialization" into international institutions as something like a tabula rasa, or a child previously accustomed to operating according to an atavistic *realpolitik* in a state of nature but gradually joining society.[28] Kim traces China's preferences in the UN since the 1970s to the late 1990s as evolving from "system-transforming" to "system-reforming" to "system-maintaining."[29] Wang corroborates this account by highlighting how international recognition of the PRC in 1971 enabled the CCP to pursue its goals of strengthening sovereignty. He finds the Party's attitude upon joining the UN to be one of initial skepticism, ultimately dissipating and being replaced by general support for the organization, especially in strategic use of the UNSC veto.[30] This view is supported by Mark Leonard, who finds China using the UN as "a powerful amplifier of the Chinese world-view" of inviolable sovereignty.[31] Even using global institutions to serve Chinese interests, as skeptics of the supporter scenario accuse, might one day turn the PRC into a supporter of the system, if the socialization thesis is carried to its logical extreme. Whether an order of liberal institutionalism would be recognizably the same order if stripped of the liberal half, however, remains questionable.

Rosemary Foot believes the UN is the most attractive way to draw China permanently into the fold. Partially behind her reasoning is that, while the UN is the foremost global institution, it needn't be a liberal one. An illiberal global majority could well co-opt it, as the theoretical question of whether the UN serves or constrains hegemonic power is increasingly open.[32] With Chinese foreign policy becoming more active,[33] PRC leaders have used the UN as a forum to counter U.S. power—especially when used "irresponsibly," though not necessarily in knee-jerk reaction against

[28] The preface to Johnston's 2008 *Social States*, pg. xx, finds the PRC to be a "critical" case to test whether "there is any counter-realpolitik socialization" going on in international institutions because it had no previous involvement in international organizations, being steeped in a cultural *realpolitik* dating at least to the Ming (as in Johnston's 1995 book) and acting unilaterally.
[29] See Kim's chapter, "China in the United Nations," in Economy & Oksenberg (Eds.).
[30] See Wang Gungwu, pg. 74.
[31] Leonard, however, notes that the sovereignty favored in this world-view is explicitly "an older idea" used to counter emerging liberal norms and practices of "conditional sovereignty" based on the "responsibility to protect" one's citizens and resulting in "humanitarian intervention" and the forfeiture of sovereignty if the responsibility is not met (i.e. in the extreme case of waging genocide on a population).
[32] Relatedly, it may be in the present hegemon's own interest to have its power checked, both for reasons Finnemore cites related to legitimacy and image but also as a guarantee that, following inevitable decline, the next hegemon will not be unrestrained in seeking retribution for past grievances or imperialist expansion.
[33] Duchatel et al., Chung, and Rozman all conclude that the days of a modest Chinese foreign policy are over and that the PRC will increasingly pursue interests abroad. Li, Kemburi, and Zhang (pg. 16) note that the 2013 White Paper on Chinese national defense was the first to mention the protection of overseas interests.

liberal ideals.[34] Foot also points out that China keeps the Security Council contentious, thereby honest and relevant,[35] while also increasing payment of dues, now ranking sixth in the world. On this global stage for leadership, Foot finds that China receives alternating benefits from being able to express its two identities as both a great power and a developing country.[36] These nearly conflicting identities may be called upon either to demand respect or, as critics and this study argue, shirk responsibility. China's evolving behavior in the UN and other organizations is well worth further exposition to lay out the unlikelihood of the PRC leading bodies still viewed by the CCP as promoting Western or liberal values across the globe.

Most recently, Niall Duggan's chapter on the PRC's behavior in global institutions, finds mixed evidence in favor of the supporter scenario.[37] China's views toward the liberal order may be seen in his comparison of China's position and actions in the UN versus the more neo-liberal IMF. As stated in previous studies, China has become increasingly active in the UN, and the organization often receives official endorsement from the Foreign Ministry. China contributes more than ever to the UN's budget, and Chinese troop numbers in peacekeeping missions have reversed from being low to high among peers in the developing world and even other UNSC members. Such activity clearly falls on the institutional rather than liberal side of the current order, however. Where China had previously garnered an inactive reputation for its abstentions from UNSC votes which did not directly involve "core interests," Duggan believes China's increased activity has come in the form of more active use of the veto, effectively cooperating with Russia from the mid-2000s up to the early 2010s. At the IMF, where China is now "underrepresented," expectations to assume greater responsibility have been met with reluctance and a numbered agenda for institutional reforms to better reflect the interests of itself and other developing countries. Even viewed from the easiest case of global economic governance, where the PRC's interests may be shifting from those of the South to the North as its economy benefits from globalization, China appears at best lukewarm on liberalism.[38]

[34] Elsewhere in a paper on the use of combat drones, I've suggested that the U.S. definition of responsibility is to act in a manner consistent with liberal values whereas the PRC is increasingly using violations of the letter of international law to denote the opposite.
[35] Foot does not believe that the UN should be a rubber stamp for international action promoting either liberalism or hegemonic interests; thus contentiousness within UN proceedings shows that the institution is healthy and fulfilling its purpose of neutral constraint.
[36] See Foot, pg. 1090.
[37] See his chapter, "The Rise of China within Global Governance," in Dessein's 2014 volume, *Interpreting China as a Regional and Global Power*.
[38] See Huang & Patman's conclusion, pg. 198, on the tensions with the global South as China's interests align with the North. This supports their argument that China is in a transitional phase and has multiple, often conflicting identities.

Being an active participant in institutions and a leader in economic globalization, where most scholars view China currently, does not add up to being a supporter of the liberal order.[39] There is a sense in the literature that China may only be going through the motions in most institutions, and Odgaard suggests that the PRC may never be convinced to support, let alone spread, liberalism. As Suisheng Zhao puts it, as of 2013 China was already becoming more vocal about the issues it cares about and what goals it will pursue, noting that so-called global responsibility is not a "core interest," according to the terms of the ruling CCP.[40] Barry Buzan and Cameron Thies also emphasize the introduction of the concept of core interests, and Thies is particularly explicit that attempts to "socialize" China into the liberal order will be futile and frustrating for both sides when the two objectives are contradictory. Despite the earlier quoted section on peer pressure from other states, Shambaugh also notes an ongoing suspicion among Chinese analysts that the concept of "global responsibility" may be a Western "trap" to burden and thereby contain China's rise.[41] Even Ikenberry's confidence in the likelihood of integrating China to the point where it is a fully supportive member of the liberal order appears to waver, as his most recent article calls for the U.S. to hedge against failure with a combined approach of regional balancing and inducements to apply Chinese power toward maintaining global institutions.

Shaun Breslin notes that China's regional cooperation in the mid-2000s solidified official rhetoric of a "peaceful rise," and he too offers behavior within multilateral institutions as evidence of this. However, when acting in bodies of China's own creation, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, China may be building *alternatives* to liberal institutions rather than supporting their legitimacy.[42] These actions drive a conceptual wedge between liberalism and institutionalism, and if the organizations and values China supports are decidedly subversive of predominant liberal ones, they belong to the second scenario, not the first.

[39] Ikenberry, 2011 pg. 57, asserts: "China and other emerging great powers do not want to contest the basic rules and principles of the liberal international order; they wish to gain more authority and leadership within it." Whether this amounts to support, absent liberalization of these "emerging powers," is a question which can remain unanswered until China actually attains global leadership and enough power to enact changes. Perhaps the PRC may not wish to change the content of the rules but instead to revert to a system in which rules are unnecessary, as in the idealized, traditional Sino-centric world of states competing not for power but for the virtue and, in David Kang's terms, authority.

[40] See Zhao, pg. 116. Most authors select either the global recession or the transition to Xi Jinping as a turning point for the PRC to assert itself more forcefully, across the board within multilateral institutions, bilateral relations, and unilateral declarations.

[41] See Huang & Patman, pg. 26. He nonetheless concurs with Duggan, on pg. 27, that "the Chinese government and scholars have become some of the world's strongest advocates of the UN." This should be contextualized with the argument of this section that the UN generally favors global restraint or at least consensus, and even if it currently favors liberal values, the favoritism is subject to shifts in the General Assembly.

[42] See Wang Dong, pg. 70-1, for reassurances about the SCO and hopes that it may cooperate with NATO in Afghanistan, rather a first for international government organizations (IGOs) with significant security components.

Spoiler. When predicted to be a spoiler of the liberal world order, realist scholars ascribe the PRC with hegemonic ambition—diametrically opposite official rhetoric[43] of "peaceful development"--and a concomitant revision of the system from unipolar to bipolar. Here, in the polarity of the system and the intentions of great powers, John Mearshimer's offensive realism shares an expansive interest with Robert Gilpin's Power Transition Theory (PTT), to be discussed shortly.[44] Before launching into realist analysis, it should be noted that realists by no means have a monopoly on predictions of systemic changes in store under a Chinese hegemon. Institutionalists and constructivists view potential changes as extending far beyond polarity to a transformation of systemic foundations towards one reflecting Chinese interests and cultural/normative preferences.[45] Such a drastic change could hardly be accomplished without a preponderance of power, and so this section begins by zeroing in on how the various forms of realism support a "China Threat" argument.[46] Each IR paradigm is able to formulate reasons why, when, and how the PRC might want to spoil and replace the current order, but realism stands head and shoulders above the others in predicting great power conflict as the most likely scenario, even expecting hegemonic war to be all but inevitable.[47]

Hypotheses based on realism are clearest and thereby most falsifiable with regard to the expanding material interests of rising powers. Jonathan Kirshner's point that realism is a pluralist paradigm is well taken, but even his preferred "classical" form is "wary and pessimistic" about the consequences of China's rise.[48] Indeed, even the most optimistic realist analyses expect that the "status quo" of U.S. primacy in the world will have to make significant and painful accommodations of the PRC's stated "core interests."[49] Christopher Layne's sometimes self-congratulatory article goes the farthest to show that America's "unipolar moment" is over, and China's "risen" status is his key material

[43] See Zheng Bijian. As "peaceful rise" was still deemed too threatening, "peaceful development" was later adopted. Both Hu Jintao and his successor Xi Jinping have stated in no uncertain terms that China will never seek hegemony.
[44] Notably, as pointed out by Shiping Tang, the assumptions of Mearshimer's offensive realism are incompatible with the security dilemma because states' intentions are *known* to be offensive rather than uncertain to be offensive or defensive.
[45] Ikenberry, 2011 pg. 63, has a different definition of being a spoiler, more akin to Schweller & Pu's shirker scenario. Calling the Beijing Model only a decay to "a fragmented, mercantilist, protectionist complex," he oddly neglects the possibility of rebuilding the system according to Chinese interests.
[46] The "China Threat" narrative and the implication of this section is that a war between the U.S. and China over "core interests" would be unlikely to be a minor skirmish and could well fundamentally reshape world order if the PRC were to prevail (and nuclear annihilation did not remove both states from the system).
[47] Mearshimer reaffirmed his convictions that China's rise can't be peaceful in a brief 2006 article. Friedberg also tends toward pessimistic conclusions on U.S.-China conflict.
[48] See Kirshner, pg. 65.
[49] Recent examples include White's proposal that the U.S. and PRC "share power" in Asia, Glaser's "Grand Bargain" of removing guarantees of defending Taiwan in exchange for maritime territorial concessions, and for Kirshner a general warning that the status quo is likely indefensible. Buzan's article helpfully lays out China's core interests. Taking into account "second image" concerns about the PRC's stability as an authoritarian developing country, leading perhaps to predictions of the CCP regime's collapse before it can mount a credible challenge to the U.S. fit more with liberalism or perhaps Kirshner's classical realism, which does consider domestic factors and "politics."

indicator.[50] For structural realists, China's rise represents the expected and overdue return to order based on a balance of power, with bipolarity theoretically more stable than a mulitpolar or anomalous post-Cold War unipolar system. Mearshimer's offensive realism removes the guesswork from China's intentions but also offers the most pessimistic assessment and prescriptions for the future, namely that all states pursue regional hegemony so as to maximize their security.[51] The ship of containment may already have sailed as a viable policy option,[52] but some strands of realism predict U.S.-China conflict with global consequences despite whatever strategic choices CCP and American leadership select.

By way of historical analogy, China and the current U.S. hegemon risk falling into "The Thucydides Trap," in which "the inevitable unease that accompanies a sharp shift in the relative power of potential competitors" may unintentionally escalate to disastrous great power war.[53] Either a "spark" by a third party, as in the case of WWI's onset, or simply the militarization of an intractable conflict could conceivably lead to this result. Moreover, the ensnaring aspect of the "trap" might appear despite each party understanding the extremely high costs of war and claiming to favor anything but. This point is crucial because Ikenberry and Kirshner rely on the rationality of leaders on all sides to realize that modern hegemonic war would be nuclear war, and no rational state would ever choose what Kirshner calls a "suicide solution."[54] Thucydides Trap works not only based on fear but also by means of domestic audience costs—it is politically costly to appear weak or untrustworthy as a result of backing down from stated commitments—and it is easy to imagine a relatively minor conflict escalating insidiously to war.[55] Axiomatic expressions such as the Thucydides Trap and metaphors of crises "sparking a wildfire" find more testable hypotheses in the theory of power transition.

[50] Layne, pg. 207 and throughout the article, makes the case for irreversible U.S. decline as China's economy approaches the proportion of the U.S. globally. His and Beeson & Li's piece, pg. 98, cite the global financial crisis as an opportunity for China and an indication that China and the West have opposite trajectories.
[51] Though see Kirshner for a thoughtful critique of offensive realism which points out internal contradictions and makes it more of a utopian theory.
[52] See Zhao, 2014 pg. 386-91 on why it was never a good option and why China's rise is now all but unstoppable.
[53] Graham Allison's chapter, pg. 77, in Rosecrance & Miller (Eds.). Gilpin opens his 1989 article with a lengthy Thucydidean exposition.
[54] Kirshner, pg. 63, finds that the likelihood of state survival is actually very high *unless* one makes a bid for regional hegemony, which is virtually suicidal, especially under the enduring condition of Mutually Assured Destruction between the U.S. and China. Ikenberry considers these factors in a chapter on Power Transition Theory in Ross & Zhu (Eds.).
[55] See Glaser for the suggestion that Taiwan, though minor only in the grand scheme of IR, might be such an instigator of great power conflict. In the past, it was thought that authoritarian countries faced lesser audience costs than democracies, though works on Chinese nationalism and especially Jessica Chen Weiss's article largely dispel theoretical differences based on regime types.

Power Transition Theory (PTT), as a research agenda within realism, has its roots in the 1958 classic *World Politics* by A.F.K. Organski and is nicely summarized by DiCicco & Levy's article.[56] Unlike other forms of realism, PTT rejects balance of power because "hegemonies frequently form, […] these extreme concentrations of power are stabilizing rather than destabilizing and contribute to peace rather than war, and […] blocking coalitions do not generally form against dominant states."[57] Robert Gilpin also refined and formalized the concept of power transition as a theory, specified further to explain hegemonic war.[58] In a nutshell, the outcome of China's rise for world order hinges on whether the PRC is a "dissatisfied" or "revisionist" power rather than a "status quo power." If anything but the last, China can be expected to challenge the liberal world order, perhaps ultimately "spoiling" and replacing it with a new one, if Martin Jacques' provocative *When China Rules the World* proves correct.[59] Stated thusly, the theory provides context-independent support for what some outspoken area specialists and Chinese scholars hypothesize or advocate.[60] PTT has been tested and critiqued numerous times[61] by scholars within and outside the realist tradition, and it remains a well-known, useful, if not universally accepted lens to view perennial rising powers such as Japan in the 1980s.

The economic challenges presented by the "rising sun" were perhaps comparable to the contemporary situation, but the "rising dragon" piles on significance in military affairs and cultural values, befitting discussions of true hegemony.[62] Whereas Japan earlier adopted Western imperialism before accepting an imposed, liberal democracy, eminent Chinese intellectuals like Wang Gungwu and the "New Left's" Wang Hui are actively criticizing the Westphalian system of nation-states on a more fundamental level, with an emphasis on its dependence on "Western" values.[63] The "China Threat" is therefore directed at both the U.S. and the post-WWII liberal order it helped create.

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[56] See also their chapter in Elman & Elman's edited volume. They note (pg. 110) that while power transition theory works within the power-focused realist paradigm, it rejects balance of power theory because "hegemonies frequently form, […] these extreme concentrations of power are stabilizing rather than destabilizing and contribute to peace rather than war, and […] blocking coalitions do not generally form against dominant states."

[57] See their chapter in Elman & Elman, pg. 110. Regarding concentrations of power and channeling Hegemonic Stability Theory (HST), Ikenberry (pg. 23 in Ross & Zhu) notes that throughout history high concentrations of power have been globally stabilizing but regionally destabilizing.

[58] See Gilpin 1981, 1988.

[59] Jacques, pg. 362, predicts that China will sponsor a new, Sino-centric international system "which will exist alongside the present system and probably slowly begin to usurp it."

[60] Critics of the "spoiler" scenario, such as Mark Beeson, first and foremost doubt that the PRC has sufficient power to remake world order, but they also question whether China could offer a coherent alternative. Zhao, 2015, offers the most accessible summary of traditional Chinese IR, and two proposals to upgrade the "morality" of the international system are offered by Zhao Tingyang (in Callahan & Barabantseva) and Yan Xuetong. In his own edited volume, Bart Dessein's chapter, "All under Heaven and the Chinese Nation-state," also offers a useful comparison between China's past and present worldviews.

[61] See Harris, Lebow & Valentino.

[62] See Ian Clark for the differences between power transition and hegemonic succession. The latter, as Finnemore also notes with regard to legitimacy, requires a prescription of order based on widely, if not universally-held values.

[63] Both Wangs and proponents of *tianxia* criticize the system of nation-states as causing violence, and viewing the legal equality of states in the current system as little more than a self-orientalized fiction in a teleological global historical narrative, they do not think the system would be mourned if it were replaced by a more

All of the preceding flies in the face of what Dingding Chen and Jianwei Wang describe as China's "grand strategy" since the Deng Xiaoping era. Condensed into a single phrase as 韬光养晦 *taoguang yanghui,* the strategy is variously translated as "keeping a low profile" or more ominously, "hiding our strength and biding our time."[64] The latter suggests that China will wait until it has gathered sufficient strength to avenge imperial misdeeds which have led to ongoing dissatisfaction, though Chen and Wang find this interpretation itself to be a Western imposition.[65] All the more dangerous in cases where intended meanings may be lost in translation, wordplay can easily give way to swordplay. These authors and Suisheng Zhao note that many nationalist citizens and more outspoken leaders of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) are already calling for abandonment of Deng's principle in favor of a more muscular foreign policy.[66] The time has come, some argue, for China to "*liangjian* [reveal the sword]," firstly in the form of "pushing the U.S. out of Asia" both physically and in a policy declaration similar to America's "Monroe Doctrine."[67] While evidence of this is mixed, Suisheng Zhao believes that Xi Jinping "has demonstrated clear intentions to drive the U.S. out of the region" by attempting to weaken U.S. alliances and excluding America from regional summits organized by the PRC.[68] As China's capabilities grow, "[…] it wants to remake its home region in its own image."[69]

Reinhard Wolf's claim that Chinese people are "tired of an international order dominated by the West and its ideas" suggests the spoiler scenario may be the most likely, though least immediate.[70] Power transition theory supports both realist and constructivist interpretations of China and "other rising powers" replacing the liberal order with norms derived from unique historical and cultural experience, as argued by Charles Kupchan. Playing the spoiler, in other words, would require a hegemonic PRC to thoroughly dismantle the current international system, perhaps violently, and use its irresistible power to rebuild a system which better serves Chinese interests. While most consequential, for most authors like Steve Chan and David Shambaugh who view China as still merely a "partial power" with strong influence in

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hierarchical, Sinocentric one. Ironically, the Westphalian quarter of Krasner's divisions of sovereignty is the one which gives rise to the PRC's cherished norm of non-interference in internal affairs.

[64] Chen & Wang's consideration of the official "24-character" principle, pg. 196-199, helpfully shows how Deng's guiding statement can be translated to amplify or diminish the "China Threat."

[65] In terms of Georg Sørensen, the liberal world order led by the U.S. has chosen "imposition" on the rest of the world, including China, over "restraint," offering cause for an anti-liberal PRC to oppose the *means* by which the order is promoted, in addition to the values themselves.

[66] Zhao (2013), pg. 113.

[67] See Wang Dong, pg. 68, and his introduction for a Chinese "Monroe Doctrine." Notably, the author's purpose is to argue against these as mischaracterizations or fringe positions, but he does note that an internal debate exists.

[68] See Zhao, 2014, pg. 381-2, for these assertions and the example of exclusion at the 2014 Shanghai summit of the Conference of Interaction and Confidence-Building in Asia (CICA).

[69] Thies, pg. 6. On pg. 7 he suggests that much of China's dissatisfaction can be traced to its status as a norm-taker which increasingly wants to be a norm-*maker*.

[70] Wolf, pg. 24. He cites several surveys suggesting that PRC citizens want China to gain respect and recognition but may not be content until regaining hegemonic status in the world. Affirmations that Chinese nationalists affect the PRC's foreign policy may be found in James Reilly's 2012 book.

only some arenas, this scenario would also have to be the most temporally distant. Many authors also claim that China lacks a coherent alternative world view, as concepts like the "Beijing Consensus" are not intended as models for other developing countries to emulate.[71]

Some early signs of revisionist intent may be observed, however. Charles Glaser, an avowed realist, is among the first to declare that "China appears to have largely abandoned its 'peaceful rise' strategy,"[72] but what signals would add up to a major shift to a spoiler strategy? Attempts to spoil institutional effectiveness include the PRC's attempt to buy out Cambodia as the Chair of the 2012 ASEAN Summit, which successfully kept the highly contentious South China Sea issue out of discussion at the meeting.[73] The PRC has so far refused to send a delegation to represent its claims to the Mischief Reef in an ongoing dispute with the Philippines, and while others have taken up the case on China's behalf at the UN, it seems unlikely that China would respect any court's decision.[74] Although not yet declared a "core interest," accepting international arbitration in the South China Sea disputes would still be a hard test of the supporter scenario because it involves territory, the most important part of sovereignty for this "traditional state."[75] Specific empirical support for the spoiler scenario exists, but it is not particularly strong.

More general discontent points China in a revisionist direction and can be expected to grow. Hugh White and Lisolette Odgaard believe that China finds the current order of Western liberal cooperation, or collusion in Chinese eyes, unacceptable. Particular sections of Chinese society and leadership are, naturally, paying more attention to global issues and are more sensitive to perceived slights than others. As China rises, its nationalist coalitions will become more "inward-oriented" in Etel Solingen's terms, especially if Xi Jinping's ruling coalition yet proves to be less "outward-oriented" and engaging of liberal institutions than the departed Hu Jintao and his administration.[76] Under liberal IR

[71] See Beeson, 2009, pg. 111. Beeson & Li in 2015, pg. 105, find a divide within the Party as to whether the "Beijing Consensus" is an exportable economic model, though "state capitalism" can certainly be replicated, as this may simply be another name for the "East Asian Model" of development.
[72] Glaser, pg. 66.
[73] This may be a sign both of China's circumventing a governing institution on a matter of its own interest and a preference to negotiate bilaterally with ASEAN countries, giving the PRC far more leverage than when facing a unified group. See Li & Kemburi, pg. 16, for the example of Cambodia.
[74] See also Odom's article on China and UNCLOS, which could use an update in light of current events. A thorough, though possibly biased account of the dispute with the Philippines being handled by the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) is offered by Prof. Jay Batongbacal at http://amti.csis.org/arbitration-101-philippines-v-china/
[75] See Wayne Bert for the distinction between a "traditional" and a "virtual" state, the key being how essential territory is and what means determine whether particular lands remain within or break off from the state. Fravel's book contrarily portrays China as quite flexible, even accommodating and conciliatory in its many territorial disputes, though maritime issues of the kind now in the headlines are not the focus.
[76] See her chapter in Finnemore & Goldstein, "Three Scenes of Sovereignty and Power." Beijie Tang's dissertation also makes extensive use of the preferences of domestic coalitions as explanations for foreign policy in China. While Hu may or may not have been more "outward-oriented" and accepting of the liberal institutionalist order, he appears to have been more interested in harmony-seeking than Xi so far. On the need to disaggregate the Chinese state to analyze its foreign

theory and Odgaard's understanding of rising China, powerful inward-oriented coalitions demand more global "respect" for those who subscribe to different views of domestic order but also are more prone to jingoistic xenophobia.

Vocal minority coalitions are also known to take advantage of the "state as unitary actor" assumption in IR. Popular Chinese nationalists, should the CCP embrace them as the patriotic voice of *the* Chinese state, could conceivably foist their self-centered preferences for international order upon neighbors and the global stage. If unchecked, Wolf and White believe they could undermine the most liberal aspect of China's rise and reforms, in the economic realm. Jean-Christophe Defraigne believes that nationalism could serve as distraction from domestic problems while making the CCP "less flexible" internationally, but barring a major incident, will never be enough to motivate an expansive spoiler campaign, even one confined to Asia. Perceived double-standards between the West and "the rest" in terms of military intervention, however, lead many nationalist citizens and the PLA to feel disrespected.[77] For Kupchan, Odgaard, and Leonard, sufficient global respect would entail a diversity of norms, enforced coexistence, and a "walled world" of absolute sovereignty, respectively.[78] In initial contradiction, this would require strong global intervention from China to establish, toward the eventual goal of leaving state regimes alone to do as they please in their sovereign territory. Westphalia reinvigorated,[79] however, might invite a new Cold War.

Most authors, perhaps most explicitly Kang in suggesting that the Soviet Union would be a better comparison than rising Germany, believe that China would have to establish itself definitively as the U.S.'s bipolar rival before any global agenda could be advanced. For now, Yinhong Shi dismisses calls for a G2 of China and the U.S. as a kind of Chinese "triumphalism" intended for little more than an official status recognition, but if current trends continue, it may be prudent to extablish the "new kind of great power relationship" Xi Jinping suggests sooner rather than later.[80] Breslin's article surveys Chinese academic literature to find consensus that a transition from U.S.-led unipolarity toward

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policy, a budding approach to study all rising powers whose trajectories are unclear, see also Hameiri & Jones and Chen & Wang, pg. 209. Even classical realists have room for the contingencies of domestic politics in Kirshner's article.

[77] See Defraigne's chapter in Dessein's edited volume, pg. 308. On pg. 309, he notes that institutions like the IMF are not able to adapt quickly enough to China's rise, exacerbating feelings that containment and exclusion strategies are well underway. Friedberg, 2015 pg. 104, also finds nationalism related to more forceful foreign claims to be timed with the slowing of GDP growth in the past few years. He disagrees with Glaser's proposal for the U.S. to sever ties with Taiwan on grounds that the PRC has far grander global ambitions.

[78] Glaser, pg. 88, also doubts whether the U.S. acceptance of the "essential legitimacy" of China's political system would be well received by the U.S. public and elites, though he believes such a low-cost move would be "a good correction to U.S. policy." Such changes would mean the end of vital liberal practices of humanitarian intervention and the international promotion of political liberalization (democratization).

[79] On the legality of humanitarian intervention, central to Westphalian sovereignty's expectation of non-interference in other states' internal affairs, see Ian Hurd. Duchatel et al. show that a debate on whether to get "involved" in other countries, with their consent, to protect China's overseas interests is well underway, though not to the extent predicted by Fisk & Ramos.

[80] See Zhao, 2014, for what such a relationship might entail, drawing heavily from official CCP rhetoric.

multipolarity is both desirable and *inevitable*, though he notes the contradiction that dissatisfied states like China must still push for such a change.[81] Modified polarity is only a short-to-medium term spoiling of world order, however. In the long term, much larger changes could be in store for a world led by China.

In a 2008 article and a 2011 edited volume, constructivists like William Callahan outline how a future Chinese world order would differ radically from the current one. A return to the Sinocentric concept of *tianxia* "all under heaven" would be the most fundamental change, and Suisheng Zhao's consideration of whether such a system ever existed, is fascinating. Building off of historian Peter Perdue's finding that the tributary system was likely a product of China's own self-aggrandizing vision as the center of civilization and John K. Fairbank's seminal work of orientalism, Zhao contrarily believes that a "patriarchal-vassal system" did indeed exist. He and some contemporary Chinese scholars find that such a system was basically a hegemonic world in which China faced no "durable rivals."[82]

The idea of hegemony may thereby be very much in Chinese DNA. Pride and nostalgia for whatever the reality was in China's unchallenged imperial past is perfectly understandable and inevitable, though this needn't translate irresistibly into a desire for reconstruction of the traditional order. Whether or not such a system existed, constructivism allows plenty of room for the (re-)creation of a close approximation, though many eggs would have to be broken to turn the world into a Chinese omelet.

Zhao cites a Korean scholar for being concerned that a Chinese "expansionist territorial imagination" has returned to intellectual circles,[83] and some of the usual suspects are sanguine and perhaps even bullish on China spoiling the current system to the fullest extent in the (perhaps very) long term. Wang Hui's *The Politics of Imagining Asia* suggests that world would not mourn the loss of the violent, teleological history of the nation-state system. Indeed, Wang Hui and Wang Gungwu--among other scholars, by no means all Wangs or only Chinese—view the legal equality of states in the current system as little more than a self-orientalized fiction.[84] Mark Leonard's 2007 *What Does China Think?*

[81] See Breslin, pg. 624-5. The contradiction, stated simply, is that China favors non-interference but must exert its will upon all states to force them to revert to this previous understanding of sovereignty.
[82] Zhao, 2015, pg. 10.
[83] Zhao, 2015, pg. 8.
[84] By this I mean that one of the purposes of orientalism, as described by Edward Said, is to draw stark distinctions between oneself and a relevant "other." Such comparisons should be treated as more revelatory of how one views oneself than of any truth about the self, the other, or the relationship between the two. The point should be obviously illustrated in comparing between a liberal, Westphalian system of legally protected, sovereign equality and the hierarchies of traditional

treats these fundamental complaints as little more than venting discontent, without much hypothesizing about how a risen dragon might go about spoiling the current order. Martin Jacques' *When China Rules the World* attempts a full re-imagining only two years later. Clearly, reinventing the world is too large a topic for a literature review to summarize thoroughly; what's more important is to counter claims that China has no normative vision of its own. Lack of consensus or power should be enough to keep this project on the back burner, however, in favor of smaller but still highly consequential changes.

An obvious alternative to measuring China's challenge in the realm of violent coercion would be in the economic realm, one arena in which China obviously has achieved superpower status. Yet the PRC is weighed down by status as a developing country and the low per-capita income this entails. "China's Dominance Hypothesis and the Emergence of a Tri-polar Global Currency System," by Marcel Fratzscher and Arnaud Mehl is a valuable inquiry into the possibility that China may begin a spoiling strategy by undermining the U.S. dollar as the global reserve currency. Despite openly stated calls for an alternative to the dollar, even in an arena of strength, the CCP is reluctant to insert itself explicitly as the primary challenger. The authors find that the Chinese *renminbi* (RMB), despite its non-convertibility and rigidly regulated exchange rate, is emerging as a "key driver of currency movements in Asia," suggesting a challenge to the dollar, at least in the region. They stop short of describing the RMB an alternative reserve currency, instead calling it a regional "anchor currency."

This section has applied a theoretical argument for why increased state power is accompanied by greater incentives to use force, including especially a desire to redress past grievances and reshape world order in one's own favor. Power Transition Theory, as applied to the case of the "China Threat," yields the prediction that the PRC will challenge U.S. interests first within its own region(s) and then globally, ultimately affecting not only interests but the structure of the system itself. In this view, conflicts with the current hegemon are inevitable and especially likely to escalate to militarization if the rising state is not given expanded privileges in accord with its rising power and expanding interests. Johnston's 2013 article in particular shows that popular media has supported the narrative of a PRC which is "newly assertive," and events in the South China Sea since its publication may well reverse his palliative claims.

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systems of all other regions. Few would claim that international law bestowed actual equality on all states, especially if power is to be considered at all. This is not to say that leaders cannot or should not work to realize a system of *de facto* equal units, only that the *de jure* gap is large.

The CCP, still preferring the global "low profile" advocated by Deng Xiaoping (*taoguang yanghui*), may actually be a restraining factor on this scenario. Perhaps as China is well aware of the theoretical dangers involved in openly full scale revisionism, most scholars place the PRC as straddling the line between been a status quo and dissatisfied power.

Empirical studies which fall clearly on the side of the status quo tend to come either from questionable Chinese scholarship or in Kastner & Saunders' case, be based on odd indicators like where Chinese leaders travel. Shih-Yueh Yang's dissection of power transition theory is usefully precise in laying out the very restricted conditions when we should expect rising powers to seek expansion and war but credulously accepting of "peaceful rise" rhetoric. Lebow & Valentino also claim that China became "objectively" the most powerful state in the 1980s (!), and no war or other drastic reconstruction could arise from a transition which has already occurred. The claims of Womack and Layne that China can't pursue a spoiler strategy to challenge the U.S. hegemon are less outlandish but employ similar explanatory sleight of hand: the U.S. is not hegemonic any longer, so China simply lacks a worthy target. Instead, the world is already under the third scenario of both superpowers "shirking" hegemonic responsibilities. As will be explained, the third scenario is broad and flexible enough to include scenarios which resemble China being a spoiler "in slow motion."

Shirker. This is Schweller & Pu's pick as most likely, not least because it functions as a catch-all for "negotiated order," hybrids, and most importantly, continuing to muddle along without a clear strategy.[85] Canrong Jin, for one, attributes contradictory actions suggesting the pursuit of *both* supporting and spoiling to the PRC's "transitional" status. True to the traditional "strategic culture" of China described by Johnston and Scobell, Jin expects China to maintain an "inward-looking, defensive posture" with "a 'cosmopolitan' view in its international relations" insisting on "the principles of openness, cooperation, mutual benefit, and win-win for all."[86] Yet the distinction between words and deeds is paramount for a distrustful China, and so "China's international actions [are] inconsistent and swaying," as in this summation:

[85] Huang's final paragraph, pg. 208, is worth quoting at length, but this paragraph already has one. Huang believes China to be following a "practical model of change" in which "both the interests of China and those of the international system co-exist, mingle and muddle through, but no key stakeholders should be worse off as a result of the adjustments or changes in the international system." This is likened to the processes in the PRC's own domestic reforms over the past 30 years.
[86] See Jin's chapter, "International Structure and China's Strategy and Options," pg. 66, in Huang & Patman (Eds.). On the same page, Jin says China "has become an important participant and collaborator in the existing system."

> "When an issue is related to world peace and human well-being, China always considers it from a moral perspective and takes an idealistic stand. However, when it comes to concrete actions, the country tends to resort to pragmatism, take evasive actions, and put self-preservation first."[87]

Statements like this contribute to "the difficulty for the outside world to know China"[88] and leave open the question of whether China is truly searching for a grand strategy, doesn't have one and is not searching (preferring pure pragmatism), or has a grand strategy but insufficient power to realize it.

Most authors believe that even if China has strongly revisionist preferences, it does not have the power to overturn *and* replace the current order.[89] This point stands regardless of whether one measures the essential but elusive concept of state power simply with GDP or more descriptive but empirically complex indicators like the Chinese-derived Comprehensive National Power (CNP).[90] Ikenberry generally implies but sometimes asserts that China would not be overturning only the U.S. hegemon but also an entire liberal world order, too great a task for a country which may not shed its status as a developing country in this century.[91] The system, for Ikenberry, is far more than just the U.S., and Schweller & Pu's framework allows for the possibility that a realist, hegemonic China would simply let liberal institutions gradually decay, leading back to the pure anarchy assumed by realism. Equally likely, China may choose to maintain the elements from which it directly benefits, like free trade and a relatively peaceful system without warfare between great powers.

The shirker scenario is consistent with the possibility that it may be easier to verify what China opposes and wishes to dismantle than what it favors and actively supports. In tandem and addition to protection of "core interests," the PRC's system-relevant behavior may reflect an effective, global veto on the grand, liberal ambitions openly stated and acted upon by the U.S. and its Western allies. Still, as Shambaugh's wide-ranging exposition of what the CCP is for and against highlights, knowing where China stands on either side of an issue does not allow us to order its preferences

[87] Huang & Patman (Eds.), pg. 67.
[88] Huang & Patman (Eds.), pg. 67.
[89] Shambaugh's book, in Dessein's book Defraigne's chapter "Is China on the Verge of a *Weltpolitik?*" support the conclusion that China remains far too weak to confront the U.S. or take leadership roles in the number of arenas that would indicate superpower status. Kirshner is most forceful not only in portraying China's rise to regional hegemony as "extremely unlikely," on pg. 64, but also in dismissing Mearshimer's offensive realism, which is one way to motivate a state to seek regional hegemony as a matter of survival, as utopian rather than realist. He applies the same label to those who wish to preserve the status quo of American primacy at all costs on pg. 66-7.
[90] As one might expect, CNP since its development in the mid-1980s been subject to a shifting set of indicators, with no single set yet authoritative. See Li & Kemburi, pg. 6-7, for ongoing Chinese attempts to go beyond GDP to measure state power.
[91] Huntington might respond that a pan-Asian "Confucian civilization" (however unlikely to cohere) might be up to the transformative task, and Breslin's section on South-South and BRICs cooperation led by China suggests that the global balance may not be tipped so heavily toward the liberal side. See Breslin, pg. 627-8. Kiely's book on the BRICs, however, finds the conclusion that a BRIC-led South is rising and the U.S.-led West is declining to be as yet unwarranted.

and priorities.[92] We may assume that the PRC has evolved to be less anti-liberal in general than it is anti-hegemony, yet more so specifically anti-American hegemony than anti-American, and most of all anti-containment of itself. Verifying these assumptions with more than the logic of not wanting to lose global respect or material power is difficult in the context of unwavering official rhetoric of peaceful development, with little else in terms of consistent ideology or strategy.

Johnston, Breslin, and others find the PRC to be fundamentally pragmatic, preferring unadorned and amoral realism on a case-by-case basis to any grandly explicit and thereby liberal or constructivist project (as exhibited in its preference to negotiate bilaterally, rather than with regional organizations like ASEAN). Even Kissinger seems to agree that change under Chinese leadership would be gradual, viewing the Chinese tendency to take the strategic "long view" as one of confident patience for the sake of avoiding destabilizing conflict rather than supporting a grand scheme. Whether or not to abandon Deng's "low profile" of *taoguang yanghui* may be subject to debate, but an apparent lack of a grand strategy and unclear intentions likely stem just as well from the CCP regime's top priority of staying in power by any and all means necessary. Viewed by Shambaugh as a classical realist state, he embodies the shirker scenario in his consideration that "China may *not* actually possess a vision or agenda for world order per se—as all China wants is to strengthen itself as an end in itself."[93] By paradigmatic definition, this concept of power cuts to the heart of hegemony and liberal ideas, both of which take power to be "an abstraction" which is meaningless without *purpose*.[94] Mention of power and purpose invites comparison of the CCP within the PRC and the PRC within the world as fundamentally flexible except where top priorities of survival and self-strengthening are concerned.

Perhaps no recent study explains the CCP's radical pragmatism in domestic affairs better than Heilmann & Perry's *Mao's Invisible Hand*, and their argument is worth applying internationally, as evidence favoring the shirker scenario. In their introduction, they note that the CCP's long struggle to rise and govern China encourages leaders steeped in Party history to take an unusually long view of state interests. Moreover, the pragmatic reform dictum of Deng to "cross the river by feeling for stones" does not allow ideological rigidity but rather augurs case-by-case analyses

[92] See his book generally and the list on pg. 30 of Huang & Patman (Eds.).
[93] See Huang & Patman, pg. 22, for the quotation and Shambaugh's thoughts on China's motivations. Emphasis is in the original.
[94] Clark, pg. 18, quotes Martin Wight for this insight, which is also at the heart of his distinctions between power transition and hegemonic succession, on pg. 14: the former affects the likelihood of conflict (with the U.S.) while only the latter considers the preservation of order.

which can often seem unguided and contradictory.[95] In reference to domestic challenges which arise with unsurprising consistency, the authors call this a supremely flexible "guerrilla policy-style" which embraces uncertainty. The description might also apply to the PRC's international relations, which in some cases appear to support multilateral institutions and in others can seem like a prototypically bellicose rising power. In a slight but important modification of Johnston's thesis, then, it may appear that China is being socialized into the liberal order, perhaps even internalizing the occasional norm such as the value of collective security, but the PRC could just as well be *adapting to* how the current order operates as a matter of expediency. When the time comes for China to bear the lion's share of the burden for ordering the world, it is not difficult to imagine China truthfully but conveniently highlighting its status as a developing country with too many domestic order problems to trouble itself with hegemony.

In the presence of scholarly disagreement on China's intentions, this "middle ground" scenario gains the most traction and is largely endorsed by the prominent Chinese IR scholar Wang Jisi. In contrast to the more philosophically pure and grandly ambitious Yan Xuetong, Wang does not believe China should try to displace the U.S. from Asia or antagonize America as part of a zero-sum game,[96] but both believe that *taoguang yanghui* needs to be thoroughly reconsidered. Reconsideration would likely stop short of unrestrained assertiveness or imperialism, and as Duchatel et al. and Chen & Wang suggest, a simple shift to the other half of Deng's quotation, *yousuo zuowei* "get some things done," could achieve the PRC's goals of expanding foreign policy without abandoning the revered leader's wisdom.[97]

Ultimately, the shirker scenario would be a test of just how resilient (and independently powerful) liberal and multilateral institutions would be in the absence (or decline) of superpower patron states. Robert Keohane advanced the argument in the mid-1980s that global institutions had taken on lives of their own and would endure, and one would expect the ensuing thirty years to have improved the odds of institutional survival or even dominance. Liberals like Ikenberry should be both interested and concerned about the results of such a test, but the global laboratory may not oblige to prepare the experiment.

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[95] Kirshner, pg. 70, validates Shambaugh's label when he promotes the case-by-case basis as a central tactic of classical realist conflict resolution, subject however to the domestic coalitions in power at the time, a rather unexpected marriage of realism and liberalism at the domestic level.

[96] Yan's book largely depicts Sino-U.S. relations as approaching this relative-gains, realist mode of interaction.

[97] Chen & Wang, pg. 207 call *TGYH* and *YSZW* "two sides of the same coin," though again the translation of *YSZW* can vary according to how much hidden intent and ambition one ascribes to Deng.

Inauspicious 4th Scenarios. If the PRC's continued rise to the position of undisputed leader and most powerful state in the world is dubious, the preceding sections likely seemed little more than idle speculation. Predictions and projections never match reality exactly and often prove to be laughably inaccurate. At the very least, studies from Chinese scholars like Angang Hu et al.'s "China's Role in the Rising of the South: Vision for 2030" show an unbridled optimism that deliberately and entirely obscures the likely conflicts of the coming decades. While pessimists like H. Gordon Chang and Minxin Pei have become less vocal about regime collapse or "trapped transitions," plenty of obstacles remain to be overcome before the PRC would dare to don a hegemonic crown.

China could yet follow Japan, presenting a formidable challenge but ultimately succumbing to domestic challenges beyond political control, such as demographics.[98] An aging society replete with unmarriageable "surplus males," environmental catastrophe, declining growth, getting stuck in the "middle-income trap", or certainly losing a hegemonic war would all forestall or entirely prevent a Chinese century and its concomitant consequences for the international system.

Even without China, however, the BRIC countries could collectively have revisionist intentions toward the liberal order, with an even split between democracies and non-democracies. The optimistic projections of Hu et al. aside, it is far from certain that the PRC will remain head and shoulders above the other BRIC countries, though Duggan's chapter from the Supporter section also considers China's attempt to direct the agenda of the G20 not only replacing the G8. Should the BRICs all approach parity and threaten to surpass the U.S., a robustly institutionalized global order might be all the more essential to moderate power transitions. As shown in Kiely's book, the "rising BRICs" scenario has all the problems of China's shirking for lack of a unified agenda. The BRICs will almost certainly reach the equivalent of American power but will disagree with how to change the liberal institutionalist order. In organizations like the G20 which include the BRICs, China echoes its developing country solidarity at the UN by bringing non-traditional security issues like food security to the table, asserting that "the level of responsibility should depend on the stage of development of that nation."[99]

[98] See Hudson & den Boer, though their book is more focused on unmarriageable men than the problem of a graying society.
[99] Dessein, pg. 257.

Positioning China as a leader within the BRICs, which may itself be a prequel to world leadership or hegemony, is strongly questioned by liberal elites who doubt the durability of authoritarianism domestically. Elizabeth Perry is most articulate in arguing against the collapse of the PRC, calling China's current challenges and complaints "the growing pains of a body politic still in the process of maturation, not […] the death pangs of a Communist dinosaur destined to imminent extinction." She concludes her piece with the admonition that if China is not allowed to resolve global problems as it sees fit but is instead treated as a problem to be fixed or a "political system [that] is some day destined to disappear," the West would be deluding itself. China is no more likely to disappear than it is to become a liberal democracy or recreate a Sino-centric tribute system. Although the shirker scenario may be unfairly favored as an inclusive and negotiable middle ground between scenarios predicting drastic change, consideration of extremes remains a worthwhile thought experiment.

Discussion & Conclusions. In the years since Schweller & Pu's framework was introduced, China's rise to regional hegemony looks all but certain, yet its intentions are no clearer. Brantly Womack's prediction of a return to a "normal" international system (i.e. a non-hegemonic one) nonetheless rules out the possibility of China reverting to the non-confrontational great power it was before the global financial crisis.[100] A chorus of domestic actors, including popular nationalists, PLA generals, and intellectuals call out to jettison the official "peaceful rise" rhetoric of Zheng Bijian in favor of the unbridled assertiveness Johnston already finds China accused of in Western media. Wolf suggests that the PRC needs to signal its intentions better, in a costlier way such as a cap on its interrelated narratives of victimhood and nationalism, but Kliman's 2015 book counterposes that there can be no improvement in signals' trustworthiness as long as China's ruling regime remains authoritarian. The latter volume likely resonates well with those who believe that a "league of democracies" would be the West's best way to consolidate a liberalizing force against China and other illiberal states, but such would effectively rule out the "supporter" scenario in favor of a "democratization first" agenda. It is dubious, however, that containment to the scale offensive realism prescribes has any viable options short of preventive, hegemonic war, just as power transition theory predicts.

[100] See Womack, pg. 132. His prescription, pg. 134, to prepare for systemic change of some kind by means of a vague "Status Ad Quem" is rather unsatisfying, but understandable for one who doesn't appear to put much stock in the significance or endurance of liberal institutions.

Schweller & Pu's three scenarios offer a useful heuristic for understanding the possibilities of China's rise, but they share an assumption of China's surpassing American power not just in Asia but globally. Successful "retrenchment" by the U.S., MacDonald & Parent argue, could prevent China's relative transcendence or push it far into the future.[101] Earlier works are less certain that the U.S. would recover from the 2007-2008 Great Recession, and while all express some doubts that the PRC can continue its torrid GDP growth rate, the major hurdle of becoming the world's largest economy is already in the range of depending on whether the comparison is adjusted for Purchasing Power Parity. That China would ever seek more than regional hegemony should not be a foregone conclusion; it could do no more than repeat Japan's fleeting challenge in the 1980s and then cede the spotlight to another of the rising BRICs in a cycle which would be familiar enough that Western powers could defuse it.

While the PRC's regional or especially bilateral relations with the U.S. are of great importance, studies which consider China's rise should not be limited to policy matters when the potential for systemic change could be paramount. Something so large and vague as world order, however, is almost impossible to study with empirical rigor, and thus even scholars accustomed to focusing on positivist or context-independent theoretical arguments are being pushed uncomfortably into the realm of contextualized speculation by the importance of the issue. Lest the subfield of IR be accused, in David Easton's words, of "fiddling while Rome burns," the uncertainty should be embraced, not unlike the CCP does in Heilmann & Perry's "guerrilla policy-style." U.S.-China crises so far have been carefully managed, perhaps acknowledging and dampening the kindling set around Rome rather than setting it ablaze, but the stakes of China's rise and its consequences for the system are most certainly higher than providing a real world test of the various forms of realist IR theory.

Realism was famously unable to predict the end of the Cold War, and its foremost proponents have been clamoring for another chance to prove the theory's practical relevance to biggest events in international relations. China, as a classical realist state, may yet provide a lucky theorist with the winning numbers in the lottery of forecasting hegemonic war, but responsible realists today are aware of the dangers in creating a self-fulfilling prophesy. Thus, even "smarter balancing" advocate Aaron Friedberg cautions against abandonment of engagement and integration as the

[101] Chen & Wang, pg. 204, agree that "China's ascent is for real, but US decline is far from certain."

over-arching strategy of the world vis-à-vis the rising PRC. China's international problems and reluctance to become a responsible stakeholder in the system clearly don't reside in institutions themselves, but in their tendency to forego the neutrality they sometimes promise in favor of the promotion of liberal values anathema to much of the world. If international institutions could be kept neutral under Sørensen's "liberalism of restraint," a liberal institutionalism with an emphasis on the latter, the PRC could yet be a supporter. Such a goal is still worth pursuing, but it will require changes not only on China's part but also on the West's and in concert within institutions of global governance.

This paper was not about policy, but in China's eyes, continuing overt engagement under suspicion of containment might bring all players into China's game of sometimes contradictory pragmatism. Keeping Thucydides in mind, the occasional contradiction or appeasement would be far preferable to war or a threat to the viability of global institutions. If the West wants to preserve at least the institutional side of liberal institutionalism, it would be helpful to drop any monolithic conception of China, to rely on close study of internal dynamics and debates rather than context-independent theories primarily—and certainly neither in exclusivity. Beyond knowing for certain the CCP's grand strategy, which may never be conclusive, it would be helpful to come to a conclusion on whether internal problems and pressures make the PRC more or less "assertive" abroad. If *more*, due to Chinese popular nationalism, the West shouldn't meddle in Chinese domestic affairs because this would increase the likelihood of violent confrontation. If *less*, due to a greater need for the CCP to focus domestically to prevent disorder, this would still be no reason to meddle and push for regime collapse and containment.

In sum, "China watching" has certainly become a cottage industry within IR, and authors' perceptions of threat relate directly to their theoretical assumptions and systemic predictions. Importantly, only the "spoiler" scenario could possibly involve hegemonic war, and even then not necessarily. That Gilpin argues for a Thucydidean basis for IR theory more forcefully in 1988 than do the authors in Rosecrance & Miller in 2015 is no small comfort, and the role of fear for Thucydides to reify inevitability[102] suggests that constructivism should be privileged over analysis of "real threats." In

[102] This is to say that fear has the power not only to amplify threats already perceived but also to make threats that no one would otherwise perceive seem both real and urgent. The inevitability comes not from material factors but in perceptions colored by fear. In a strictly realist ontology, irrational fear creates threats where there are none.

conclusion, I believe that the experts cited offer better prognostication than supposedly predictive theories like power transition.

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