GREAT POWER CONDUCT *and* CREDIBILITY *in* WORLD POLITICS

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To my wife Elena, and our daughters Kate and Victoria

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Introduction

This study investigates one of the most perplexing phenomena in world politics, a riddle of erratic and at times seemingly irrational behavior of the contemporary great powers whose policies and actions have tended to divert from the cost-benefit principle—for example, in the form of burdensome military budgets (e.g., those in the United States and Russia) and obsolete structures of the armed forces poorly tuned to the levels and the changing nature of threats to their security; engaging in wars with inconsequential states or entities that do not constitute existential hazards to their safety and well-being (United States', Russia's, France's, and Britain's post-World War II (WWII) resorts to the use of force in the periphery); violating the international law by annexation of foreign territory (e.g., Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea) or undermining the freedom of open sea passages (China's defying conduct in the South China Sea), and thereby needlessly deteriorating relations with their neighbors and the principal economic partners; and so on. By the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century, the list of puzzling abnormalities, inconsistencies, and irrationality in the conduct of the principal polities was supplemented by an avalanche of globally resonating developments, as much unexpected as alarming, and in every instance poorly explained by the epistemic communities: the examples range from the United Kingdom leaving the European Union (EU) to the United States pulling out of the multilateral agreements and partnerships (e.g., the Paris agreement on climate change and the Trans-Pacific Partnership) while putting on hold

the negotiations on EU-US Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) to Russia's squabble with the West aggravated by Moscow's annexation of Crimea, hybrid war with Ukraine, and its reputed interference in the American presidential election in 2016.

Indeed, why do the modern great powers, which, at least according to realists, should demonstrate rational and common patterns of behavior, frequently appear to behave erratically, and, above all, so strikingly different? In the aftermath of the Cold War, this phenomenon looks quite baffling: the United States appears to be stuck in efforts to find a proper balance between interventionism and disengagement with respect to other nations' imbroglios, while Europe, despite her lasting drive for a strong role in world politics, still doesn't look ready to share the burdens of global leadership with America, whereas China's peculiar mix of restraint and intimidation in foreign policy contrasts with Russia's blatant adventurism—both in an amazing discord with their respective hard power capabilities. The task of this study is, therefore, to understand and provide an explanation of the aforementioned puzzle in international politics that cannot be discerned and explicated from the standpoints of the existing theories of international relations.

To be sure, different facets of great power conduct have long attracted attention of scholars in the field of International Relations (IR).[1] The analyticist thread of IR literature, for example, abounds in attempts to explain each case by emphasizing its uniqueness.[2] Committed to what Patrick Thaddeus Jackson calls "singular causal analysis,"[3] analyticists typically do not seek to make generalizations to account for common patterns in the conduct of individual states.

Contrary to the foregoing methodological approach, this research finds its roots in the positivist tradition in IR scholarship that seeks to create predictability value and advance knowledge about generalized patterns in world politics. In particular, I hypothesize that at different stages of their power cycles powerful states are bound to exhibit stage-specific and group-common patterns of behavior. In terms of its methodology, this study prioritizes the system level of analysis over others. This is not to say that this volume refutes sub-systemic—state, group, and individual—levels of research when analyzing the complex set of factors underpinning great power conduct. This is because in working out a concept of international politics applicable for predicting behavior of states, one cannot ignore that to grasp the motives behind the latter, "actor orientation," as J. David Singer has found, "is considerably more fruitful, permitting as it does a more thorough investigation of the processes by which foreign policies are made."[4]

To qualify for a theory, a concept, while meeting the standards of parsimoniousness, should possess a comprehensive explanatory power. Since the task of scientific research is, as formulated by Jackson, to "produce worldly knowledge systematically,"[5] or, in the words of Singer, "achieve a cumulative growth of empirical generalizations," one needs to define their analytical framework comparative to the existing ones first by pointing out to some "common frames of reference."[6]

Among various IR perspectives, two streams of realist theory—the classical and structural realism—have noticeably stood out. Indeed, both of them should be commended for suggesting, perhaps, the most thrift and accurate narratives in explaining causality of the better part of the prior developments in international relations, and this alone may explicate their lasting popularity. However, while a lot of scholarship, in fact, continues to perpetuate the claims purported by both teachings, in the case of the ensuing international system none of them is determinate. At best, they can serve as prescriptions of foreign policy approaches rather than conclusive explanatory mechanisms allowing to construe and predict behavior of the contemporary states in general, and the major powers in particular. Both offensive realism and its defensive cousin, for example, hold survival as the overarching objective of, respectively, power and security maximization; yet, they fail to explain why the present-day great powers wage small wars that are essentially irrelevant to their existence and safety.

While noting that nowadays the realist perspective fails to explicate causality of the dynamic and erratic behavior of the modern-day world's leading powers, this study contests the invariably static existentialist determinism of realism and puts forward a new theoretical approach to understanding the aforementioned phenomenon. In the absence of visible existential threats to their homeland security, the book holds, they strive for a different kind of survival—endurance of their exceptional international ranks has emerged as the primary aim of their grand strategies. Today, retaining *persuasive images* of international primacy rather than securing physical existence of their nations constitutes the overriding concern of policymakers in Washington, Moscow, Beijing, London, and Paris. However, great powers cannot satisfactorily perform their law and order–sustaining functions in the absence of endorsement by others; they need a universal legitimation of their yearning to lead. To reduce anarchy and promote order in the world system, the claimants for the status of legitimate and credible international authority should be able to secure particular *trustworthiness* of their expertise and intentions—something

they have begun to conceive as their overarching policy objective in the ensuing era of strategic uncertainty.

This volume suggests a new concept of international politics that may be applicable for explicating and predicting behavior of the major world powers—the United States, China, Russia, Britain, and France—in the age of the unfolding structural shifts in the international system, the *Theory of Power Credibility (TPC)*. In so doing, one of its major arguments goes against the well-established classical and structural realist notions of the primary motives behind great power policy that confine those to power and security enhancement. I argue that as the current generation of the world's leading nations has entered the stage of decline in relative capability, *re-enforcing credibility of their primacy* has emerged as the major common determinant of their comportment.

The *TPC* synthesizes two approaches to power identified by David Baldwin and referred to by Brian Schmidt: power as resources and power as a relational category. Indeed, realization of one's relative power capability is a process of cognition, inference, and comparison which derives from self's trusting or doubting information about both material resources of the others and their ability to convert them into influence.[7] It assumes that with the decline of relative material capabilities, competition among nations shifts to the realm of communicating their *abilities*. While this does not, of course, eliminate their rivalry in tangibles, its importance relative to the salience of successes in a race among their national capacities in spreading information, shaping ideas, and creating images is bound to deflate.

Noteworthy, a declining great power's resort to adroit non-lethal means of intimidation and persuasion to manifest and communicate veracity of its power and endure its image of primacy is not a recent phenomenon, and can be traced at least as far as the first millennia. Unparalleled in the craft of astounding and mesmerizing foreigners as well as in converting enemies into friends, the Eastern Roman Empire, Byzantine, presents, perhaps, the most illustrative example in this regard. Surrounded by the hordes of Turks and Arabs, Persians and Avars, Huns and Bulghars, Pechenegs, and Cumans as well as other hostile and expansionist nations along its vast borders, yet lacking the legendary hard power of Rome to contain them by force, it continuously sought to excel in elaborating and practicing ingenious diplomacy in relation to neighbors—an invaluable faculty that eventually enabled it to secure an amazing longevity against all odds. "The strategical success of the Byzantine empire," observes Edward Luttwak, "was of a different order than any number of tactical victories or

defeats: it was a sustained ability, century after century, to generate dispro-portionate power from whatever military strength could be mustered, by combining it with all the arts of persuasion, guided by superior informa-tion." Noting that Byzantine rulers were above all keen to uphold the imperial prestige, Luttwak emphasizes the role of cost-saving tools in sus-taining the empire's symbolic power: "as compared to the united Romans of the past, the Byzantine empire relied less on military strength and more on all forms of persuasion—to recruit allies, dissuade enemies, and induce potential enemies to attack one another."[8] Thus, although gradually wad-ing in its relative might and faced with deficiency in military strength vis-à-vis her numerous rivals, Byzantine nevertheless managed to last much longer than its Western alter ego, the Roman Empire, by skillfully re-assuring others in the credibility of its power.

The narrative of credibility attracts substantial attention in social and behavioral sciences including economics, political and social psychology, communication theory, philosophy, and political science. Although the notion of being "credible" is commonly understood across and within various scholarly disciplines as having qualities of reliability and believabil-ity, its specific interpretations within the pertinent cognitive perspectives differ. In the domain of international relations, the notion of credibility has been studied rather inconclusively. While recognizing its popularity among policymakers and acknowledging their desire in promoting their states' power veracity as the predominant motive of foreign policy, the recent scholarship on credibility has been condescending if not outwardly dismissive with respect to credibility's genuine utility.

One of the major objectives pursued by this book is to explore the gen-esis, causality, and policy implications of fixation on retaining credible images of power in global politics by elites of the descending nations. To be sure, credibility-seeking is always present as a motive in great powers' poli-cies at all stages of their lifespan. However, as this research demonstrates—and it is the thrust of the book—the salience of this motive is in reverse proportion to their *relative* power. The desire to look credibly powerful to make up for the decline in relative power, this study argues, sidelines power and security maximizations, traditionally considered to constitute the sin-gle drivers of great power comportment in world politics. As the urge to retain their power credibility at all costs in the eyes of the important domes-tic and foreign audiences emerges as an all-consuming preoccupation by the governments in the major waning powers, it prompts them to act in the ways that in the traditional sense can hardly be considered as "normal" or

"rational." While examining the major premises and nature of this phenomenon, I attempt to elaborate an analytical framework aimed at providing a parsimonious and conclusive account of *credibility maximization* as a common pattern of the major powers' behavior under the downward stage of their power cycles.

In sum, the book identifies, explores, and explicates the complex mechanism of the principal powers' conduct as it has evolved through the second half of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. In a wider perspective, my purpose is to investigate the pervasive conflict emerging from power-credibility mismatch when aspirations for retaining self-respect in complex social systems are not sufficiently underpinned by the self's power faculties. In undertaking this scholarship, I sought to find answers as to how this schism is reconciled in the contemporary system of international relations.

1   Explanation of Book Structure

The book consists of two parts aimed, respectively, at understanding how the dynamics of power distribution in the international system modify perceptions of primacy and then uncover the essence of the interface between fluctuations in great power comportment and their power dynamics. The volume's first part, *Operationalization, Periodicity, and Pinnacles of Power*, begins with the identification of the roles great powers play in the evolution of the international system, and proceeds by examining various criteria enabling to judge about their relative preponderance. To this end, while exploring a number of single- and multi-variable approaches to operationalization of power, it evaluates advantages and deficiencies in various systems of power assessments, including indexes prioritizing military strength, numerical economic preponderance, and other tangibles, and compares them with measurements of intangible assets, such as the levels of competitiveness, government efficiency, creativity, and other faculties of soft power. Drawing on these and other competing snapshots of power, I introduce a new multi-variable *qualitative* index of power, the Global Influence Score, which enables to rank the world's principal nations in accordance with their cumulative weights gained for the intensity of their impact on a set of global domains including security, technological, environmental, cultural, and social ones. Noting that primacy in international relations is relative and unstable, the research proceeds by revisiting the theory of power cycles. It focuses, in particular, on the phenomenon of periodicity in the

movement of national power and examines its impact on the distribution of power in the international system. The study finds that with the exception of China all contemporary great powers have passed the peaks of their primacy at certain points in their power cycles and since then have been continuously declining in terms of their relative material power. While France and Britain have started experiencing this trend before World War I, US power has become to fade after WWII, and Russia's has started waning in the late 1970s. Although China's tangible strength has remarkably grown in the last decades, the study questions her ability to sustain her outrunning performance in the future. In considering different scenarios of world power distribution between the West and China-centric Asia, the volume finds China's positions by 2050 less optimistic than is commonly projected. Viewed against this background, the study holds, the contemporary major powers commonly face the credibility dilemma exemplified by the growing gap between their declining relative capabilities on the one hand, and their traditional images of greatness and claims of superiority, on the other.

The book's second part, *The Theory of Power Credibility*, conceptualizes the ongoing shifts in great power comportment caused, as it argues, by alterations in their relative power dynamics. Initially, it re-evaluates the core theories of IR, primarily realist and constructivist, in terms of their suitability to account for the core common patterns in foreign and security postures of great powers. Next, it focuses on elaborating a conceptual framework to account for the causal relationship between the stages of great power cycle, on the one hand, and patterns of great power behavior, on the other, and introduces the *TPC*. In so doing, it revisits the notion of national power by conceiving it as cumulative confidence in the self's capabilities and authority. Drawing on Robert Bierstedt's concept of power as a force-authority synthesis, it hypothesizes that since power constitutes a dynamic synergy of the two properties, once national capabilities to generate force decline, thereby risking to bear negatively on the general confidence in national power at home and abroad, statesmen are poised to make up for coercive capability's diminution by attempting to boost their *virtual* influence and authority.[9]

To support and exemplify the study's primary thesis on the shift from power and security maximization to credibility enhancement as an *objective pattern* in major state conduct at the stage of decline, the second part of the volume investigates a number of historical cases ranging from the Second Empire to the Fifth Republic in France to the Bismarckian, Wilhelmine, and

Nazi Germany to the Imperial, Soviet, and post-Soviet Russia at the high and low points in their power lifespans.

The subsequent sections define and explore such innate components of power credibility as demonstrable abilities to attract and educate, punish and reward, as well as protect and patronize. Investigation of specific credibility attributes is substantiated by examination of pertinent empirical cases. The section on rewarding, for example, is illustrated by exploring the role the subsidized oil deliveries by the Soviets to the members of the Communist bloc played in retaining Moscow's clout and credibility in the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The section on punishment is exemplified by revisiting the motivational incentives of Britain's conduct during the 1982 Falkland crisis from the standpoint of upholding her power credibility worldwide.

The study analyzes both *pros* and *cons* of these and other relentless efforts aimed at maintaining national prestige, and finds that strong nations' overwhelming inclination to display credibility at the stage of decay may be counterproductive to the goals of maintaining their safety and retaining primacy. The major challenge arising in this regard for policymakers, conceivably, is in finding a proper balance between the hard and soft components of national power while investing—not only financially, but no less importantly, also politically, intellectually, and morally—in their veracity. For there are no universal policy templates, the task of crafting optimal solutions for the given historical period, specific issue, and area is indeed confounding, but so is the mission of staying in great power ranks by upholding credible supremacy.

However, while policy success obviously depends on a multitude of auspicious factors, not in the least degree it is determined by decision makers's abilities to balance emotions with cognition, combine intuition with rational judgment, and exude confidence in subsequent policy actions. These, the book contends, are the abilities that together with outstanding leadership skills, superb managerial experience, and an in-depth knowledge of history constitute qualifications indispensable for state leaders to successfully navigate the vessel of national power through the dangerous reefs and currents of the global *Zeitgeist*.

While the *TPC*'s outlook is fundamentally realist, the concept recognizes the limits of a single school of thought and academic discipline in grasping the essence of a complex social phenomenon or construing causality of behavioral patterns of actors in the dynamic social systems. Thus, this study incorporates various theoretical perspectives in IR and other scientific

fields, for example, by integrating findings by the constructivist school that accentuate socialization and cognition in the development of state behavior, and those by political and social psychology that emphasize the role of emotions in decision-making and social esteem.

This author assumes that the major task of a theory is not to correct the reality but to explain its teleology. By explicating how and why with structural shifts in the international system causing the fading of great powers' relative capabilities, *maximization of their power credibility* emerges as the primary driver of their behavior, the book views its wider mission in contributing to scholarship that seeks to better understand and explain the nature and essence of agency-structure interplay in the contemporary international system.

NOTES

1. Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations,* edited by M. Cox (Hampshire; NY: Palgrave, 2001 [1945]); John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 2001); Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2006); Hans J. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man Vs. Power Politics* (Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 1946); Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, translated by R. Warner (New York: Penguin Classics, 1972); Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959); C.J. Bartlett, *The Global Conflict: The International Rivalry of the Great Powers, 1880–1970* (London; New York: Longman, 1984); Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York, NY: Random House, 1987); Karen A. Rasler & William R. Thompson, *The Great Powers and Global Struggle, 1490–1990* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1994); Charles W. Kegley, Jr. and Gregory A. Raymond, *A Multipolar Peace?: Great-Power Politics in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: St. Martin's, 1994); For more recent studies, see, for instance, Barry Buzan, *The United States and the Great Powers: World Politics in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge; Malden, Mass.: Polity, 2004); G. John Ikenberry, ed., *Power, Order, and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Martin A. Smith, *Power in the Changing Global Order: The US, Russia and China* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2012). Jeffrey W. Legro, *Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); T.V. Paul, ed., *Accommodating*

Rising Powers: Past, Present, and Future (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2016); H.M. Scott, *The Birth of a Great Power System, 1740–1815* (Harlow, England; New York: Pearson/Longman, 2006); Louis W. Pauly and Bruce W. Jentleson, eds., *Power in a Complex Global System* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2014); Richard N. Rosecrance and Steven E. Miller, eds., *The Next Great War?: The Roots of World War I and the Risk of U.S.-China Conflict* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2015).

2. See Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations: Philosophy of Science and its Implications for the Study of World Politics* (London: Routledge 2010). On a critique of Jackson's study see, for instance, Eric Grynaviski, "Do Our Philosophical Commitments Matter?" *Qualitative & Multi-Method Research Newsletter of the American Political Science Association Organized Section for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research* 8, no.1 (Spring 2010):5–9.

3. Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations*, 114.

4. J. David Singer, "The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations" in *The International System*, ed. Klaus Knorr (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 77–92.

5. See Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations*, 196.

6. J. David Singer, "The Level of Analysis Problem in International Relations," *World Politics* 14, no.1 (1961):92.

7. Brian C. Schmidt, "Realist Conceptions of Power," in *Power in World Politics*, eds. Felix Berenskoetter and M. J. Williams (London: Routledge, 2008).

8. Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 5.

9. See Robert Bierstedt, "An Analysis of Social Power," *American Sociological Review* 15, no.6 (December 1950):730–738.

Operationalization, Periodicity, and Pinnacles of Power

As evidenced by human history, political units, such as nation-states, are subject to ups and downs in terms of their impact on world developments. These fluctuations, particularly well exhibited by the rise and decline of strong nations, are known as power cycles. While in the last decades the increasingly baffling and at times purportedly irrational behavior by the strongest among nations has been taking place against the backdrop of the downward slope in their power lifespans, the mainstream IR scholarship tended to perceive these phenomena as autonomous trends rather than manifestations of a single pattern. Contrary to the common perception, this volume hypothesizes that there is, however, an objective connection between the changes in the modes of great powers' comportment and the different stages in their power cycles, and that the link between the two variables presents a causality whereby the cyclical changes in relative power distribution constitute systemic factors determining definite types of state behavior. The latter are of repetitive nature, and are reproduced over certain periods of time in correlation with specific stages in power lifespans. This hypothesis is at the center of a concept of international politics, which I call the Theory of Power Credibility, that accounts for an explication of the major pattern in great powers' behavior at the stage of their relative decline.

Operationalization of Power

1 Concerns of Great Powers

Economically integrated, yet politically fragmented and strategically uncertain, the international system in the twenty-first century engenders a complex and dynamic decision-making environment for every nation around the globe, be it a poor island state in the Pacific, or a wealthy country in the Western Hemisphere. And while for each and every nation the ensuing age of global uncertainty presents an array of rampant challenges, at times even casting doubts on their political and economic future, the strongest of them are prone to experience a unique set of concerns.

As the permanent members of the prestigious United Nations Security Council (UNSC), and, through the second half of the last century monopolists on the most devastating weapons in the human history, the "Big Five"—the United States, Russia, France, Britain, and China—got accustomed to a superior international standing. While the commanding status of the world's most powerful nations obliges those to burdensome commitments, it also grants them special privileges to decide upon the core issues of peace and war.[1] However, in the current century the credibility of their power is in jeopardy: economic, political, technological, and demographic shifts emerging both at home and abroad threaten to push them off the top of the power Olympus. Since the prospects of national decay could awaken and empower the extreme right, electoral chances of the incumbent political elites may drastically vanish. But these are not their only concerns: once

reputational losses ensue, the likelihoods of sustaining their status and influence abroad are bound to become progressively bleaker.

With a demonstrable fragility of the ruling elite's credibility in a great power, the rationales for her foreign allies behind preserving "special relations" with the former might not totally perish; yet, the task of sustaining the latter's earlier level of compliance may prove untenable. As long as a great power continues to emanate confidence in her strengths, she is able to deflate the price of her pawns' loyalty. But once the bargaining leverage of their patron shrinks, client states would seek to increase costs of their strategic and commercial validity to the discredited suzerain. Furthermore, resource-rich and geostrategically important countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia may renege on their old allegiances and obligations, and thereby undermine the international positions of their traditional patrons. The difference between "then" and "now" in terms of the dividends derived from greatness can, therefore, be quite substantial.

In an attempt to make up for her credibility dwindling in one country by flirting with another, a strong nation is bound to interfere in the power structure set long before her arrival, and risks to clash with the long-established interests of the local suzerains, the regional hegemons. With the constant power dynamics being an innate feature of the international system, the subsequent redistribution of allegiances triggers the system's volatility; before new regional orders are firmly set, anarchic transitions can cause escalating conflagrations. Above all, by inadvertently provoking miscalculation on the part of her emboldened adversaries, an unconvincing major power risks endangering her own homeland security. Under these conditions, the overriding task of the status-quo great powers becomes arresting translation of their material decline into diminution of their international credibility.

The primary distinction between different stages in the evolution of the international system is the degree of its coherence. The current stage in this evolution presents a sweeping transition from international to world politics. Something fundamental is happening at this stage: the "Chinese wall" separating domestic and international politics is being swept off by the forces of globalization—an idea rooted in the Kantian philosophy and nicely framed by the English school in its concept of "world society," buttressed *inter alia* by Martin Wight's notion of "unity of mankind" and Hedley Bull's idea of "common values."[2] The global structural forces fostering universal social coherence perpetuate creation of a global social body where an all-out conflict between its now deeply integrated parts, if ever

possible, would not, as in the past, perpetuate international progress; yet it might plausibly result in total annihilation of the human civilization, and—with this gloomy prospect—bring about a genuine "end of history."

Imagine the global society as a universal enterprise where a dynamic division of labor is a natural condition of individual and common success. Although the enterprise has no president (a superstructure performing the functions of a global authority), and its employees (sovereign states) are their own bosses, there still is a certain code of rules (international law) they have to obey. However, even though the international law pronounces strong and weak states as the legally equal members of the international community disrespecting of their actual power, their social status and bargaining clout are conspicuously dissimilar which enables the strongest of them to exercise unparalleled impact on the international structure and exceptional influence in world affairs.

For the last two centuries, the great powers—the largest and strongest among the world's states—have constituted the core underpinnings of the international system. Their impact on the system's evolution and other nations was not always positive; the periods of relative tranquility were interrupted by outbreaks of bloody confrontations, often instigated by their own conflicting interests. However, on balance, the overwhelming power embodied by superior political entities has acted as a strong barrier to humans' irrevocable sinking to the mires of the Hobbesian world. True, at times the darker side of this power risked overcoming the instinct of self-preservation, and yet its brighter side happened to ultimately save the mankind from self-annihilation.

In the nineteenth century, the Treaty of Vienna engineered by the diplomatic concert of the great powers—Austria, Russia, Britain, and Prussia—laid down a multilateral political mechanism to ensure the long-lasting peace in Europe. About seven decades ago the victor-powers of WWII—the United States, Soviet Union, China, France, and the United Kingdom—formed the UNSC that was called upon to become a guarantor of global peace and security. Despite all deficiencies of the emerged international system and its institutions, one should not underestimate the role that the world's major powers have been playing in sustaining the global order and ensuring that since the end of the last world war the humankind has evaded the horrors of a new global calamity.

With larger economies, stronger militaries, and arguably more resilient internal political organizations than the majority of states, great powers are naturally positioned to constitute the centers of international gravity, as

smaller and weaker nations tend to seek a friendly great power's protection from the bellicose adversaries. In exchange, great powers receive allegiances enabling them to endure their authority and extend their spheres of international influence.

These spheres provide great powers with further economic and political trade-offs: the larger the sphere, the bigger the cumulative sum of trade-offs, the more influential a great power becomes, the larger the sense of security her elites and population are poised to enjoy. The combination of additional gains a great power receives due to its status makes the latter a mirror of its international prestige. The larger a nation's sphere of influence—sub-regional, regional, or global—the more prestigious the status in the international system it yields. Once acquired, great power status becomes a nation's most precious international asset, and its endurance evolves as an overarching policy mission of its elites.

Through narratives of invincibility and glorious victories propagated in school education, media, literature, and arts, the notion of greatness became a socially constructed norm deeply embedded in the collective psyche of big nations. For Americans, Frenchmen, Russians, and British the notions, respectively, of "indispensable nation," the carrier of *mission cilivizatrice*, the "heir of the Byzantine," and the "ruler of the seas" seem axiomatic. The messianic vision of the French elite, for instance, was, perhaps, best summarized by Sorbonne professor Albert Bayet. "The country which proclaimed Human Rights, made remarkable contributions to the advancement of science, made education secular, and, in the face of other nations, is the great champion of freedom," he exclaimed, "has the mission to spread wherever she can the ideas that have prompted her greatness." His words, addressed to the League of Human Rights in 1931—"One should see us as granted with the mandate to educate, elevate, empower, enrich and rescue peoples who need our collaboration"—could, perhaps, inspire the current generation of statesmen in countries that since the end of WWII have retained or assumed the role of world leadership.[3]

Although inspiration may certainly constitute an important premise for prowess, it alone wouldn't suffice. To claim a great power status, a nation should meet at least two other principal conditions. First, she should be able to deliver common goods—for example, security and prosperity—universally. The second condition is legitimacy: she should be recognized as "great" by her peers and other members of the international community.

For the last 500 years the international system has been structured along the lines in many respects unilaterally shaped by the dominant

states—Portugal, Spain, France, Britain, and, eventually, the United States. As the definitive group of polities, the great powers stand out, as was mentioned above, in terms of their internal organization allowing for massive mobilization of their human and industrial resources in case of contingencies, and conspicuously eclipse other nations in terms of motivation.[4] Since the great powers differ from each other in systems of government, economic structure, geographical location, territorial size, language, history, culture, natural resources, and demographics, these variables preordain dissimilarity in their national interests, which make them pursue divergent and, most importantly, independent foreign and security policies—a powerful catalyst of global anarchy.[5]

According to the hegemonic stability theory, a preponderant state manages its foreign policy in a way that is conducive to enduring global peace, dissuading tensions, and preventing revisionist powers from undermining world stability.[6] However, in the era of globalization, the continuous concentration of power capabilities—economic, technological, and military—in the hands of a pitfall of governments, has become intractable. This eventuality bore negatively on their stabilizing capacities. The very logic of globalization precipitates diffusion of every significant component of power throughout the world—like butter is spread over a slice of bread. Thus, while the absolute power capabilities of principal powers may grow, in relative terms they are bound to wane.

While the root causes of power transition have been a constant subject of inquiry in IR literature since Thucydides, the contemporary scholarship appears to have overlooked to thoroughly consider the conditional nature of the hegemonic "life and death" paradigm, and, in particular, the complex impact of the foregoing structural overhauls that may bring the conventional pattern of hegemonic decline into question. This is markedly applicable to ubiquitous studies that posit the US succession by China as the world hegemon an imminent and linear prospect.[7]

This approach, mechanical as it stands, exhibits double fallacy—first, in neglecting the revolutionary role of globalization as a relative power equalizer, and, second, by not discriminating between absolute and relative power. The first fallacy, while accentuating China's rise, appears to overlook not only the parallel ascendance of other nations but also the impact of globalization on world power distribution and the ensuing structural changes in power substance. The latter can be defined as diminution of the role that numerical parameters of power play in comparison with its

normative characteristics. This misconception leads to the second fallible outcome: by taking growth of the nation's absolute power out of the relative and transformational contexts of the global power dynamics one cannot adequately discern limits of her hegemonic potency.

As one of the key premises of the TPC is the concept of power periodicity, it is important to introduce criteria by which one can reasonably judge about the veracity of power fluctuations in the international system as well as measure their relative intensity.

2   ASSESSING NATIONAL POWER

While defining power *conceptually* grasped the attention of political thinkers, conceiving national power *operationally* looked as a minor priority. "In practice, [however]," wrote Robert Dahl, "the concept of power will have to be defined by operational criteria that will undoubtedly modify its pure meaning."[8] The rise in the practical needs for policymakers to determine power potentials of their nations' adversaries created a growing demand for pertinent studies, making the notion of power policy-relevant. Such a demand has not truly evolved though before the formation of the, and the first works on "political arithmetic"—"Duplicate Proportions" (1674) and "Essays on Political Arithmetic" (1682–1687)—authored by British physician Sir William Petty were focused on demographics.[9]

It was not then before 1741 that the measurements of population size and density extended their utility beyond demographics when the Prussian pastor and demographer Johann Peter Süssmilch suggested to apply them to the ends of judging about the nations' *political strengths.*[10] Since then, the number of variables considered to be the key underpinnings of power has substantially grown, and the formulas used in power measurement have become more complex and versatile. Yet, the list of scholars who have made substantial contributions in the realm is relatively small: since Süssmilch's pioneering publication,[11] and by the second decade of this century it has added up just about two dozen names.[12]

On the eve of WWII evaluations and comparisons of military potentials in all major powers became the primary tasks of their intelligence and strategic experts. Their highly classified reports produced "net assessments" of hard power balances at the dyadic and inter-alliance levels.[13]

Nowadays, an ability to timely and accurately predict shifts in dyadic, regional, and global power balances constitutes an imperative prerequisite

of state policy planning. This imperative flows from a general understanding (conceptualized in realist theories of international relations and substantiated by numerous historical cases) that probabilities of interstate military conflicts increase with radical shifts in the distribution of power. Another reason stems from the growing concerns over power credibility. Noting that "while total defence spending by the [NATO] Allies in recent years has been going down, the defence spending of emerging powers has been going up," NATO's General Secretary, for instance, warns that "If these trends continue, we will face serious gaps that would place NATO's military capacity and *political credibility* at risk [emphasis added]."[14] Assuming that "the rise of emerging powers could create *a growing gap between the capacity of those nations to exert influence in the world and our own ability to do so* [emphasis added]."[15] Western policy managers believe that discrepancy in the tangible capabilities between the West and the ascending powers is bound to undermine their nations' authority and status. It is mostly in the view of these worrisome concerns and alarming considerations that academic and intelligence communities in the major powers are assigned with the task to supply policymakers with reliable analysis and projections of changes in relative power capabilities as well as with possible scenarios of their strategic implications. In the United States, governmental structures such as the National Intelligence Council (earlier the Office of National Estimates and the Office of Reports and Estimates) within the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) of the United States Department of State, and the Strategic Assessments Group (SAG) of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) as well as non-governmental institutions, such as the RAND Corporation, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Heritage Foundation, and the Atlantic Council; private companies, like Strategic Forecasting, Inc. (Stratfor); and university research centers, such as the Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures at the University of Denver, are among dozens of other national expert groups that monitor, systemize, process, compose, and project the available data as well as make policy-relevant judgments concerning the dynamics of various power components of world nations and global power structure in the long-term perspective.

In Britain, perhaps, the most significant in this regard are the studies conducted by such world-renowned think-tanks as the Chatham House and the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) specializing respectively on foreign policy and international defense and security. In France, power

evaluators traditionally focus on parameters and rankings of economic power. Coordinated by the Economic Policy Planning for the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industry, this work is usually done in cooperation with research centers, such as Centre d'Études Prospectives et d'Informations Internationales (CEPII), a French think-tank in international economics, as well as through networks with other national agencies, such as Strategy France (General Commissariat of strategy and prospects, formerly the Centre of strategic analysis) and the General Secretariat for Defense and National Security (SGDSN). It is worth noting though that French statesmen appear to be rather skeptical to the notions of composite power, and in addition to economic strength prefer dealing with other well-defined and easily measurable power components, such as military might. This is, perhaps, because their culture of thinking about power has been formed in prestigious national graduate schools, such as the École Nationale d'Administration, where it was strongly influenced by the intellectual legacy of the outstanding French political thinker Raymond Aron, who argued that it makes no sense to measure comprehensive power precisely because it is comprised of too many elements with specific ends and means, which, above all, are in permanent flux.[16]

In China, evaluations and projections of power capabilities within the framework of Comprehensive National Power (CNP) methodology are performed in parallel by scholars of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) and Academy of Military Science (AMS), while in India a similar mission is assumed by the Foundation for National Security Research (FNSR). The resulting product by FNSR group of experts is National Power Index (NPI), which will be briefly examined in this chapter.[17] Additionally, strategic assessments are regularly conducted within the framework of the pertinent intergovernmental and supranational institutions. In the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), for instance, they are coordinated by The Defence Policy and Planning Committee (DPPC) and performed within NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP), which "is the primary means to identify the required capabilities and promote their timely and coherent development and acquisition by Allies."[18] In the European Union (EU), increasingly concerned with prospects of Europe's role and place in the world, such institutions as the European Commission, the European Parliament, the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, and the European External Action Service (EEAS) frequently rely on the expertise of foreign policy think-tanks in EU member-states whom they may assign with appropriate tasks. One can

refer in this regard, for example, to the joint study by the Chatham House (United Kingdom) and FRIDE (Spain) "Empowering Europe's Future: Governance, Power and Options for the EU in a Changing World" produced for the European Commission within the framework of The European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS) as well as to ESPAS report "Global Trends to 2030: Can the EU meet the challenges ahead?" (2015).

In the former Soviet Union, measurements of national strength were conducted mainly by its military intelligence since the 1970s, and were strictly classified. Their purpose was to assess the comparative war potential of Soviet geopolitical rivals, and first of all, the United States and its NATO allies. To these ends, the Soviets elaborated an original methodology by applying coefficients capturing national "energy" computed on the basis of physics and cybernetics that arguably made the resulting picture more dynamic and comprehensive in comparison with Western models of evaluating national power through purchasing power parity (PPP).[19]

3   THE CORRELATES OF WAR AND NATIONAL CAPABILITY

The Correlates of War (COW) project, since its inception by J. David Singer, has obtained a growing popularity, particularly among realists. While operationalizing strictly material and quantifiable components of power, such as gross domestic product (GDP), population size, and military spending, it gave at least an idea of state ranking vis-à-vis each other and served not only as an important indicator of shifts in the balance of power, but also performed an important political mission by framing and perpetuating certain pictures of global power distribution. While the primary purpose of the project was to define the impact of shifts in redistribution of power on the probability of war involving major powers, COW authors identified and summarized several indexes reflecting the relative national capability of nations to wage war on the basis of their demographic, industrial, and military strengths. To calculate these indexes, the model used six variables encompassing military expenditure, military personnel, energy consumption, iron and steel production, urban population, and total population.[20] The aggregated index, the Composite Index of National Capability (CINC), enables to trace the dynamics of capability distributions among major powers for long terms (Table 2.1).

As Table 2.1 demonstrates, in the last 200 years the hard power potentials of great powers have been subject to conspicuous fluctuations. It is

Table 2.1 The Composite Index of National Capability (1816–2014, country score)

Year	United States	Russia	China	United Kingdom	France
1816	0.039698	0.164304	NA	0.336619	0.117286
1826	0.036425	0.150055	NA	0.329825	0.1383329
1836	0.050953	0.165743	NA	0.299511	0.1321525
1846	0.082757	0.128714	NA	0.302888	0.1373469
1856	0.078409	0.164031	NA	0.2957	0.1404021
1866	0.098172	0.078528	0.171008	0.248282	0.1093204
1876	0.101917	0.101546	0.163194	0.234957	0.1019857
1886	0.146135	0.094627	0.160356	0.200533	0.0990058
1896	0.160011	0.108783	0.12429	0.173657	0.0904131
1906	0.218284	0.124353	0.118753	0.123381	0.0694171
1916	0.232941	0.14509	0.083506	0.15321	0.085814
1926	0.263268	0.115036	0.162297	0.077437	0.0603111
1936	0.205985	0.148171	0.111152	0.076583	0.0530614
1937	0.2009	0.147862	0.117241	0.077035	0.0475344
1938	0.170771	0.164359	0.093207	0.077787	0.0455686
1939	0.181971	0.138136	0.097052	0.099684	0.0395961
1940	0.201907	0.137345	0.09263	0.094957	0.0758349
1941	0.244495	0.124339	0.098657	0.099255	0.0157879
1942	0.285455	0.112919	0.098869	0.093587	0.0155561
1943	0.345632	0.102841	0.099892	0.087379	NA
1944	0.350642	0.097618	0.097423	0.083234	0.0182324
1945	0.383864	0.118207	0.093496	0.08799	0.0179454
1946	0.363988	0.122541	0.132711	0.116173	0.0313083
1956	0.260614	0.170197	0.098138	0.049224	0.0325624
1966	0.20867	0.166316	0.109654	0.035364	0.0262937
1976	0.140885	0.177637	0.116582	0.026964	0.0233903
1986	0.132095	0.169235	0.108864	0.023479	0.0205886
1996	0.138339	0.056931	0.139115	0.023816	0.0249387
2006	0.146377	0.039335	0.190264	0.021872	0.0192374
2007	0.142149	0.039274	0.198578	0.021158	0.0189237
2014	0.124166	0.038833	0.223000	0.014200	0.0161166

Sources: The National Material Capabilities data set (v4.0), available at http://cow.la.psu.edu/; J. David Singer, Stuart Bremer, and John Stuckey. "Capability Distribution, Uncertainty, and Major Power War, 1820–1965" in Bruce Russett (ed.), *Peace, War, and Numbers* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1972), 19–48; J. David Singer, "Reconstructing the Correlates of War Dataset on Material Capabilities of States, 1816–1985" *International Interactions* 14, no.2 (May 1988):115–132; 2014—author's calculations.

important to discern that while every individual great power continued to rise in absolute terms, some of them have been rising at higher rate than the others; once—after the demise of the colonial system—a group of sovereign developing nations has embarked on the path of rapid industrial and social development, the relative share of the world's leading nations in the global distribution of power started to fall. For example, the United States had been continuously rising in 1816–1926 when their relative weight in the world tangible power (measured by the composite index of national capability) increased 6.6 times. The Great Depression and the faster growth of the military-industrial capabilities in Germany, Japan, and the Soviet Union caused a relative slump in US power standing in the 1930s. Yet, America's entering WWII had triggered her speedy economic recovery and prompted an unprecedented growth of her military sector, which—against the backdrop of the war-caused destruction in Europe and Japan—enabled the United States to soon reach a historical record of relative supremacy. Thus, by 1945, the United States accounted for more than 38 percent of the overall global capacity in terms of CINC. However, with the postwar economic revival in Europe and Japan, and later with the appearance of the new economic powerhouses in the Asia-Pacific, the United States has entered the stage of continuous relative decline resulting in reduction of its composite capability more than three times by 2015 in comparison with the late 1940s. With just 12.4 percent of world's CINC, America, according to my calculations, though far ahead of its peers such as Britain (1.4), France (1.6), and Russia (3.9), was by then conspicuously lagging behind China (22.3).

It is worth noting though that in measuring relative warfighting capability CINC authors omit some parameters that can substantially affect war outcome. This inconclusiveness risks to exaggerate or, on the contrary, diminish one's military strengths. In the case of Japan, for instance, evaluation of her military strength doesn't take into consideration the inferior strategic depth of her territory in comparison with such rivals as China and Russia that if considered would seriously degrade her resilience capacity and infringe on any realistic scenario of her military engagement with the former. In the case of China, the mere quantitative parameters of her firepower such as the number of tanks, aircraft, and submarines do not consider their qualitative characteristics that are seriously behind those by the major Western powers and Russia. Moreover, the CINC does not consider national levels of military organization and battle experience. The most recent combat experience by the Chinese military, for example, dates

to the 1979 war with Vietnam. During that war, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), opposed mainly by the Vietnamese border and paramilitary forces rather than the regular army, revealed an insufficient operational efficiency. This allowed some Western experts to conclude that at the time Vietnam had "outperformed" China.[21] Above all, the CINC and other indexes of military power do not allow to make reasonable assumptions about possible outcomes of armed conflicts between potential adversaries. This is an innate deficiency of mechanical comparisons of the fighting power, first noted by US military experts during the Cold War era. Additionally, as they pointed out, such comparisons are essentially useless for policy planning for two other reasons: one being an erroneous belief that symmetrical forces have equal fighting power, and another stemming from their inapplicability for making projections about adversaries' future military postures.[22] While the CINC was designed to evaluate war potentials of individual states, it implied that military capability can be used interchangeably with the notion of power. However, as many scholars from various schools of thought have reasonably suggested, the COW indices could not and cannot be considered objective and comprehensive yardstick of power measurement for a variety of reasons. COW, for instance, supports a widely spread statement that by 1938 Germany obtained composite power superiority over France and Britain. This claim fails to consider the substantiated and objective assessments of German power. This could have been excused at the time when the British and French decision makers, lacking reliable intelligence information on the Third Reich's military and industrial capacities before the outbreak of WWII, had to rely mostly on their generals' perceptions, for example, those by the Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence, General Hastings Ismay in the United Kingdom, and General Joseph Vuilleman, the French Air Minister, who in a highly pessimistic fashion, typical for the interwar military establishments in both countries, tended to greatly exaggerate German might while seriously underestimating their own nations' fighting capabilities.[23]

These claims, however, are rebuffed by the data presented in the works of such historians as Niall Ferguson[24] and Williamson Murray.[25] It demonstrates that the Third Reich lacked indigenous natural resources and labor force sufficient to wage a successful military campaign in case of a joint Franco-British attack on Germany in the months preceding the Munich agreement of 1938. Moreover, as it follows from an analysis of the Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) report of 1934, the defensive and appeasement-prone posture by Britain was, in effect, contributing to the decrease of her power

relative to Germany's.[26] The longer the British and French leadership were postponing an inevitable clash with the Third Reich, the more the unfavorable shifts in their power balance with Germany and the fast aggravation of geopolitical environment in Europe were increasing for London and Paris the costs of the impending war with Hitler in terms of blood and treasure. It was not, therefore, inferiority in material capabilities that determined the shift of power away from the European democracies in the critical momentum of 1938 but deficiency of their power's credibility.

The foregoing example reveals the necessity for more comprehensive criteria in evaluating power—something the COW manifestly lacks. Not surprisingly, it is frequently criticized for addressing solely hard components of power while leaving aside organizational aptitude as well as symbolic power of policy actions. Critics, such as Ted Gurr, have argued that without considering mobilization capacity and behavioral power of statecraft, the COW cannot be considered a reliable source of information about the true distribution of composite power capabilities.[27] To be fair, Singer appeared to have acknowledged that material capabilities could serve only as a partial indicator of power and that a concept of power should incorporate soft power faculties, which "are far from negligible." The operational purposes, however, necessitate setting intangibles aside for "they are not a *component* of such capabilities [as] the demographic, industrial, and military dimensions [that] are three of the most central components of material strength."[28] At the same time, while he noted that there is no linear correlation or fungibility between the physical components of national power on the one hand, and political, organizational, and diplomatic skills of elites, on the other, he did recognize that the efficiency with which the material assets are utilized cannot but depend upon soft power variables.[29] Second, the COW index, while predicting war propensity, is not able to foretell who would eventually win the war since an outcome of a military conflict depends among all upon many factors that are beyond the self's control. Moreover, not everything in a conflict depends solely upon material faculty; organizational capacity of the national leadership, skillfulness of the military, combat moral, and ingenuity of the parties involved, as well as a mere luck are all intertwined in a complex knot of circumstances that can result in outcomes surprisingly opposite to those that can be originally assumed on the grounds of the composite indexes of national material capability. Above all, in the peacetime, the fighting capability of a nation is mostly irrelevant to the ends of judging about her composite power credibility. It is worth noting that

Singer and his colleagues appeared to recognize that power is too complex a category to be solely judged upon by statistics; therefore, instead of grounding their list of major powers on "objective" criteria, they preferred to compile it referring to the intuition of diplomatic historians.[30] It can be suggested that in the absence of a universally recognized criteria of power, it is practically impossible to trace power dynamics in the world history. This obstacle, however, doesn't stop individual scholars and think-tanks from undertaking new attempts to measure power by including additional economic and military variables in computation.

4   US Military Power: Strength Under Question?

In a tradition laid down by E.H. Carr and other realists who emphasized the centrality of military capability among various components of power,[31] there is a deeply entrenched belief in the United States that America's supremacy in world politics rests upon her preponderance in the military realm. Given US position of a leading maritime power against the backdrop of numerous historical records depicting the roles played by navies and trade fleets of various nations—Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, France, and Britain in addition to the United States—in promoting and securing their geostrategic and commercial interests, it is not surprising that some pundits in American academia have attempted to emphasize significance of naval supremacy to the ends of global leadership. Such an attempt has been made, for example, by George Modelski and William R. Thompson (MT) in their seminal study "Seapower in Global Politics, 1494–1993,"[32] which contained computations of national seapower concentration index for the last 500 years while presenting the naval power as an expression of genuine power. In outlining their thesis, MT argued that "the concentration of global reach capabilities" is a primordial condition of global leadership whereas "a primary capability for global reach has been and continues to be seapower." Drawing on the writings of Alfred Mahan[33] who positioned seapower as the primary driver of historical changes, MT held that command of the sea is a distinguishing attribute of a global power, while "[c]hanges in the position of world leadership are associated with shifts in the distribution of seapower."[34] It is not difficult to see that singling a sole variable out of other core components of military might is erroneous, particularly given the dynamics of military technology and the role of other branches of service—air force, space, cyber, and special forces in projecting power beyond national frontiers. Besides,

by confining power to the notion of seapower measured as a national share of warships in the cumulative naval assets of the leading powers one risks to ignore the complexity of the very notion of power as well as the role of other power components—hard and soft—in its perpetuation.

Furthermore, accentuating a sheer number of ships as a yardstick of military supremacy tends to overlook the qualitative characteristics of the naval force, including its structure, equipment, operational capacity, fire-power, maneuverability, and doctrinal efficiency. Adopted as a guide for policy, such an approach can result in overconfidence on the part of powers whose naval capacity exceeds that of their immediate rivals, and can eventually lead to dramatic ramifications. To compare the power of the leading world navies, according to US analytics, it is not enough to consider the capacity (number) of battleships, but also measure their capability including platforms characteristics, might, range, and accuracy of their weapon systems, and efficiency of their operational capacity, and finally assess the material readiness of the naval forces. While the US Navy continues to present a formidable striking force, with the exception of its strong readiness, two other core components of its power, according to the assessment made by the Heritage Foundation—capacity and capability—are not as impressive: their scores are respectively "marginal" and "weak" whereas the overall condition of the navy is "marginal."[35]

In the post-Cold war era, one's global military pre-eminence is understood as "command of the global commons"—sea, air, and space.[36] From this angle, some analysts see the growth of access denial capabilities by other nations in strategically relevant parts of the global commons (e.g., by China in the South China Sea) as a major challenge to US rank and status.[37]

Illustrative of, perhaps, the most ambitious among the recent endeavors to assess American military capabilities in the new strategic environment is their examination by a group of experts from Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy at The Heritage Foundation. Their study identifies and assesses three core strategic determinants of US military ability: interests, environment, and strength. To examine the degree of US military power *adequacy* in defending the nation's core interests in the complex and dynamic operating environment, they introduced *The Index of U.S. Military Strength*. Specifically, its purpose is to evaluate US preparedness to deal with its likely adversaries in the core three areas of its strategic interests—Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, while maintaining capabilities to simultaneously and successfully wage two major regional wars (two-major-regional-contingency [MRC] criteria).[38]

By and large, the Index can be seen as a yardstick to measure the status of America's hard power *primacy*. Consider that to comply with MRC requirements, the United States should maintain a level of superiority *exceeding* the aggregated military might of its two strongest regional adversaries. Given the realities of the ensuing geostrategic environment in Europe and Asia, this means that US armed faculty should possess capability, capacity, and readiness surpassing those by Russia and China combined. The 2015 report, however, found that America's military power was "shrinking."[39]

Notably, an image of a decaying military power can bear negatively not only on US national security interests, but also on maintaining the nation's diplomatic and economic preponderance for there is a deep-rooted belief in America, particularly strong in the conservative circles, that it is "[t]he United States' military capability [that] supported our nation's rise to global greatness over the past century, but this was often because of the increased *influence and credibility produced by this capability rather than the overt use of force* [emphasis added]."[40] Upholding US qualitative supremacy in military technology, this logic implies, is not sufficient to deter geopolitical ambitions of Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea. What America genuinely needs to persuade her foes is boosting the quantitative parameters of her military capability. That numbers do matter in perceptions of hard power seems like an undisputed precept in US defense and foreign policy communities. "At some point math counts in warfare," contends, for example, retired US Army general Barry McCaffrey. "If you don't want to fight, then maintain a capability that is persuasive to your adversary as being capable of taking them on."[41] Former permanent representative of the United States to the United Nations John Bolton concurs: "[E]verything changes as the perception of American power around the world changes." He elaborates further: "If we had a Navy comparable to the levels we need … one closer to Reagan's Navy—I don't think the Chinese would be doing what they're doing in the South China Sea. I don't think the middle east would be so close to descending into anarchy. I don't think Putin would be harassing the independent states formerly part of the Soviet Union." It is not, therefore, surprising that the Trump administration considers a massive modernization and enhancement of US military force, unseen since the Reagan era, as the primary tool "to make America great again." "[B]y building up our military," Bolton explains, "[w]e're trying to dissuade and deter our adversaries. And they are dissuaded and deterred when

they think we're strong. By contrast, when they see us as weak, they're gonna try and take advantage of us."[42] This point of view appears, however, to ignore the financial ramifications of the new arms race for US economy as the costs of impressing American adversaries—China and Russia—with reinvigorated military power, including new attack submarines, battle ships, aircraft carriers, fighters, and so on, are far from being moderate: they are estimated at additional $500 billion to $1 trillion in 2017–2027 US defense spending,[43] and do not match up with plans to cut the nation's otherwise huge budget deficit. Additionally, the plans to uphold US image of primacy through flexing military muscles are mostly of symbolic nature for they are essentially irrelevant in dealing with the real security risks America is facing, such as social discontent, racial tension, terrorist threats, and environmental pressures.

5   Russia's Military Capability and Strategic Rationale

In the Putin era, the Russian state has made serious efforts to retain its competitive edge in military capability. These attempts stemmed from an alarmist mindset by the Russian powerholders comprised primarily of officials who come from the Soviet or post-Soviet secret services. Interestingly, their world look has experienced little change since the time George Kennan's *Long Telegram* defined the Kremlin's perception of world affairs as "neurotic" which it astutely explained by "traditional and instinctive Russian sense of insecurity."[44] Suspicious and reactionary, trained in the conspiracy-minded fashion of Cold War mentality, this group of people continue to see the outside world as a hostile place with the United States and the West at large as their country's mortal enemy. According to their vision, military strength constitutes the major underpinning of state power, and its enhancement is imperative to sustaining Russia's great power status. With a rearmament program known as GPV-2020 underway in Russia since 2011, more than 70 percent of her military hardware—ranging from intercontinental ballistic missiles to nuclear submarines, tanks, helicopters, strategic bombers, and fighter jets—is planned to be modernized by 2020.[45] Western assessments of the GPV-2020 suggest that despite economic troubles caused by reduction of budget revenues due to the fall of oil prices, break of military-economic ties with Ukraine, and severity of Western economic sanctions, Russian military-industrial complex demonstrated resilience and capacity sufficient to

ensure the country's return to the list of the most conspicuous military powers.[46] The Kremlin's efforts in accelerated military modernization have been supplemented by its revisionist foreign policy. Viewing the United States and the European NATO members as its implacable rivals in attempts to sustain supremacy and influence in Eurasian geopolitics after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Moscow, in the new century, has undertaken a set of unpredictable and assertive policy actions to demonstrate its military superiority, including the war in Georgia (2008), the hybrid war in Ukraine (since 2014), and the military campaign in Syria (since 2015). The overall mode of these acts by Putin's Russia has been perfectly grasped by a panel of prominent European foreign affairs scholars and diplomats who defined it as "Russia's propensity to create a problem, then leverage it and offer to manage it without necessarily solving it."[47] While this pattern bore negatively on Russia's public image in the West, it nevertheless allowed Moscow to preserve its significance in Western political calculus as of a power one has to "reckon with"—a goal which in itself constitutes an overarching objective of its grand strategy. These actions have coincided with an assumingly state-coordinated campaign by Russian defense contractors in publicizing their "revolutionary" projects in weaponry modernization and innovation. Based on information whose accuracy cannot be objectively verified, some Western media outlets did not fall short of publications presenting Russia as a military superpower, whose capabilities "[i]n some ways … could be even more of a threat than [those of] its Soviet predecessor."[48] It cannot, however, get unnoticed for a meticulous observer that these very outlets have been often used as sources of reference by Russian state-sponsored bloggers and mass media to propagate Russia's superpower image among her people. Referring to certain publications by Western authors publicizing Russian military strength this way makes sense in Russia because foreign sources of information have been traditionally seen since the Soviet era as more reliable and objective than the domestic ones. Such an approach allows the Kremlin to look credible for both the foreign and domestic audiences not in the least because the images of Russia as a military superpower it propagates are skillfully tailored to meet their traditional expectations. The first image, designed for the West, is mostly intimidating and scary as it seeks to press the Western, and in particular the European, governments to acquiesce to and appease Moscow. The second image, designed for domestic consumption, is mighty and glorious for it seeks to endure regime consolidation by prompting imperial nostalgia.

If the Kremlin's massive military build-up and interventions in conflicts abroad can be interpreted as an attempt by Russian policymakers to reach "parity" with the United States in terms of raw power, one has to recognize, judging by reaction in US military and political communities, that they have, at least temporarily, reached their objective. "If you want to talk about a nation that could pose an existential threat to the United States, I'd have to point to Russia," stated, for instance, General Joseph F. Dunford before the Senate Armed Services Committee during the hearings devoted to his nomination as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in July 2015. "If you look at their behavior, it's nothing short of alarming."[49] Deborah James, Secretary of the Air Force, concurred: "Russia is the No. 1 threat to the United States. We have a number of threats that we're dealing with, but Russia could be, because of the nuclear aspect, an existential threat to the United States."[50] One of the immediate concerns for US and NATO military commanders is Russia's radically improved capability to negate the West's combat superiority in the air: for instance, in the opinion of US Air Force General Frank Gorenc, Russian anti-aircraft systems deployed in the Crimea and Kaliningrad region possess a game-changing anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) faculty beyond Russian territory.[51] However, the culmination of these appraisals was admittedly reached in November 2016, when the Russian powerholders received perhaps the most awaited recognition of their armed forces' exceptional status from the departing US President who called Russia "a military superpower."[52] Moreover, some Western analysts argue that Russia is not only the world's second strongest military power after the United States, but that Russian military capability in Europe exceeds the one by the US's European allies. In 2016, for example, a leaked report by British defense ministry admitted Russia's superiority in conventional firepower and cyberwarfare capability.[53]

While it is impossible to make an objective judgment on the real balance of military power in Europe without a lethal test, the very fact of UK military acknowledging its weakness signifies an important psychological victory for the Kremlin that seeks to promote an image of Russia as a dominant power on the Old Continent. Most importantly, acknowledgment of inferiority by NATO's second strongest military power with respect to a resurgent opponent cannot get unnoticed by its European allies and risks resulting in undermining the critically needed solidarity among them. Above all, those presenting Russian military modernization as a likely "game changer" in scenarios of a hypothetical military conflict

in Europe between NATO and Russia, which might inadvertently lead to NATO defeat, seem not to understand that despite their demonstrative assertiveness Russian powerholders are intrinsically reluctant to wage a war with a strong opponent, and for this reason alone would seek to avoid a direct military conflict with NATO. But there are also additional arguments for this assumption. First, there exists a reasonable fear that such a conflict would rapidly escalate to a suicidal nuclear phase. Second, there are concerns that such an escalation would threaten security of their family members residing in Western Europe and jeopardize their property in the West. Third, even if such a conflict is confined to conventional warfare, there is no guarantee that it would end to Russia's advantage, and even in case of her hypothetical victory Russia has no organizational capacity to maintain occupation of any part of Europe let alone the entire Old Continent. Fourth, any war, as Clausewitz noted, is followed by peace. It is improbable that benefits of re-arranging Europe on Moscow's terms would outweigh the costs of a new European war. Apparently, unlike their Soviet predecessors who sought spreading their ideology to capitalist Europe, Russian decision makers lack any indigenous political and economic ideas they could deem more attractive for Europeans than the existing models of social market democracy in Europe. The only viable policy objective of Russia's saber rattling is to insulate its political regime from external pressure. Therefore, undermining solidarity in NATO between Europe and America, Western and Eastern Europe, and inside each sub-regional group and individual polity in the transatlantic alliance appears to look in the Kremlin as a reliable hedge against a perceived threat of the West-sponsored regime change in Russia. However, Moscow's flexing of military muscles has been so far counterproductive to this aim as it caused NATO reassertion and prompted even some neutral European countries, such as Finland and Sweden, to contemplate membership in the organization. Moreover, by creating a new security dilemma for Europe, Moscow provokes America and NATO to respond by enhancing their military power, which is bound to engage Russia in an economically devastating arms race. This race may be similar to the one that exhausted the Soviet economy, and thereby contributed to the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union.

Although in the short run Moscow's obsession with sustaining military superiority has indeed contributed to reinvigorating Russia's strong power image among US and NATO leadership, there are not unreasonable fears among Russian experts that in the long run such a fixation can bear negatively on the country's solvency and integrity. Some Russian economists,

for example, compare the 2011–2020 defense costs in the country's budget to the accelerated rise of military expenditures in the Soviet Union in the last three years before its ultimate collapse in 1991, and warn that while Putin's rearmament program has already likely become the major cause of the country's recession since 2012, it might eventually engender even more dramatic consequences for the Russian economy in the future.[54]

6   GLOBAL FIREPOWER AND CHINA'S MIGHT

Another popular ranking of national military strengths is created by the Global Firepower (GFP) company. It evaluates 50 factors that along with conventional land, air, and naval power include indexes assessing production, consumption and proven reserves of oil; economic health including the size of domestic economy, external debt and financial reserves; logistical parameters like the number of ports and terminals, and the size of the merchant marine fleet; and geographical characteristics encompassing the lengths of shared borders, coastline, and waterways.

According to the GFP, in 2006–2017 the pecking order of the first four strongest militaries in the world has not changed as the United States, followed by Russia, China, and India, has preserved its hard power supremacy,[55] and the dyadic military power balances have sustained between Russia and China and China and India respectively in favor of Moscow and Beijing. Nevertheless, according to the GFP, China and India have overdone France and Britain in terms of conventional military power, and there is an almost consensual belief among American experts that the PLA, for instance, is rapidly closing its technological gap with the US military.[56]

The GFP authors, however, note that their rankings reflect the standing of states in terms of their virtual fighting power, rather than the one that can be ultimately assessed in the battlefield. Yet, there are serious doubts as to the ranking's accuracy since CFP does not take into account neither the quality of weapon systems and degrees of national technological advancement, nor the levels of military organization, intelligence, and communication, thus grounding the ratings on superficial number-based calculations and guesswork rather than comprehensive and rigorous multifactor analysis. Moreover, the GFP does not take into consideration neither strategic nor tactical nuclear weapons, while its in-house formula accentuates the weight of manpower, thereby inflating the military strengths of countries with large populations. Above all, the lack of aggregated power indexes for several years since 2006 when the GFP project

was incepted makes it analytically deficient as it is only with the help of the former that one can judge about national, dyadic, and global military *power dynamics.*

While it is doubtful that the GFP per se can seriously influence governmental policies around the world, it certainly has an impact on propagating certain national images in mass media. The general impression that one can derive from those by the CFP and many other images of power dissipated through the world public and social networks is that the Western powers are already surpassed by the big developing nations in terms of their hard power. It is, therefore, not inconceivable that with virtual images of fighting capability which, for example, make such militarily and technologically advanced great powers as France and Britain look weaker than such developing nations as India, the French and British governments would naturally seek to prove their superior status by actual manifestations of their real combat strengths as it did happen, for instance, in Libya.

It is worth noting though that China's comprehensive power, and especially its military component, may be significantly overestimated by Western observers who appear to be almost mesmerized by the country's population size and the speed of China's economic growth in the recent three decades. Contrarily, the views of Chinese military establishment look much soberer. For instance, a recent scholarship on the topic cites highly skeptical opinions by several PLA high-rank officers with respect to China's true relative fighting strength. Colonel Dai Xu and Major General Zhang Shaozhong, for example, concur that Chinese military force is falling behind not only the United States, but also Russia and the leading European powers of NATO. In the opinion of Colonel Xu, the PLA's composite faculty ranks eighth in the world as the sheer number of its personnel and armory units cannot make up for the innate deficiencies in the levels of its technological and operational sophistication. General Shaozhong, in his turn, points out to the specific weaknesses of China's military power that in his view lags behind the advanced nations in every facet of modern warfare—submarines, aircraft, and even land forces. It will not be until 2049, he argues, that the People's Republic of China (PRC) would be able to outperform her advanced peers and occupy the second place in the list of the world's most powerful nations.[57] Markedly, against the backdrop of serious discrepancy in foreign and indigenous assessment of China's relative military capability, the task of making reliable forecasts and realistic policy proposals by strategists in the United States and other major powers looks particularly challenging. While the true fighting capac-

ity of the PLA cannot be reliably judged upon in the absence of credible empirical ways and means to assess it, it makes, perhaps, more sense to rely on inferences by civilian experts rather than those by national military specialists for the latter tend to exaggerate adversarial potentials while underestimating indigenous ones as they are understandably interested to secure increases in budget spending on national defense and military modernization. It nevertheless is highly probable that even though the United States and some other leading nations may have indeed maintained their competitive edge over the PRC in military capability, China has been investing and will likely continue to invest vigorously in overcoming her hard power inferiority, even though, perhaps, not at the pace and with the outcomes that can make her parity with, let alone supremacy over, the most militarily advanced nations possible in the foreseeable future. By 2050, however, as declared by China's President Xi Jinping, the Chinese authorities are determined to turn the PLA into a "world-class" military force capable of fighting and winning future wars[58] and instrumental in projecting China's power globally.[59] This commitment puts an especially heavy load on the credibility of other nations' military power in general and their deterrence capability in particular.

7   COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL POWER

Efforts to determine national power rankings are encouraged by every major state. Attempts undertaken in the Middle Kingdom in this regard since the 1980s are of a special interest for international experts not in the least because Chinese scholars appear to have elaborated the most nuanced measurements of composite power, CNP. Unlike power metrics originated in the West that operate primarily with indexes of hard power like GDP and military expenditures, those in China—along with economic capabilities—incorporate politics—and information technology–related components of power. One of the modern versions of CNP developed by CASS contains, for example, 64 different indexes of power divided into eight groups, such as (a) natural resources including territory, demographic, mineral, and energy resources; (b) economic activities' capability incorporating total GDP and GDP per capita, production efficiency, and level of material consumption; (c) foreign economic activities capability; (d) science and technology capability; (e) social development level encompassing cultural level, health care level, communications, and urbanization; (f) military capability, both conventional and nuclear; (g) government regulation and control capability; (h) foreign affairs capability.[60]

A snapshot of world power by CNP experts presents the following hierarchical order: United States, Japan, China, Russia, Germany, France, United Kingdom, Canada, Brazil, India, Italy, South Korea, Australia.[61] Inclusion of both hard and soft power ingredients as well as transformation variables in the advanced contemporary indexes of composite power, such as CNP, however, is of controversial value. On the one hand, they are seen by PRC strategists as state-of-the-art instruments in mapping their country's power dynamics relative of her peers. Yet, on the other hand, the timeframe of these endeavors is limited as they are only capable to embrace a period since the end of the last-beginning of the present century. As the composite power indexes created by CASS as well as those by the Chinese Military Academy consist of several dozens of variables, such as cultural influence and institution efficiency, they are obviously inapplicable for the purposes of tracking power dynamics through historically long periods of time.

Above all, national power ratings tend to give a rather distorted picture of global power distribution. For example, in CNP ratings, Japan is presented as the world's second most powerful actor. This picture assumingly reflects traditional perceptions by the Chinese with respect to Japan as of their major regional adversary rather than results from an unbiased assessment of Japan's real place in the global power hierarchy. Such ratings cannot be considered objective first and foremost because their authors assign arbitrary weights to various power components, so that the resultant composite coefficients stemming from highly subjective inferences create images of national power that can be quite remote from reality.

8   THE NATIONAL POWER INDEX

The ongoing shifts in regional and global power balances have prompted experts in ascending powers to elaborate autonomous matrix of power capabilities. Drawing on China's CNP, India's National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS), for instance, created the National Security Index (NSI), which nevertheless has important distinctions from CNP in that it emphasizes the salience of human development levels in power measurements. In addition to the Human Development Index (HDI), it includes indexes of economic performance, research and development, defense expenditure, and population.[62] Yet, Indian experts appeared to be dissatisfied with the NSI as a practical policy compass. They drew attention to the following shortcomings of the index: neglect of resource, environmental health, and good governance variables. Additionally, they underlined that

NSI authors had downplayed the role of national security (a priority for the developed countries) in comparison with human security (a primary concern of developing nations), and thereby distorted coherence of their analytical apparatus, which should be uniform for any state.[63]

In the recent years, Indian scholars have, however, attempted to advance their methods of power measurement. India's specialists from FNSR, for example, have undertaken an attempt to independently map their nation's positions in the world power hierarchy, the NPI. In addition to tangible capabilities in economic, military, demographic, technological, and energy realms, NPI includes some novelties, such as diplomatic capacity. The latter presents a combination of defense autonomy, participation in multilateral organizations, rule-making capacity, and soft power. Every component is assigned a certain weight measured as a percentage of the total. The distribution of component shares looked as follows: economic and military capacities—25 percent each, population and technology—15 percent each, and energy security and foreign affairs—10 percent each. The last available NPI data referred to 2012, and pictured the following power hierarchy: United States, China, Russia, France, Japan, United Kingdom, Germany, India Canada, Israel.[64] Although the NPI sought to overcome deficiencies of its Chinese prototype, on balance its methodology turned out not to be more conclusive to the ends of producing an objective and comprehensive picture of international power distribution. The deficiencies of NPI project can be grouped in four major blocks. First, they stem from the arbitrary assignment of weights to various composite index components, and in particular those assessing foreign affairs capacity: for example, soft power weightage constitutes just 1 percent of the total, which places it within the margins of a statistical error. Additionally, the project appears to significantly underestimate the aggregated salience of a nation's role in global rule-formulation and decision-making, which is calculated in parallel to soft power and accounts for only 3 percent of the total. Second, in calculating tangible variables of national capabilities, the NPI omits such vital components as territory, as well as potable water and agricultural production endowments. Third, in the absence of indexes reflecting the growing importance of the national environmental conditions, as well the imprint of domestic politics—social and political stability, as well as the matrix of national unity and resilience, the overall picture of global power balance could hardly be accurate and comprehensive. Finally, the lack of earlier NPI assessments and projections does not allow to put the international power distribution into a historical perspective as well as

make judgments about the long-term prospects of individual political units in the evolving global power dynamics.

9   Military Alliances

The foregoing evaluations of national strength tend to commonly omit a number of important power features, such as those connected with its credibility. Consider, for example, military capability's deterrence potential. In addition to tangibles, its efficiency strongly depends upon such factors as victorious images gained in recent military conflicts as well as records of respecting national commitments in military alliances.

Among implicit indicators of power, one should contemplate the number and magnitude of major power allies. The latter we define as countries that have concluded defense agreements with a principal power. If one applies Stephen Walt's concept of balancing and bandwagoning patterns in alliance formation, it would be easier to discern what international conditions are objectively more conducive to strengthening the veracity of images of the traditional great powers.[65]

One may reasonably suggest then that the periods of instability and strategic uncertainty are more in line with the logic of power sustainability for they tend to create incentives by the weaker states to bandwagon with strong nations, thereby contributing to consolidation of their power credibility. Indeed, with multiplication of threats to national security, governments are more often than not prompted to seek security partnerships with stronger states. While entangling alliances, as history tells us, might well contain security risks for the patron-states, their elites may tempt to perceive such alliances as the necessary evil when dealing with the challenges of sustaining legitimacy of their international primacy. Understandably, the bigger the number of minor countries seeking protection from foes by bandwagoning with stronger nations, the wider the geography of major power alliances, the more diverse their structure— the larger the scope of political influence by the alfa states. Accordingly, a state whose benevolence and protection are sought after by a relativity larger number of states can be considered more credible in terms of power in comparison with her peers.

Further, to determine the long-term trends in the relative importance of individual major powers in terms of their military-political appeal and influence, it is vital to trace the dynamics of the alliance indexes through an extended period of time. This can be done, for instance, by analyzing COW project data on military agreements concluded by every

contemporary major power for the last 200 years beginning 1816.[66] An analysis of compositions of the world power balances and military alliances in the last 200 years reveals that the hard power attractiveness of the traditional European great powers has been falling as result of their relative decline comparative to the United States and the former Soviet Union which have skyrocketed after WWII. Even though the hard power gap between the United States and its immediate competitor, China, has been narrowing in the last decades, this has not reflected upon the structure of international allegiances, which remained primarily pro-American. Even though in the new century China's government has resorted to multilateralism to legitimize her rise in economic capabilities (e.g., by initiating the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) or establishing a free trade area with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—the ASEAN–China Free Trade Area [ACFTA]), it continues to pursue its traditional policy of military non-entanglement in relations with pawns with the rare exception of North Korea. Notably, even despite close ties with its most valuable geopolitical partner, Pakistan, the PRC has been wary to bind itself by security obligations with respect to Islamabad. Among the causes of Beijing's "allliancephobia" some Chinese scholars name the lack of experience in alliance formation and management along with the fears of losing diplomatic maneuverability. They, however, appear to recognize that in the absence of formal commitments to security of her pawns, the resultant international image of China is bound to be insufficiently impressive for a claimant of a superpower status.[67]

Notes

1. See the UN Charter. In fact, the whole mechanism of international security operated by the UN Security Council is based on the principle of unequal sovereignty. Institutionalized in favor of its permanent members, this principle allows them to block decisions they see detrimental to their core national interests. For an analysis of the international security utility of the Big Five's legal exceptionalism in the UNSC, see Nico Krisch, "The Security Council and the Great Powers" in *The United Nations Security Council and War: The Evolution of Thought and Practice since 1945*, eds. Vaughan Lowe, Adam Roberts, Jennifer Welsh, and Dominik Zaum (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008): Ch. 5.

2. See Martin Wight, with a foreword by Kenneth Robinson, "Is the Commonwealth a Non-Hobbesian Institution?" *The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 16, no.2 (July 1978):119–135; Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). On the ontology of the

'world society' concept, see Barry Buzan, *From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

3. Quoted in Rony Brauman, « Mission civilisatrice, ingérence humanitaire, » *Le Monde diplomatique,* septembre 2005, 2.

4. See Gordon A. Craig and Alexander L. George, *Force and Statecraft: Diplomatic Problems of Our Time* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

5. Great powers are not just states with large populations, strong militaries, big economies, and vast financial resources. To qualify for this status, they, along with being recognized as such worldwide, need to demonstrate self-determination in their international behavior—a quality, which the famous Italian diplomat and political writer Francesco Tommasini, for instance, identified, in the words of Antonio Gramsci, as an "ability to pursue an *absolutely* independent line of action which necessarily influenced all the other powers, great and small." Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, v. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 259–260.

6. Robert Gilpin, "The Rise of American Hegemony," in *Two Hegemonies: Britain 1846–1914 and the United States 1941–2001*, eds. Patrick Karl O'Brien and Armand Clesse (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2002), 165–182; Michael C. Webb and Stephen D. Krasner, "Hegemonic Stability Theory: An Empirical Assessment," *Review of International Studies* 15, no.2 (April 1989):183–198; James E. Alt, Randall L. Calvert and Brian D. Humes, "Reputation and Hegemonic Stability: A Game-Theoretic Analysis," *The American Political Science Review* 82, no.2 (June 1988):445–466; Charles Kindleberger, *The World in Depression, 1929–39* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973); Isabelle Grunberg, "Exploring the 'Myth' of Hegemonic Stability," *International Organization* 44, no.4 (Autumn 1990):431–477.

7. See, for instance, Steven W. Mosher, *Hegemon: China's Plan to Dominate Asia and the World* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2002); Geoffrey Murray, *China: The Next Superpower: Dilemmas in Change and Continuity* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998): Frank S. Fang, *China Fever: Fascination, Fear, and the World's Next Superpower* (Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 2007); Ted C. Fishman, *China, Inc.: How the Rise of the Next Superpower Challenges America and the World* (New York; Toronto: Scribner, 2005); Martin Jacques, *When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012). On arguments behind power transition see, for instance, Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989); Charles A. Kupchan … [et al.]; with the assistance of Jason Davidson and

Mira Sucharov, *Power in Transition: The Peaceful Change of International Order* (Tokyo; New York: United Nations University Press, 2001); Yildiz Atasoy, ed., *Hegemonic Transitions, the State and Crisis in Neoliberal Capitalism* (London; New York: Routledge, 2009). Arrighi, Giovanni and Beverly Silver, *Chaos and Governance in the Modern World-System: Comparing Hegemonic Transitions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

8. Robert A. Dahl, "The Concept of Power," *Behavioral Science*, 2, no.3 (July 1957):214.

9. See Sir William Petty, *Essays on Mankind and Political Arithmetic* (New York: Cassell & Company, Ltd., 1888).

10. See Karl Höhn, "Four Early Attempts to Develop Power Formulas (1741−1955)," *Stosunki Międzynarodowe−International Relations* 44, no.3–4 (2011):305–317.

11. Johann Peter Süssmilch, *Die göttliche Ordnung in den Veränderungen des menschlichen Geschlechts aus der Geburt, dem Tode und der Fortpflanzung desselben* (Berlin: J. C. Spener, 1741).

12. The list compiled by Karl Höhn. Powermetrics Information Network. Available at: http://powermetrics.bplaced.net/literature/

13. See, for instance, Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray, "Net Assessment I in the 1930s," Mershon Center Defense Supply Service, Washington, D.C., 20310-5220.

14. "Secretary General's Monthly Press Conference and Launch of the Annual Report for 2012, Opening Remarks and Q&A," January 31, 2013. Available at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_94269.htm?selectedLocale=en

15. Ibid.

16. Raymond Aron, *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations*, with a new introduction by Daniel J. Mahoney and Brian C. Anderson (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 48, 52–57.

17. See P.K. Singh, Y.K. Gera, Sandeep Dewan (eds.), *Comprehensive National Power: A Model for India* (New Delhi: United Service Institution of India: Vij Books India, 2013).

18. "The NATO Defence Planning Process." Available at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49202.htm?selectedLocale=en

19. See P.G. Kuznecov, *Sistema priroda—obshhestvo—chelovek: Ustojchivoe razvitie* / O.L. Kuznecov, P.G. Kuznecov, B.E. Bol'shakov. (Dubna: Mezhdunarodnyj universitet prirody, obshhestva i cheloveka "Dubna," 2000).

20. The National Material Capabilities data set; Singer, J. David, Stuart Bremer, and John Stuckey, "Capability Distribution, Uncertainty, and Major Power War, 1820–1965." in *Peace, War, and Numbers*, ed. Bruce Russett (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1972), 19–48; J. David Singer, "Reconstructing the Correlates of War Dataset on Material Capabilities of States, 1816–1985" *International Interactions* 14, no.2 (May 1988):115–132; Composite Index of National Capability (CINC) index Version 4.0.

21. Henry J. Kenny, "Vietnamese Perception of the 1979 War with China," in Chinese Warfighting: The PLA Experience since 1949, eds. Mark A. Ryan, David M. Finkelstein, and Michael A. McDevitt (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2003), 232.

22. See A.W. Marshall, "Problems of Estimating Military Power," P-3417 (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, August 1966).

23. See Talbot C. Imlay, *Facing the Second World War: Strategy, Politics, and Economics in Britain and France, 1938–1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 80; Glyn Stone, "From Entente to Alliance: Anglo-French Relations, 1935–1939" in *Anglo-French Relations in the Twentieth Century: Rivalry and Cooperation*, eds. Alan Sharp and Glyn Stone (London: Routledge, 2000), 193.

24. See Niall Ferguson, *The War of the World: Twentieth-Century Conflict and the Descent of the West* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 361–380.

25. See Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett, *A War to Be Won: Fighting the Second World War* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Harvard, 2000), 12.

26. Sebastian Cox, "Chapter 5: British Military Planning and the Origins of the Second World War," in *Military Planning and the Origins of the Second World War in Europe,* eds. B.J.C. McKercher and Roch Legault (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), 107.

27. Ted Robert Gurr, "The Political Dimension of National Capabilities: Concepts and Measurement Pages," *International Interactions* 14, no.2 (May 1988):133–139.

28. David Singer, "Reconstructing the Correlates of War…":117.

29. Ibid. The *Theory of Power Credibility* conceives credibility as a fungible resource. There is, however, no consensus among IR theorists on the issue of power fungibility. Realists, such as Kenneth Waltz, assume that power, in principle, is fungible, even though international actors may vary in their ability to convert their tangible resources into influence so that "[p]ower may be only slightly fungible for weak states, but it is highly so for strong ones." Kenneth N. Waltz, "Reflections on Theory of International Politics: A Response to My Critics," in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 333. Joseph Nye's and Robert Keohane's theory of "complex interdependence" suggests that it is military force that cannot be transferred to other forms of power "across issue-

areas" (Robert O. Keohane, "Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond" in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 197.) David Baldwin argues that political resources are poorly fungible, yet appears to consider such properties as "information, and a reputation for making credible threats or promises to rank generally high" in a hypothetical list of fungible power resources. David A. Baldwin, "Power Analysis and World Politics: New Trends Versus Old Tendencies," *World Politics* 31, no.2 (January 1979):165–166. Stefano Guzzini, while looking at the fungibility dilemma from a constructivist per-spective, proposes moving away from indeterminacy of realist interpretation of power by putting power in interpretivist and communicative context. See Stefano Guzzini, *Power, Realism and Constructivism* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013). Wolf Hassdorf, drawing to Bourdieu's notion of "sym-bolic capital," suggests examining the issue of power fungibility along similar lines. See Wolf Hassdorf, "Contested Credibility: The Use of Symbolic Power in British Exchange-Rate" in *Power in World Politics,* eds. Felix. Berenskoetter and Michael Williams, (New York Routledge, 2007), 141–161. Additionally, for discussions on fungibility of power in world politics, see Robert J. Art, "Force and Fungibility Reconsidered," *Security Studies* 8, no.4 (June 1999):183–189, and David A. Baldwin, "Force, Fungibility, and Influence," *Security Studies* 8, no.4 (June 1999):173–183.

30. See David Singer, "Reconstructing the Correlates of War…," 22.

31. "The supreme importance of the military instrument," wrote Carr, "lies in the fact that the *ultima ratio* of power in international relations is war." Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty-Years' Crisis 1919–1939: Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1946), 109.

32. George Modelski and William R. Thompson, *Seapower and Global Politics, 1494–1993* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988).

33. A.T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1903) 12th ed.

34. George Modelski and William R. Thompson, *Seapower and Global Politics*, 16–17.

35. See Dakota L. Wood (ed.), *2017 Index of U.S. Military Strength: Assessing America's Ability to Provide for the Common Defense* (The Heritage Foundation: Washington, D.C., 2016).

36. See Barry R. Posen, "Command of the Commons—The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony," in *Primacy and Its Discontents: American Power and International Stability*, eds. Michael E. Brown, Owen R. Coté Jr., Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2008).

37. See Barry Posen, "Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony," *International Security* 28, no.1 (Summer 2003):5–46.

38. On the ascending scale of 1 to 5 the report assessed threats to US vital security interests emanating from North Korea at 5 (severe); Russia, China, and terrorism in Afghanistan and Pakistan at 4 (high); Iran and terrorism in the Middle East at 3 (elevated); North Korea's behavior at 5 (hostile); and the rest of the group at 4 (aggressive). In terms of capabilities, Russia, China, North Korea, and terrorist groupings in Afghanistan and Pakistan scored 4 (gathering), while Iran and Middle East terrorist organizations received 2 points (aspirational). The aggregated level of threat to the United States in 2015 was assessed as "elevated." Dakota L. Wood (ed.), *2016 Index of U.S. Military Strength: Assessing America's Ability to Provide for the Common Defense* (Washington: The Heritage Foundation, 2015), 10–11.

39. Ibid., xiii.

40. William Inboden, "The Role of a Strong National Defense" in Dakota L. Wood (ed.), *2016 Index of U.S. Military Strength*, 15.

41. Quoted in Leo Shane III and Andrew Tilghman, "Trump's Military Will Have More Troops and More Firepower—If He Can Find More Money," *Military Times*, November 20, 2016. Available at: http://www.military-times.com/articles/donald-trump-military-spending

42. Quoted in John Hayward "John Bolton: 'Much Stronger U.S.-U.K. Relationship' Will Emerge from Brexit and Trump's Election," *Breitbart News Daily*, November 10, 2016. Available at: http://www.breitbart.com/radio/2016/11/10/bolton-much-stronger-u-s-u-k-relationship-emerge-brexit-trumps-election/

43. See Charles Tiefer, "President Trump Is Likely to Boost U.S. Military Spending By $500 Billion To $1 Trillion," *Forbes*, November 9, 2016. Available at: http://www.forbes.com/sites/charlestiefer/2016/11/09/president-trump-is-likely-to-boost-u-s-military-spending-by-500-billion-to-1-trillion/#13b003d74108

44. George Kennan, "Telegram, George Kennan to George Marshall" ["Long Telegram"], February 22, 1946. Harry S. Truman Administration File, Elsey Papers.

45. See Dmitry Bykov, "Voennye Normativy" ("Military Standards"), *Kommersant -Sankt-Peterburg*, June 29, 2015. Available at: http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2757166

46. See Julian Cooper, "Russia's State Armament Programme to 2020: A Quantitative Assessment of Implementation 2011–2015," FOI-R--4239—SE, March 2016, DOI:10.13140/RG.2.1.3859.3685

47. "The Effects of Finland's Possible NATO Membership: An Assessment," March 29, 2016, 53. Available at: http://formin.finland.fi/public/download.aspx?ID=157408&GUID={71D08E6C-3168-439F-9C31-0326D1014C26}

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49. Quoted in Dan Lamothe, "Russia is Greatest Threat to the U.S., Says Joint Chiefs Chairman Nominee Gen. Joseph Dunford," *The Washington Post*, July 9, 2015. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2015/07/09/russia-is-greatest-threat-to-the-u-s-says-joint-chiefs-chairman-nominee-gen-joseph-dunford/?utm_term=.58c082f86000

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54. See *Ogonek (Kommersant)*, "Voennaja nagruzka stala tormozom" ("Military load became a break"), *Ogonek* 41 (October 17, 2016):14. Available at: http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3114479

55. See Global Firepower Index (GFP). Available at: http://www.globalfire-power.com

56. For instance, a Pentagon report to the US Congress, in assessing trends evolving in the PLA's relative capabilities, warns that "China's military modernization has the potential to reduce core U.S. military technological advantages." "Office of the Secretary of Defense, Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2015" (Washington: Department of Defense, 2015), i. One can further refer to the RAND corporation's "scorecards" report that evaluates the unfolding trends in Sino-American dyadic hard power equation. The report argues that in 1996–2017 China has substantially improved her capability to attack US air bases, conduct anti-surface warfare, and project her air force in the areas adjacent to the mainland. The evolving shifts in favor of China assumingly present serious challenges for the United States with respect to possible war scenarios in case of conflicts over Taiwan and Spratly Islands. See Eric Heginbotham et al., *The U.S.-China Military Scorecard: Forces, Geography, and the Evolving Balance of Power, 1996–2017* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2015).

57. See Zhimin Chen, "China's Power form a Chinese Perspective(II): Back to the Center Stage" in *Assessing China's Power*, ed. Jae Ho Chung (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 279, 284.

58. Xi Jinping made this statement at the 19th Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) on October 18, 2017. See "Highlights of Xi's Report to 19th CPC National Congress," available at: http://news.xin-huanet.com

59. These objectives should be considered in the context of Chinese leaders' desire to turn their country into "a global leader in terms of comprehensive national strength and international influence" by mid-century. Quoted in Ting Shi, "Xi Plans to Turn China into a Leading Global Power by 2050," Bloomberg, October 18, 2017. Available at: https://www.bloomberg.com

60. Michael Pillsbury, *China Debates the Future Security Environment* (Washington: National Defense University Press, 2000), 221.

61. As of 2014. CNP is presented in Li Shenming, Zhang Yushan, eds., *Annual Report on International Politics and Security 2015* (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2015), which contains a chapter analyzing power distribution among and influence by the world's strongest nations. Its author, Yang Yuan, argues that "the situation of 'one superpower and multi great powers' has yet to be fundamentally changed, and that the United States is still the undisputed 'sole superpower' in the world." He believes that "[w]hether the international structure will be changed from 'unipolarity' to 'bipolarity' in the future will depend on China."

62. P. K. Singh, Y. K. Gera, and Sandeep Dewan, eds., *Comprehensive National Power: A Model for India*, United Service Institution of India (New Delhi: Vij Books India Pvt. Ltd., 2013), 55.

63. Ibid., 56.

64. See Satish Kumar, Kanwal Sibal, S.D. Pradhan, et al., "National Power Index 2012," New Delhi: Foundation for National Security Research (December 2012).

65. See Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

66. The data operationalizes defense pacts, that is bilateral or multilateral agreements obliging major power to intervene militarily if a treaty member is attacked by a third party. See David J. Singer, and Melvin Small, "Formal Alliances, 1815–1939: A Quantitative Description," *Journal of Peace Research* 3, no.1 (January 1966):5.

67. For details, see Lyle J. Goldstein, "Does China Need Allies?" *The National Interest*, March 31, 2016. Available at: http://nationalinterest.org/feature/does-china-need-allies-15634

Measuring Intangibles

With a relative decline of their physical capabilities, principal states looking for remedies of sustaining their customary status and influence are bound to make up for the waning tangibles by mobilizing their intangible assets. The latter, denoted as 'soft power' by Joseph Nye, constitutes "the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment."[1] To quietly promote national authority and respect, statecraft seeks to contrive cultural, normative, and political means of public diplomacy. The advance of new communication technologies provided an opportunity for the respective nations to disseminate their positive images worldwide with the purpose of winning over the world public opinion and preventing the balance of power from changing in favor of their competitors. At the same time, the abundance of information has created what Nye calls a "paradox of plenty," a situation which demands particular skillfulness of policymakers in gaining the attention of the important others and anchoring it in the desired way in the overwhelming flow of communicated events and data. It is against this background that credibility, argues Nye, has emerged as "an important source of soft power," and while "[p]olitics has become a contest of competitive credibility," the struggle for credibility has evolved as the centerpiece of interstate rivalry. "Without underlying national credibility," he argues, "the instruments of public diplomacy cannot translate cultural resources into the soft power of attraction."[2] When targeted at foreign authorities, publics, and individuals, such instruments, in his view, together with those

directly employed by national governments should also include indirect means of radiating credibility, for example through communication networks provided by mass media, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs).[3]

The promulgation of soft power concept affects approaches to power comparisons. It should be noted though that the changes in the social construct of power are taking place not without a targeted impact of governments interested in replacing the notions of power-as-brute-force with those that perpetuate their nations' comparative advantages in intangibles—social capital, human development, ingenuity, and so on. It is reasonable to suggest that the appearance of numerous world ratings seeking to assess intangible facets of global strength *sui generis* contributes to alternating common perceptions of *power as force* to *power as influence* by accentuating soft components of primacy in the new century over the hard ones. This trend is exemplified, for instance, by the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index (GCI), Martin Prosperity Institute's Global Creativity Index (GCI), Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brand Index, and Portland's Soft Power Index, among others.

1   GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

The ability to generate and project soft power, particularly in the age of globalization, is closely connected with the levels of economic competitiveness. The latter is defined as "the set of institutions, policies, and factors that determine the level of productivity of an economy, which in turn sets the level of prosperity that the country can earn,"[4] and is measured by the World Economic Forum's GCI since 2004. The subsequent annual assessments of national productivity levels have constantly revealed the leading positions of the advanced economies including those of the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and smaller European nations. The GCI incorporates three groups of subindices: first, basic requirements needed for factor-driven economies; second, efficiency enhancers necessary for efficiency-driven economies; and third, innovation and sophistication factors indispensable for innovation-driven economies. Each subindex, in its turn, includes certain pillars: the first subindex embraces institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment; health and primary education. The second one consists of higher education and training; goods market efficiency; labor market efficiency; financial market development; technological readiness; and market size. Business sophistication and innovation form the third subindex.[5]

Indeed, the more vibrant, efficient, and innovative a national economy, the more attractive an image of a nation in the system of international business cooperation. The more opportunities such an economy creates for generating growth and wealth, the better chances for it to become a center of regional and global gravity. However, not all highly competitive nations have equal chances to translate their economic and technological superiority into composite primacy. Other things being equal, the larger a nation and the better potential she has in accumulating her net power resources, the greater her chances to assert herself on the world stage in terms of composite supremacy. It is worth realizing that as the quantitative parameters of the traditional great powers are relatively shrinking, maintaining superiority in the levels of their economic and technological competitiveness and ingenuity looks indispensable in sustaining their international status. Enduring soft primacy can add up to upholding supremacy in hard power, for example, through spillovers of civil technologies to defense systems[6] as well as by expanding the leading nations' deterrence and coercive potentials through cultivating economic and technological dependency of the others.

As Table 3.1 reveals, in 2007–2017 competitive positions of the major powers were characterized by dissimilar dynamics. For example, the comparative accomplishments of the Western economies—despite their

Table 3.1   Global Competitiveness of Major Powers (2007–2017)

Country/Year	GCI 2007–2008		GCI 2017–2018		GCI 2007–2017
	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Change in ranking
United States	1	5.673	2	5.853	−1
Germany	5	5.511	5	5.655	0
Japan	8	5.426	9	5.495	−1
United Kingdom	9	5.415	8	5.507	+1
Republic of Korea	11	5.397	26	5.072	−15
France	18	5.181	22	5.180	−4
China	34	4.567	27	5.002	+7
India	48	4.334	40	4.587	+8
Mexico	52	4.262	51	4.435	+1
Russian Federation	58	4.190	38	4.642	+20
Brazil	72	3.985	80	4.135	−8

Note: GCI—The Global Competitiveness Index—measures competitiveness of 137 economies on the scale of 1 (lowest) to 7 (highest).

Source: World Economic Forum, *The Global Competitiveness Index dataset 2007–2017*.

generally higher rankings than those of BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China)—have been relatively moderate. Out of the large advanced economies only the United Kingdom managed to improve its standing, while Germany maintained its place, the United States stepped from the first place to the second, and France lost four positions. In the meantime, while Russia, India, and China succeeded in spectacularly upgrading their general GCI ranks, with Russia recording a remarkable breakthrough of 20 positions up, Brazil has lost eight positions. Additionally, the case of South Korea's 15-slot decline in the last decade demonstrated that a fast economic advancement in the past does not automatically ensure a steady GCI performance in the future. Overall, despite the notable improvement of competitive economic performance of China and Russia in the last decade, one might question the ability of their institutions to continue fostering productivity and sophistication at higher than world average rates in the long-term perspective.[7]

One should also consider that while the GCI measures economic productivity, the model is hardly applicable for judging about the aggregated levels of comparative disparity between the advanced and emerging economies. Thus, in 2017 China's and Russia's levels of competitiveness comprised respectively 86 and 79 percent of the US level.[8] However, if measured in terms of such composite indicator of economic performance as GDP per capita in PPP, the economic discrepancy between East and West turns out to be significantly larger: in 2017, Chinese and Russian economic outputs per person accounted respectively for 30 and 47 percent of the US level.[9]

As the relative economic backwardness is incommensurate with geopolitical ambitions of the emerging powers, while due to the foregoing factors the prospects of narrowing their economic gap with respect to the advanced economies look ambiguous, the Chinese and Russian policymakers are seeking to make up for these deficiencies by re-energizing their efforts in traditional domains of power, and in the first run in their military build-up. While in 2006–2015 in all major Western powers' military expenditures contracted (by −3.9 in the United States, −7.2 in the United Kingdom, and −5.9 in France), Russian and Chinese military budgets increased respectively by 91 and 132 percent.[10] Seen as ominous signs of resurgence fraught with risks of military conflict, these attempts are poised to further intensify competition for power and influence between the United States and its Western allies on the one hand, and the resurgent powers of Eurasia, on the other, while prompting scholars and policymakers alike to become even more obsessed with inferences about the scenarios

of impending power transition ranging from Armageddonic to less cata-strophic to relatively non-conflictual to predominantly peaceful ones.

Small wonder that under these conditions the prospects of China, the principal contender of the current leader, the United States, for universal primacy, fall in the loom light of global attention. An explicable obsession in Washington and other Western capitals with the propensity of China's supremacy should not, however, distract scholarly reflection from examining—in parallel to the shifts that are taking place in the distribution of comprehensive power around the globe—those that are evolving in the structure of power *per se*, for example, concerning the correlation between its tangible and intangible components.

2   Government Efficiency

An unprecedented scope and depth of challenges modern governments have to deal with at home and abroad demand especially high levels of competence, accountability, and transparency on the part of public ser-vants and institutions. An efficient government should be able not only to anticipate the most pressing issues but also respond to them in the most optimal, cost-efficient, and socially responsible ways. Understandably, national governments vary significantly in terms of their efficacy not in the least because they possess unequal human, financial, and technological resources and administrative skills that underpin their decision-making and policy implementation capacities. To estimate and compare efficiency of national governments, one can explore the Government Efficiency Index (GEI) in *The Global Competitiveness Index dataset* created by the World Economic Forum. The Index includes such variables as efficiency of government spending, burden of government regulation, efficiency of legal framework in settling disputes, efficiency of legal framework in chal-lenging regulations, and transparency of government policymaking.[11] As Table 3.2 shows, except for the United States that moved from the 35th place in 2007–2008 GEI to the fifth place in the 2017–2018 GEI, none of other conspicuous states succeeded in making it to the list of the world's top ten most efficient governments. In the same period, some countries, like Russia, China, India,—though still far from reaching the best stan-dards of governmental efficiency—nevertheless managed to significantly improve their standings. In the meantime, UK, Japanese, and German governments also proved to be successful in this regard, whereas efficiency of the Mexican, French, and Brazilian governments noticeably declined.

Table 3.2   Government Efficiency of Major Powers (2007–2008 and 2017–2018)

Country/Year	2007–2008		2017–2018		2007–2017
	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Change in ranking
Germany	16	4.766	11	5.202	+5
Republic of Korea	20	4.595	66	3.510	−46
Japan	24	4.473	21	4.599	+3
United Kingdom	26	4.451	15	4.860	+11
United States	35	4.204	5	5.392	+30
France	38	4.151	48	3.829	−10
India	45	3.937	24	4.414	+21
China	57	3.646	26	4.328	+31
Mexico	88	3.243	108	2.882	−20
Russian Federation	118	2.799	67	3.485	+51
Brazil	125	2.487	132	2.421	−7

Source: World Economic Forum, *The Global Competitiveness Index dataset.*

An ability of states to purposefully increase their power and influence beyond national frontiers is strongly connected to their efficiency in mobilization of national resources. The latter is analyzed in a set of concepts, such as "political capacity" and "political performance." The former is outlined in Jacek Kugler's and William Donke's proposal to include a new gross national product (GNP)-based variable in power measurement to account for the phenomenon of materially weaker nations being victorious in military conflicts with stronger foes. Defined as a *Relative Political Capacity*, this variable calculated government ability to mobilize nation's resources to the ends of winning an existential conflict.[12]

Novel, as it was in calculating national power, this approach suffered from a significant flaw by lacking predictability value. Indeed, while it was possible to calculate national power of the warring sides in past conflicts, calculating extractive power capacity of individual governments in case of future potentially lethal standoffs was untenable. Above all, by measuring political capacity through monetary categories, the method ignored non-economic variables, such as degrees of elite and societal determination, moral and national resilience, as well as such intangibles as organizational skills of civil and military establishments.

The concept of *political performance*, put forward in a volume edited by Jacek Kugler and Ronald L. Tammen, elaborates further the idea of

political efficiency. While "[p]olitical performance does not reflect economic success, regime characteristics, or political values embraced by a government," it accentuates "the ability of governments to *reach* their populations, to *extract* economic resources from population, and to *allocate* these resources to secure the long-term survival of the political structure [emphasis added]."[13] It would be correct though to surmise that such an ability is proportionate to the degrees of power centralization and political control by the state authorities which tend to be substantially stronger in authoritative and totalitarian political entities in comparison with liberal democracies. More than anything such an ability in illiberal regimes depends upon personal characteristics of predominant leaders, and in fact communicates the measures of their Machiavellian skills, brutality, and obsessive determination in pursuing personal goals. While this ability certainly does add up to credibility of the nation's composite power, the former is not a sufficient element to ensure preponderance in the state's relations with foreign agencies, and needs to be supplemented by other intangible as well as tangible power components.

3   Global Creativity and Innovation

With technological progress rapidly transforming the economic and military underpinnings of national capabilities in the new century, a number of attempts have been made to elaborate unorthodox criteria by which one could determine the winners and losers in the unfolding industrial revolution, while simultaneously tracking the pertinent global trends and dynamics. Two endeavors—one by Martin Prosperity Institute, and another a joint project by Cornell University, INSEAD, and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)—present a particular interest in this regard.

Based on Richard Florida's scholarship on the role of the creative class in economic development,[14] the concept underlying the Global Creativity Index (GCI) by the Martin Prosperity Institute stems from an idea that the global economic superiority in the future will be determined not only by nations' ability to generate innovation but no less importantly by their capacities to attract and retain talent.[15] To produce a composite GCI, its authors evaluate three variables—technology, talent, and tolerance.[16] These variables, in turn, are estimated on the basis of sub-variables: for example, to assess the Technology Index they measure Global R&D Investment, Global Researchers, and Global Innovation. The Talent Index

incorporates data on human capital and Creative Class population, and the Tolerance Index combines data on Tolerance toward ethnic and racial minorities and Tolerance toward gays and lesbians.[17]

If the universal perceptions of power were based on the values emphasized by GCI authors, such as openness, tolerance, and happiness, not every nation from the group of the commonly acknowledged great powers would be able to preserve their preponderance: for instance, the top ten 2015 GCI positions—with the exception of the United States ranking second—did not include any other major power; the United Kingdom ranked 12th, France—16th, Russia—38th, and China—62nd. Although these powers scored better in some individual components of the GCI, in the final analysis they were lagging behind such nations as Australia (ranked first), New Zealand (third), followed by Canada, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Iceland, Singapore, and the Netherlands.[18]

Notably, since its inception in 2004, the methodology and scope of GCI have been in progress, and by 2015 the number of countries under the model's scrutiny has increased from 15 to 139. Although due to this fact placing major powers into a long-term comparative perspective is not feasible, the available GCI rankings not only enable pundits to look at the methodology used to evaluate global supremacy from an unorthodox perspective, but also draw the attention of decision makers in the concerned nations to the best practices of fostering ingenuity and the need to adjust their policies accordingly.

Along with creativity, innovation presents another core driver of national capability enhancement. The Global Innovation Index (GII), initiated by Soumitra Dutta of INSEAD in 2007, enables to estimate national innovative performance and put it in comparative and time perspectives. The GII 2017 includes seven pillars, five of which (institutions and policies, human capacity and research, infrastructure, market sophistication, and business sophistication) assess input conditions for innovation, and two others (knowledge and technology outputs, and creative output) measure their results.

While between 2007 and 2017, the GII's authors introduced some changes in index methodology, their reports for this period do enable to identify some trends and shifts in the global distribution of innovative capacity. Thus, according to the model's findings, in 2007–2017, GII ranks of all major economies except for China, Russia, and South Korea have relatively deteriorated. The decline was particularly significant in the cases of India, Brazil, and Mexico. Whereas all principal Western powers lost their initial

positions, their decline has been unequal: some of them—the United States and the United Kingdom—have ultimately managed to remain in the top five, while others—Germany, Japan and France—through the major part of the decade have stayed behind the top ten. Yet, by the end of the second decade of this century, the major Western economies in general continued to demonstrate notable superiority in terms of innovation capacity over their peers; according to the GII 2017, even China that has continuously led the group of the emerging economies remains to be ranked significantly lower than the leading Western innovators (see Table 3.3).

In the meantime, an analysis of the available data on the dynamics of applications for intellectual property (IP) rights reveals a substantially different picture of the global creativity and innovation leadership. Thus, according to WIPO, while the United States and Japan still have the largest numbers of patents in force, the patent application activity in the twenty-first century has been conspicuously shifting to China,[19] away from the traditional centers of technological advancement. In 2005–2015, for example, US share in global applications for patents decreased by 11 percent, Russia's—by more than 16 percent, Germany's—by 35 percent, France's—almost by 45 percent, the United Kingdom's—by 52 percent, and Japan's—by 56 percent. In the same period, China's share increased more than 3.7 times, placing her in 2015 ahead of the United States, Japan, South Korea, and the European states (see Table 3.4).

Among the most important developments in the creativity realm in this century, the progress in Artificial Intelligence (AI) is posited to ensue as a genuine game changer. AI is widely believed to be able to affect every facet of human life on the planet in the future, and gaining a competitive edge in the development and application of "super intelligence" is becoming a priority task for national governments and business alike. While the United States has so far been recognized as the global leader in the realm of AI, other technologically advanced powers, and especially China, are doubling their efforts in this highly promising field of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

As every risky and novel technology, artificial intelligence necessitates substantial investments in its R&D, and state support to scientists and entrepreneurs in this regard can prove to be of critical importance. Judging by the impressive financial resources the Chinese government plans to invest in AI R&D, advancement of the latter has become its top strategic priority. The goal is to turn China into the "world's major artificial intelligence innovation center" by 2030, while using "two-way conversion

Table 3.3 Major Powers in Global Innovation Index Rankings (2007–2017)

Country/Year	GII Rankings										GII 2007–2017 Change in ranking
	2007	2008/09	2009/10	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	
United States	1	1	11	7	10	5	6	5	4	4	−3
Germany	2	2	16	12	15	15	13	12	10	9	−7
United Kingdom	3	4	14	10	5	3	2	2	3	5	−2
Japan	4	9	13	20	25	22	21	19	16	14	−10
France	5	19	22	22	24	20	22	21	18	15	−10
Republic of Korea	19	6	20	16	21	18	16	14	11	11	+8
India	23	41	56	62	64	66	76	81	66	60	−37
China	29	37	43	29	34	35	29	29	25	22	+7
Mexico	37	61	69	81	79	63	66	57	61	58	−21
Brazil	40	50	68	47	58	64	61	70	69	69	−29
Russian Federation	54	68	64	56	51	62	49	48	43	45	+9

Note: GII—The Global Innovation Index. The GII 2007 and GII 2017 covered 107 and 127 economies respectively.

Source: Cornell University, INSEAD, and WIPO (2017): The Global Innovation Index 2017: Innovation Feeding the World, Ithaca, Fontainebleau, and Geneva; ranking data for 2007–2016 from the Global Innovation Index reports for the respective years, available at https://www.globalinnovationindex. org/about-gii#reports.

Table 3.4 Patent Applications for the Top 12 Offices (2005 and 2015)

Office/Year	2005			2015		
	Rank	Number of applications	World share (%)	Rank	Number of applications	World share (%)
Japan	1	427,078	25.08	3	318,721	11.0
United States	2	390,733	22.95	2	589,410	20.4
China	3	173,327	10.18	1	1,101,864	38.16
Republic of Korea	4	160,921	9.45	4	213,694	7.40
European Patent Office	5	128,713	7.56	5	160,028	5.54
Germany	6	60,222	3.53	6	66,893	2.31
Russian Federation	7	32,253	1.89	8	45,517	1.58
United Kingdom	8	27,988	1.64	10	22,801	0.79
India	9	24,382	1.43	7	45,658	1.58
Brazil	10	18,498	1.09	9	30,219	1.05
France	11	17,275	1.01	12	16,300	0.56
Mexico	12	14,435	0.84	11	18,071	0.63
World total		1,702,800	100.00		2,887,300	100.00

Note: Data for China does not include Hong Kong.

Source: WIPO statistics database. Last updated: February 2017; author's calculations using the WIPO statistics database.

application" of AI technology as a simultaneous booster of civilian and military sectors.[20]

Diffusion of AI in economy could have a revolutionizing impact on growth and productivity. According to Accenture, turning AI into a factor of production could, by 2035, increase economic output in China and the United States by 21 and 26 percent accordingly,[21] double annual growth rates of gross value added (GVA) in Western European economies, triple Japan's, and boost labor productivity by 20–35 percent in France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States.[22] With AI technologies rapidly transforming not only the economic but also the military component of power, unfolding of a global AI arms race in the upcoming years looks inevitable. Although China and Russia have used to be seen as the major challengers to US supremacy in AI-based weaponry systems, dissemination of respective technologies (e.g., drones, hacking technolo-

gies, and image-faking programs) could also significantly propel offensive capabilities of smaller states like Iran and North Korea as well as nongovernmental actors including terrorist groups and organizations.

Another revolutionary realm of creativity is quantum computing (QC). While cryptography, chemistry, and creation of new materials have so far been considered the primary beneficiaries of QC technologies, one can conceive strategy and security among other fields of its potential application in the future. Consider that governments possessing superiority in the speed and optimality of their decisions in crisis and other complex situations as well as in their ordinary activities could always outperform their adversaries and endure unprecedented supremacy in the levels of their global authority and influence. Most importantly, they could direct these extraordinary technologies to generating common good in the interests of global society. While the United States has been leading in the global race in QC R&D, China, experiencing a boom in state-sponsored investment in quantum and other digital technologies, is rapidly emerging as a new world leader in these fields.[23]

One can suggest that the individual economic and military positions of the major powers in the global system of international relations in the upcoming years will increasingly depend upon success of their governments in adjusting policy to the needs of academia and industry in the development and commercialization of AI and QC technologies. Once again, like in the case of the Soviet "Sputnik," a powerful authoritarian state possessing a comparatively higher degree of mobilizing and extractive capacity than a democratic and liberal government might demonstrate a remarkable persistence in seeking to outpace its Western peers in the development of dual-use technologies. To safeguard their superiority in advanced technologies in the next decades, the United States and other Western nations would have to undertake a wide multilateral initiative aimed at pooling their resources and strengthening their partnership in the critical domains of creativity and innovation.

4   Soft Primacy

As the foregoing indexes assess comparatively narrow parameters of intangible power, in order to judge about the latter in a comprehensive way, one may wish to refer to *The Soft Power 30* (*SP-30*) produced by Portland, a strategic communications consultancy. This index, built on Nye's concept of soft power, is based on assessments of national performance in six categories—government, engagement, culture, education, enterprise, and

digital. More specifically, enterprise index, for example, measured attractiveness of business environment, level of competitiveness, capacity for innovation, and workforce quality. Indexes for digital influence reflected upon such metrics as the use of Facebook and other social media by government officials to interactively connect with foreign audiences, usage of Internet by local population, as well as the advancement of information technologies. Government index addressed the maturity of democratic institutions, levels of political freedom, protection of human rights, and considered national scores on Human Development Index (HDI). Engagement metrics assessed the depth and scope of country's diplomatic visibility and its participation in resolution of global issues like climate change and aid to the developing nations. Culture index captured a country's appeal for international tourists, number of films appearing in major film festivals, national language influence in the world, accomplishments of national sport teams in the Olympics, and number of UNESCO world heritage sites. Education index evaluated the national reputation for the level of education by considering the number of international students in national universities, spending on education in GDP, and the impact of national academic communities on producing and disseminating knowledge worldwide. As Portland's Director for Branding and Global Engagement Jonathan McClory, who authored *SP-30*, has noted, it is along these lines that one should evaluate "[t]he ability of a country to engage with and attract global audiences [which] has never been so critical to prosperity, security, and international influence."[24] According to Portland's report, as of 2016, in terms of the composite soft power the major Western powers—the United States, Britain, and France—together with Germany, Canada, and Australia occupied the leading positions in *SP-30*, whereas Russia ranked –27th and China 30th.[25]

The study attributes the soft primacy of the Western nations to their particular strengths in the realm of higher education that brings in students from all parts of the world, as well as to their superiority as of the most technologically advanced societies in using digital diplomacy to popularize and propagate their national values, images, and policy actions. Although the leading non-Western powers have been making some progress in elaborating soft means of power in the recent years, such as electronic mass media, they, despite their relatively high scores in diplomatic representation (Russia) and culture (China),[26] are still a long way to go in terms of their soft power rankings.

5   Brands of National Images

The psychological need in boosting self-confidence demands the search for acknowledgment and respect that serve as moral rewards to social power. In the realm of foreign policy, maximization of social power results in the development of the states' "brands" conducive to expanding their shares on the universal market of social influence. Drawing on a recent study on "brand social power," defined as "the ability of a brand to influence the behavior of consumers," we can build an analogous model of a great power brand's impact on the conduct of other states that can be identified as addressees of its brand-promoting policy.[27] Note that while social power may be relative, the number of its consumers is finite; hence, fierce competition among its producers for social influence and domination. Additionally, brands serve as signals to communicate information about social power's credibility to consumers. Insofar as "at the heart of brands as signals is brand credibility,"[28] they serve as benchmarks of social power for brand power consumers in making judgments about the authenticity of claims by the producers of social power brands.

We can, for instance, posit the US brand as that of a "democracy promoter" and a "global securitizer," Russia's as an "energy superpower," and China's as the world's "manufacturing hub." But what unites the above-mentioned states is their *great power brand*. The great power brand prompts them to compete in the global market of social power. Such a competition can take different forms, for example, ideological rivalry, technological contest, and arms race were the major realms of the systemic power struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Interestingly, in the twenty-first century, Russia, having lost the global battle for social power, attempted to make up for her alleged humiliation by the renewed contest with the West for geopolitical domination in Eurasia, and restore her image of a great power by flexing her military muscles.

Although confronting the United States and its NATO allies may be seen by Russian leaders as a core tool for strengthening their power at home, it does not necessarily make Russia or any other country for that matter more popular internationally. Moreover, as some scholars suggest, the end of the Cold War has unveiled the need to rebuff the old constructs of power understood primarily as force, and decisively replace them with alternative narratives underpinned by such notions as social advancement, global appeal, and benevolence. Considering nation image as a "brand," the Anholt-GfK Roper

Nation Brands Index[SM] (NBI[SM]), created by Simon Anholt, attempts, for instance, to evaluate the international appeal of individual countries. Unlike indexes compiled on the basis of expert appraisals, the NBI is based on collection, processing, and examination of public perceptions in 20 states regarding 50 nations including their own.[29] The perceived variables include domestic and foreign policy, cultural and tourism attractiveness, people friendliness, business performance, and external economic activities as well as local conditions for immigrants and investment.[30]

Note that while the NBI allows to rank nations in accordance with their images as perceived by others, its primary objective is to emphasize the impact of nation brands on their well-being[31]: the weaker a nation's reputation, the meager are its chances to draw investments, human capital, and tourists as well as promote its goods and investment abroad. Contrarily, the stronger a country's image, the larger are economic gains for its domestic business and opportunities for its external commercial impact.[32] To these ends, Anholt underscores the importance of working out a strategy aimed at creating an appealing national image by streamlining state's symbolic actions at both domestic and international levels in the desired direction.[33] One can reasonably extend objectives of such a strategy beyond the realms of business and trade, and conceive it as a novel instrument in decreasing the levels of hostility toward the self, an ingenious means to strengthen national security, and a useful device in enhancing the nation's global political influence.

By analyzing the NBI dynamics, one can notice that despite the ongoing relative decline in hard power capabilities, Western powers are perceived in the respondent countries as the major holders of soft power. However, one should also keep in mind that since these findings derive from the surveys conducted in just two dozen of countries while leaving opinions of the rest in the international community unrepresented, they cannot be considered truly reliable. Besides, the inconstant numbers of respondents and countries engaged in the surveys do not allow to make trustworthy conclusions with respect to the changes in the NBI pecking order.

Nevertheless, as an actively popularized attempt to assess national standing in an unorthodox perspective, the NBI can be conceived not only as a novel tool in drawing attention of the national governments to the validity of maintaining appealing international reputations, but, above all, as an intelligent device in promoting what can be described as a Kantian perspective of power (the latter defined as an ability to generate and extend

common good). This perspective, as a keenly communicated social construct, can be seen instrumental in the United States and Western Europe to the ends of retaining images of their global primacy while moderating images of their tangible fading.

6   SHAPING PERCEPTIONS

Statecraft's ability to shape perceptions of the important others on the notion of power in line with its political objectives should be conceived as an underlying factor of universal power construct. Indeed, what matters more in the twenty-first century—military or civil components of power? Clearly, the states inferior to their peers in quality of education, as well as the levels of business and social attractiveness but still preserving a competitive edge in the strength of their armed forces, would seek to confine universal perceptions of primacy to the images of military superiority. Note that positions of major powers in world rankings of military strength significantly differ from their places in global ratings of composite power. For example, in the Global Firepower (GFP) list of the world's strongest militaries in the world Russia ranks second in terms of her conventional land, air, and sea military capabilities even without considering her vast arsenal of tactical and strategic nuclear weapons. The power index used by GFP measures national cumulative conventional fighting power while taking into account productive capability of its war-time industry, oil reserves, production and consumption, logistics, manpower, and so on along with the size of its land, air, and naval forces. Above all, as GFP experts emphasize, "a massive modernization and procurement program, as well as military action against neighboring Ukraine, has reinstalled Russian prominence in the region."[34] If military capability presents the sole remaining basis of Russia's great power status, it would be reasonable to assume that her authorities would seek to persuade others that fighting capacity is the only genuine criterion of national power. If this assumption is correct, then Putin's intervention in Syria can be seen as a consistent manifestation of this logic.

Contrarily, ratings compiled by official US organizations seek to depict national power so that while acknowledging the magnitude of national military potentials in power balances they accentuate the role of those non-military components in which the United States has apparent comparative advantages over other major powers, and which in conjuncture with the military indices present a different picture of world power distribution. These include, for example, the notion of leadership understood as America's

global institutionalizing capacity and ability to endure her universal primacy and authority in shaping and maintaining the world order, for example, by preventing and managing international crises, as well as influence the fundamental economic, social, and political processes in different parts of the world. It also includes guidance by example, stemming from the global drawing power of her national lifestyle and model of political and economic organization able to inspire other nations to comply with pertinent international rules and introduce similar mechanisms of good governance at the local level. This, otherwise strenuous, task is compounded by the growing array of paramount challenges both from within and from without—challenges whose totality and gravity risk distracting the federal government's strategic focus, overburden financial, political, and spiritual resources of the nation, and ultimately plunge her into isolationism and moral dismay, while subjecting the society to the crisis of identity and purpose. Internally, these challenges arise from the innate deficiencies of social-economic model that fails to create enough jobs, generate wealth at appropriate speed, and distribute it in fair proportionality; inadequacy of the presidential system of government against the backdrop of fierce partisan divide in Congress; and rapid changes in the racial and generational composition of the population which are fraught with risks to undermine its "civil religion." Externally, it is complicated not only by the rise of anti-American and anti-globalization forces that view the idea of US leadership as a smoke screen for imperialist expansionism, but also by the emergence of alternative models to streamline political and economic development, embodied, for instance, by the narrative of "Beijing consensus." To create a new perception of power that would transcend its material ingredients, such as GDP and military spending, in which the relative positions of the developed world including the United States have been conspicuously declining, an updated index of global power by the National Intelligence Council (NIC), for instance, refocuses it on the variables that account for the comparative levels of human development including health and education as well as governing efficiency. The new index presents a different picture of the future power distribution: in 2030, the United States could maintain its supremacy over China, while the EU's relative decline slows down.[35]

Interestingly, NIC experts found that material power (capability) may frequently not be translated into diplomatic power (influence), and the latter may sometimes exceed the former as is the case with several West European countries, such as the United Kingdom, France, Denmark, Spain, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany.[36] Whatever accurate global

power rankings might seem to their authors, they often are misleading for they tend to overlook the underlying feature of power—an ability to impose one's will on the others, which in its turn presumes independence in decision-making. For example, in NIC power rankings Japan and South Korea occupy top spots that primarily reflect their economic and technological standings. These ratings can give an impression that highly competitive national economies enable Tokyo and Seoul to project strong political influence in the world. In reality, however, these countries due to their precarious geopolitical standing and deformed history are substantially dependent in their policy conduct on the United States. To be sure, this dependency makes them safer and in some situations even more influential than they objectively are with respect to their neighbors such as China, Russia, and North Korea. But this is due to the structure of regional geopolitics rather than because of their indigenous material wealth. Likewise, India's political class is locked in their region-focused strategic perceptions determined by their security concerns over relations with Pakistan and China, whereas despite the nation's impressive demographic and economic parameters the historical legacy of her colonial past appears to be infringing on her capability and willingness to exercise influence on a global scale.

7   PROJECTING POWER INTO THE FUTURE

As it has been pointed out earlier, in defining the key determinants of national power, realists have traditionally attributed an overarching importance to military strength and other material factors. From this analytical perspective, the United States does not have chances to maintain its supremacy as the world's strongest power. Confined to tangibles, such as population, economic output, technological capability (measured as GDP per capita), government size, military expenditures, and conventional and nuclear power, the Hillebrand Herman Power index, in its projections of global power distribution computed on the basis of the in-house formula elaborated by the Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures (IFs) at the University of Denver, places China in front of the United States as early as 2023.[37] Although conspicuously weaker than China in terms of material power, by 2030 the United States is projected to remain substantially stronger than the rest of major powers including India, Japan, Russia, Brazil, Britain, and France (see Table 3.5).

Tangibles-based evaluations and projections support the thesis that the United States and other major Western powers plus Russia have been and

Table 3.5 Dynamics of Global Power Distribution (IFs Power Index, 1960–2030)

Country/Year	China	United States	India	Japan	Russia	Germany	Brazil	United Kingdom	France
1960	6.66	22.85	5.205	3.051	14.71	6.177	1.64	5.166	4.954
1965	6.301	22.1	5.153	3.633	14.82	5.303	1.71	4.097	4.766
1970	6.855	21.5	5.101	4.244	14.32	4.986	1.815	3.626	4.474
1975	7.227	18.34	5.125	4.455	13.91	4.906	2.207	3.261	4.335
1980	7.094	18.09	5.201	4.568	13.51	4.789	2.377	3.111	4.328
1985	7.13	19.37	5.445	5.017	13.33	4.369	2.263	2.964	4.013
1990	7.408	19.38	5.69	5.399	12.64	4.179	3.317	2.839	3.946
1995	8.335	22.15	6.15	5.818	3.192	4.184	2.812	3.283	4.469
2000	9.46	21.86	6.613	5.296	2.848	3.894	2.696	2.914	4.141
2005	10.7	23.58	6.941	4.713	3.077	3.284	2.483	2.821	3.106
2010	12.78	22.43	7.531	4.091	3.087	2.998	2.59	2.493	2.654
2015	14.61	19.29	8.123	3.511	3.41	2.755	2.506	2.299	2.402
2020	16.47	18.02	8.873	3.094	2.968	2.645	2.265	2.224	2.219
2025	18.42	16.23	9.492	2.789	2.642	2.428	2.17	2.147	2.063
2030	20.06	14.87	10.25	2.551	2.347	2.167	2.072	2.048	1.922

Note: IFs Power Index shows Hillebrand Herman percent of the global total power.

Source: International Futures (IFs) modeling system, Version 7.26. Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures, Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver, Denver, CO, available at https://www.ifs.du.edu.

would continue to be in the state of perpetual relative power fall: by 2030 in comparison with 1960 the United States is projected to lose 35 percent of its relative power weight, at the same time France's and Britain's relative power magnitudes could each fall 2.5 times, while Russia's relative clout could shrink 6.3 times. Contrarily, in this timeframe, India's and China's relative power weights could increase respectively two and three times.[38]

But is this picture accurate? Probably not, suggests a growing number of those who disagree that tangibles continue to constitute the most accurate hallmarks of power in the modern age. According, for example, to an econometric model by Emilio Casetti, the shrinking of the relative importance of the military components to national power has become the prevailing long-term trend in 1820–2000 timeframe. In the future, his study predicts, the relative significance of military strength in the composite indexes of power will continue to decline, while the comparative significance of economic components of power is bound to rise so that by the end of this century both of them are projected to reach parity.[39]

Noteworthy, a more nuanced IFs model, applied, for instance, by US intelligence analysts to project world power distribution by 2030, encompasses 11 variables: Internet/communication technologies; research and development; government revenue; human capital; international assistance; foreign direct investments; trade; nuclear weapons; GDP in PPP; military spending; and energy. The picture it presents looks quite different from the one above. With the intangible variables considered, it projects that by 2030 the United States could sustain its overall primacy, while preserving preponderance in information technologies, research and development, government revenue, foreign direct investments, international assistance, and military spending. China, ranking second, could dominate in terms of her shares in the global output (in PPP) and human capital. She could be followed by India, Japan, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Russia. These countries—with their aggregated shares ranging from 7.6 percent (India) to 5 percent (Japan) to 3.7 percent (the United Kingdom) to about 3 percent (France, Germany, and Russia each)—could be significantly falling behind America (about 19.3 percent) and China (15 percent).[40]

Inclusion of the soft power elements in the power formula leads, therefore, to conspicuous changes in power distribution: it results in increasing the relative clouts of the Western democracies. Japan, and Russia, while decreasing China's and India's. Thus, intangibles add up about 30 percent of the relative power to the United States, 38 percent to Germany, 50 percent to France, 80 percent to Britain, double that of Japan, and enhance

Russia's by 28 percent. At the same time, China and India—with relatively smaller soft power assets in comparison with their more developed peers—are likely to be substantially weaker (by 34 and 36 percent respectively) than when their power is measured exclusively in terms of the tangibles.[41] Comparison of the two models projecting future distribution of global power reveals, therefore, that in terms of relative power, intangibles of a materially descending developed nation contain a substantial potential to make up for a relative diminution of her tangible assets.

8   Single-Variable Versus Multi-Variable Models of Power

While the models applied to measure national power have become increasingly sophisticated in the last decades, they have not overcome the intrinsic fallacy of their common approach, that is, computing an abstract category on the basis of concrete parameters. Power, one may reasonably suggest, is too complex and fluid property for any mathematical model to accurately quantify it. This said, one can, of course, calculate relative shares of GDP and military expenditures, count the number of diplomatic missions and contacts with foreign authorities as well as other statistically available variables, but is it possible to synthesize them in a precise power index? Some analytics prefer to resolve the issue by assigning certain weights to different variables; however, the resultant indexes would fail to produce objective pictures of power distribution because their priorities and respective methodologies are inescapably subjective. Above all, even the most advanced multi-variable indexes of composite power are unable to assess its major property—an ability to purposefully cause structural change. As Allan Millett and Williamson Murray noted in their analysis of pros and cons of net assessment, models based on statistical data are inherently reductionist for they exclude variables that are not subject to computation. The resulting picture, therefore, tends to be misleading. To overcome this deficiency, they suggest applying various cognitive methods even at the cost of their "imprecision" and "lack of empiricism."[42] In evaluating relative power distribution and forecasting its dynamics, the real challenge, therefore, is in finding a workable synthesis between empiricism and inference.

Noteworthy, as some scholars argue, there is no substantial difference between single-variable-based and multifactor-based indexes of power in terms of their utility. As Richard Merritt and Dina Zinnes have remarked, the difference in the outcomes is a function of information at hand rather

than methods applied whatever sophisticated they might be.[43] Furthermore, they reasonably argue that the criteria of power index utility are different for theoreticians and foreign policy managers. Researchers choose indexes that correspond to their paradigmatic preferences, whereas for decision makers "the key issues are parsimony in the selection of variables, stability over time, combinatorial patterns enabling successful prediction, and applicability across a range of situations."[44] If one takes these remarks into account, it would then be reasonable to assume that the best index meeting these criteria, while securing stability and parsimony of power measurement, would be a national share in world output (e.g., GDP or GNP). This approach is congenial with those employed by such scholars as A.F.K. Organski, Klaus Knorr, Kingsley Davis, Charles Hitch, and Roland McKean.[45] Moreover, for the purposes of this scholarship, it makes sense to identify GDP as the only aggregated variable that can capture the dynamics of power change through long periods of time in the absence of statistical data on additional power variables, such as the size of the armed forces and military expenditure. Notably, as it has been demonstrated by the foregoing study, any multi-variable power index would have hardly changed the overall picture of the long-term global power dynamics in comparison with this single-variable indicator. Most importantly, tracking the fluctuations of national GDP shares in world output allows us to capture the long-term upward or downward trends in the relative development of national power. It would, however, be hardly sensible to completely rely on any—composite or single—indices of such vexed property as power, and, perhaps, the only reasonable way to judge about power ranks or relative power of states is by inference. "Any evaluative system will have to recognize that there are important components that cannot adequately be measured," suggests director of the Center for Foreign Policy Studies at the Heritage Foundation James Carafano, "and everything that can be measured may not be vital to decision makers."[46] This is why propagation of credible power images has become an overarching task of policymakers since the first nuclear age when simultaneous possession of nuclear weaponry by the principal nations made an ultimate test of power preponderance—war—among them impracticable.

9   THE GLOBAL INFLUENCE SCORE

At the bottom line, there is only one genuine criterion to measure power—that is to determine the influence of an actor on the course of international events, and to evaluate its impact on shaping or changing the key world

developments as well as the behavior of the relevant others in the desired way. If for example, the aim of Bin Laden's bombings of the World Trade Center (WTC) in September 2001 was to drag America in the war of attrition, then the United States by intervening in Afghanistan and waging the financially costly decade-long war there acted as was planned by the plot organizers, and de facto submitted to the will of the otherwise disproportionally weaker enemy. From this point of view, the best test for one's power credibility is in checking how seriously one is perceived by the important others. If the US officials define Russia's and China's comportments as America's most important security concerns, it means that they recognize their power as credible disregarding the moral characteristics or emotional color that such power might be attributed to.

The aforementioned indexes—tangibles, non-tangibles, and composite ones—reflect the growing interest of the academic and policymaking communities to understand how individual nations stand in power distribution at the dyadic, regional, and global levels. Whether assessing military strength, creativity, or comprehensive national strengths they, however, tend to capture snapshots of power as *capability* rather than *influence*, and are, therefore, hardly suitable for the purposes of determining how individual nations *matter*. To make up for this deficiency, it is worthwhile to elaborate an index that would estimate global influence of various actors. With respect to the principal powers that constitute the object of our analysis one should, hence, define the major realms of their international imprint. The core criterion of distinguishing the most relevant milieus of an agency's influence from numerous others is that their transformations as the result of such influence can lead to qualitative changes in the international system.

The *Global Influence Score (GIS)* I introduce here incorporates the following nine variables that most likely fit these criteria: global security impact; global institutionalizing effect; global mitigation and adaptation impact with respect to climate change and global warming; world technological development impact; world trade impact, global investment impact; international gravity impact; universal cultural influence; universal impact of agency's social model. Unlike the majority of indexes that measure quantitative parameters of power capabilities, the GIS is aimed at reflecting the depth and breadth of actors' technological, security, commercial, social, environmental and cultural influence on the substance and dynamics of the global system, and thus is closer to construing the salience of individual agencies from a structural standpoint. This is not to say, of course, that all major changes in these realms are happening exclusively under the impact

of individual actors or that structural alternations there can be confined to such an impact. But these areas are distinctly those where the impact of the pertinent actors is felt most conspicuously. Affecting these spheres explicitly as well as implicitly, certain agencies much more profoundly than their peers shape the international environment in which other actors have to operate, and thus subject the latter's behavior to structural patterns that they are unlikely to avoid. Accordingly, the GIS allows to see the picture of the world leadership in a new light (Table 3.6).

Evaluating the EU's influence presents certain methodological difficulties: as a *sui generis* actor, it definitely occupies an autonomous place in the international system, while its influence can be seen as a function of synergy between its institutions and member-states. To determine the Union's leverage, one may be tempted to summarize the relevant scores of its participants. This, however, would be erroneous as an organization's influence cannot be similar to the arithmetic sum of those by its individual members. Indeed, as an actor in its own right, the EU can exercise more or less sectoral influence than any of its individual members depending on the degree of Europe's coherence in the given realm. At the same time, as in the case of nation-states, each variable evaluated with respect to the EU

Table 3.6   The Global Influence Score (GIS)

Rank	Agency/ Indicator	GSI	GIE	GMAI	WTDI	WTI	GII	IGI	UCI	UISM	Total score
1	European Union	6	9	10	8	10	10	9	10	9	81
2	United States	10	9	6	10	10	9	9	10	7	80
3	China	6	4	6	5	10	8	6	5	2	53
4	United Kingdom	5	5	3	7	7	8	4	8	4	51
5	Germany	2	3	5	6	9	6	4	4	5	48
6	France	5	5	3	6	6	5	4	7	4	45
7	Japan	2	1	3	6	7	7	3	2	1	32
8	Russia	6	2	1	3	3	2	3	3	1	24
9	India	2	2	2	2	4	3	3	4	1	23
10	Brazil	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	13

Notes: *GSI*-global security impact, *GIE*-global institutionalizing effect, *GMAI*-global mitigation and adaptation impact with respect to climate change and global warming, *WTDI*-world technological development impact, *WTI*-world trade impact, *GII*-global investment impact, *IGI*-international gravity impact, *UCI*-universal cultural influence, *UISM*-universal impact of agency's social model. Measurements are on the scale of 0–10.

Source: Created by the author.

should be measured within a 10-point range. All this considered, the EU, its numerous internal issues notwithstanding, appears to have evolved as the world's most influential force. While lagging behind the United States in its global securitizing clout, the EU is noticeably ahead in terms of its impact on global adaptation and mitigation as well as the international relevance of its social model.

10   Primacy and Gusto

While quantification of national power of the contemporary strong states presents a challenging task, measuring primacy through long historical periods is particularly intricate. What presents the most difficult challenge in the case of the former is not so much conception of power components as determination of their specific shares in the aggregate power index. For example, in the absence of objective criteria in evaluating the weight of soft power variables relative to hard power components, the task of comparing national power between, say, the United States and France turns into a highly subjective intellectual exercise. It is *a priori* conceivable that the United States is stronger than France given its sheer economic size, population, and military might. But these are not the only components of composite power, and one can reasonably assume that inclusion of nontangible power such as diplomatic ability, cultural appeal, and other widely recognized soft power benchmarks of France should make her stronger than exclusively hard power indicators would suggest. But the question is: how much stronger? The problem is that there is no universal consensus on the validity of soft power factors, particularly in the rapidly changing international environment; it is hardly surprising that for some analysts the weight of soft components in the total power index would be relatively bigger than for others. How can one then measure a nation's ability to make use of her tangible resources? Or determine the degree of the political will by her leadership? Was France under President de Gaulle's leadership relatively more or less powerful than France under President Hollande? How would they both stand in comparison with the United States and other great powers in a power dynamics perspective? The present literature gives controversial answers to these questions. Moreover, as the former high-ranking CIA official, later the former Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in US Department of State and the author of one of the most prominent attempts to calculate power, Ray Cline, recognized, his input in assessing world power was more about judgments than

quantified data.[47] The major premise in Cline's understanding of power is that it is a highly subjective category, and cannot be impartially appraised but rather perceived. Cline's formula of perceived power looks as follows: $Pp = (C + E + M) \times (S + W)$, where Pp is perceived power, C denotes critical mass and embraces population and territory, E stands for economic capability, M signifies military capability, S represents strategic purpose, and W indicates the will to pursue national strategy.[48] One can, therefore, confine Cline's index of perceived power to a simple equation of material capability (C) multiplied by politico-organizational ability (A), or $Pp = C \times A$. As there is no consensus as to what specific tangibles and intangibles the most comprehensive power formula should include, it is, understandably, open to an unlimited number of variations.

While economic potential and military strength have been used by other scholars as indexes of power before Cline, nevertheless his model, perhaps, pioneered a holistic approach to calculating power as a combination of material and intangible components. Most importantly, it meant that other material capabilities being equal in a dyadic balance of power, an actor with a greater strategic purpose and political determination should be perceived stronger. Thus, in Cline's view, immaterial variables serve as material power multipliers. In other words, with the lack of strategic purpose and political will, validity of capabilities is poised to nullify, whereas strong purpose and determination are bound to turn nations with relatively smaller capabilities into consequential powers.[49] It is critically important to understand though that the formula defines *perceived power*, and the purpose of statecraft is thus to persuade the important others in veracity of non-quantified power parameters such as resolve, purpose, determination, and commitment. As a study on power perception suggested, "By *managing impressions of power* [emphasis added], persons may feign power capabilities and extract concessions from an adversary greater than would be predicted by objective power capabilities."[50]

Indeed, as one of the early studies on perceptions of national power had established, while perceptive and objective rankings of a few states may not differ, in the majority of cases these mismatched: whereas many nations looked weaker than their independent economic and military standings would suggest, a number of states demonstrated their ability to hit above their weight. The first group included the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR); the second one encompassed such states as China, West Germany, Italy, and Brazil; and the third group incorporated Britain, France, Israel, and Norway.[51] What Cline overlooked

in his concept of power formula is that perceptions of power from within and from without are not necessarily identical. Moreover, at different stages of national power cycle national leaders may over- or underestimate their states' power. But so can their foreign counterparts. In the case of great power politics, miscalculations of their leaders can have perilous ramifications. As suggested by such scholars as Charles Doran, at certain stages of power cycle, misperceptions of national power by domestic power holders can convert into disastrous foreign policy decisions.[52] This, in my view, presents an extremely important point in this book's conceptualization of power credibility which posits that the primary task of policymakers at certain stages of power cycle becomes providing for authenticity of their strategic messages to others, that is, ensuring credibility of national power.

The issue of power comparison in prolonged historical periods looks even more confusing. The book's examination of the issue of power cycles is drawn on the analysis of the respective literature including George Modelski's theory of long cycles in global politics.[53] The lengthy historical periods of power cycles and the absence of appropriate statistical data allowing for incorporation of non-material ingredients of power in the study of power dynamics make the national share in the world GDP the only possible common denominator of power through the last 2000 years of history of the strong nations based on the mainstream statistical estimates rather than speculative guesstimates.[54]

While various composite indices of national power accentuate the salience of different power variables, they risk underestimating the salience of the dynamics of GDP's relative shares. The latter, however, continue to play a unique role in reflecting organizational, scientific, financial as well as other transformational changes in nations' composite power. Some indices, such as CINC, confine power measurement to economic and military parameters; some include a much wider variety of power components. At the same time, the problem with the advanced contemporary indices of composite power, such as CNP index elaborated by the United Service Institution of India, is of a different nature. The CNP includes both hard and soft power ingredients as well as transformation variables, which are impossible to quantify and compare through historically long periods of time. Similarly, composite power indexes created by China's Academy of Social Sciences as well as those by the Chinese Military Academy consist of several dozens of variables such as cultural influence and institution efficiency, which—though arguably valuable at evaluating national power at the end of the last-beginning of the present century—are obviously inapplicable for the purposes of tracking power through historically long

periods of time. They cannot, therefore, be applied in this book. Thus, the national share in the world GDP criterion is the only available synthetic variable, and the single yardstick to measure the dynamics of power through the last 2000 years. To apply a common criterion that would allow for international comparison through two millennia I use GDP, since military power as well as other variables, such as cultural influence and ingenuity, cannot be quantified at the pre-modern stages of history.

Notes

1. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (March 2008):94.
2. Ibid., 100–101.
3. See Ibid.
4. Klaus Schwab, ed., *The Global Competitiveness Report 2015–2016* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2015), 4.
5. Ibid., 6.
6. For instance, in the United Kingdom, governmental spending on military science and technology constitutes just one third of investments in civil R&D, which makes the defense sector critically dependent upon technological advancements in civil industries. Ministry of Defence, "Equipment, Support and Technology for UK Defence and Security: A Consultation Paper," Cm 7989, December 2010, 23–24. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/35916/cm7989_Eqpt_supp_tech_ukdef.pdf.
7. China's and Russia's institutions, to use Daron Acemoglu's and James Robinson's taxonomy, can be defined as "extractive." As they have emphasized, in contrast to inclusive institutions enabling to sustain economic advancement and public prosperity, extractive institutions have limited capacity to generate growth and high-quality life standards for the majority "because such institutions are designed to extract incomes and wealth from one subset of society to benefit a different subset," and are bound to release powerful destructive forces leading to an eventual economic collapse. Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* (New York: Crown Business, 2012), 76.
8. Author's calculations based on data from the World Economic Forum, *The Global Competitiveness Index dataset 2007–2017.*
9. Author's calculations based on IMF World Economic Outlook (October 2017) data.

10. Sam Perlo-Freeman, Aude Fleurant, Pieter Wezeman, and Siemon Wezeman, "Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2015," *SIPRI Fact Sheet*, April 2016, 2.

11. See World Economic Forum, The Global Competitiveness Index dataset 2007–2017.

12. Jacek Kugler and William Donke, "Comparing the Strength of Nations," *Comparative Political Studies* 19, no.1 (April 1986):39–69. The variable presents a quotient of "actual extraction" divided by "expected extraction." (Ibid., 45.)

13. Marina Arbetman-Rabinowitz, Jacek Kugler, Mark Abdollahian, Kyungkook Kang, Hal T. Nelson, and Ronald L. Tammen, "Political Performance," in *The Performance of Nations*, eds., Jacek Kugler and Ronald L. Tammen (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), 8.

14. See Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

15. See Richard Florida and Irene Tinagli, *Europe in the Creative Age* (London: Demos, 2004), 12.

16. For details, see Richard Florida and Irene Tinagli, *Europe in the Creative Age*.

17. See Richard Florida Richard Florida, Charlotta Mellander, and Kevin Stolarick, *Creativity and Prosperity: The Global Creativity Index* (Toronto: Martin Prosperity Institute, 2011), 28–30, http://www.martinprosperity.org.

18. See Richard Florida, Charlotta Mellander, and Karen King, *The Global Creativity Index 2015* (Toronto: Martin Prosperity Institute, 2015), 53–55. Available online at: http://martinprosperity.org/content/theglobalcreativityindex2015/.

19. See World Intellectual Property Organization, *WIPO IP Facts and Figures 2016* (Geneva: World Intellectual Property Organization, 2016), 9.

20. See "Notice of the State Council on Printing and Distributing a New Generation of Artificial Intelligence Development Plan," State Council [2017], No. 35, July 20, 2017. Available at: http://www.gov.cn.

21. Calculated on the basis of data presented in Mark Purdy, Serena Jing Qiu, and Frank Chen, "How Artificial Intelligence Can Drive China's Growth," *Accenture*, 2016. Available at: https://www.accenture.com, and Mark Purdy and Paul Daugherty, "Why Artificial Intelligence is the Future of Growth," *Accenture*, 2016. Available at: https://www.accenture.com.

22. See Mark Purdy and Paul Daugherty, "Why Artificial Intelligence is the Future of Growth," *Accenture*, 2016. Available at: https://www.accenture.com.

23. See, for instance, McKinsey & Company, Jonathan Woetzel, Jeongmin Seong, Kevin Wei, Wang James, Manyika Michael, Chui Wendy Wong, *China's Digital Economy: A Leading Global Force* (McKinsey Global Institute, 2017). Available at: https://www.mckinsey.com.

24. Jonathan McClory, *The Soft Power 30—A Ranking of Global Soft Power* (London: Portland PR Limited, 2015), 8.

25. Jonathan McClory, *The Soft Power 30—A Ranking of Global Soft Power* (London: Portland PR Limited, 2016).

26. See Ibid.

27. See Jody L. Crosno, Traci H. Freling, and Steven J. Skinner, "Does Brand Social Power Mean Market Might? Exploring the Influence of Brand Social Power on Brand Evaluations," *Psychology & Marketing* 26, no.2 (February 2009):111.

28. Tae Hyun Baek, Jooyoung Kim, and Jay Hyunjae Yu, "The Differential Roles of Brand Credibility and Brand Brestige in Consumer Brand Choice," *Psychology & Marketing* 27, no.7 (July 2010):664.

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30. See Simon Anholt and Jeremy Hildreth, *Brand America: The Making, Unmaking and Remaking of the Greatest National Image of All Time* (London: Marshall Cavendish Business, 2010), 8–9.

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32. Simon Anholt, "Beyond the Nation Brand: The Role of Image and Identity in International Relations," *Exchange: The Journal of Public Diplomacy* 2, no.1 (2013):8.

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36. See Ibid., 17.

37. International Futures (IFs) modeling system, Version 7.26. Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures, Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver, Denver, CO, available at https://www.ifs.du.edu.

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40. See "Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds," 104.

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49. See Ibid., 98.

50. Samuel B. Bacharach and Edward J. Lawler, "The Perception of Power," *Social Forces* 55, no.1 (September 1976):123.

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53. George Modelski, "The Long Cycle of Global Politics and the Nation-State," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20, no.2 (April 1978):214–238.

54. See, for example, Angus Maddison's comments on the assessments by Bairoch and his epigoni in Angus Maddison, *The World Economy: Volume 1: A Millennial Perspective*, and *Volume 2: Historical Statistics: The Contours of World Development* (Paris: OECD, 2006), 49.

Power Periodicity

1 CONCEIVING PERIODICITY

The vantage point of this section is long cycle theory. An idea that natural and social worlds are subject to oscillation has been contemplated by numerous studies ranging from astrophysics and biology to medicine and sociology.[1] Presenting an impressive list of recurring patterns in the life of our planet and human civilization, US economist Edward R. Dewey, the President of the Foundation for the Study of Cycles (FSC), together with his co-author wrote passionately in their volume on the miracle of cycles: "A new science which deals with the behavior of events recurring at reasonably regular intervals throughout the universe may ultimately enable us to predict, scientifically and accurately, the events of tomorrow."[2]

Originated in the realm of economics, cycle theory spans a wide range of ideas concerning the causality of swing movements in business development, price and interest rate fluctuations, foreign trade variations, and dynamics of production output.[3] Pioneered as early as in 1838 by the British scholar Hyde Clark, then in 1875 explored by the American author Samuel Benner, and in the early twentieth century elaborated in the writings of Alexander Parvus (a pseudonym of the Russian Marxist economist Alexander Helphand), the concept of economic cycles was later examined by two Dutch scholars—Jacob van Gelderen and Salomon de Wolff—who worked independently of each other.[4] In the interwar period, long wave theory was investigated in detail by Nikolai Kondratieff and Joseph A. Schumpeter.[5]

Not only did Kondratieff's and Schumpeter's ideas give impetus to furthering academic studies on business cycles, but they have also inspired scholars from other disciplines to apply the idea of periodicism to examination of recurring historical and political phenomena, such as the rise and fall of civilizations, empires, and major powers, as well as the repetitive nature of hegemonic wars.[6] The cyclical nature of history, for instance, has been a captivating theme for such outstanding scholars as the British historian Oswald Spengler, whose "cultures-as-organisms" concept suggested that the stages which great cultures/civilizations have to pass through their life cycle resemble that of every living being.[7]

Although another great historian of the twentieth century, Arnold Toynbee, refuted Spengler's notion of cultures and societies as living organisms, his own concept of civilizations, outlined on the example of 26 civilizations in his impressive 12-volume study of the human history, dissects their lifespan in the distinctive periods of growth, decline, and fall, often resulting in an eventual breakdown and disintegration of their structure.[8] In effect, his discerning of civilizational development is essentially Spenglerian. Not coincidentally, he wrote about the subject of his study in terms of life and death which he otherwise postulated as erroneous.[9]

Toynbee's view on the genesis and evolution of civilizations was that these *dynamic* entities are driven by "creative personalities," and emerged as responses to particular challenges, while their subsequent growth is permeated by their continuous struggle with the incessant arrays of challenges. This struggle unfolds as the ultimate source of civilizations' growth and advancement; ironically, it also contains the seeds of their progressive decay and eventual finale. The latter, according to Toynbee, happens as they exhaust their energies in what he calls *tour de force*,[10] thereby revealing overstretch of material and moral resources which they are endowed with, but, above all, unveiling depletion of ingenuity of their pioneers.

The theories of cycles in the development of agency and structure have been further elaborated in the works of such scholars as George Modelski, John Bagot Glubb, William R. Thompson, Charles Kindleberger, and Charles F. Doran. According to George Modelski, cycles can be defined as "recurrent pattern[s] in the life (or functioning) of a system." If a system develops in cycles, it means that "over a certain period of time the system … returns to its starting point, that is regains a state occupied at an earlier stage."[11]

Modelski's long cycle theory was originally created to account for the changes in the world system in terms of its organizational conditions—from minimal order to maximum regulation. The shifts in the global politi-

cal system are caused by the outcomes of rivalries among the most powerful nation-states seeking universal primacy. Beginning 1500, which Modelski identifies as the time of the birth of the world system, these rivalries have taken the form of hegemonic wars that led to replacement of the world hegemonic power (a nation-state) by a new actor, on average, every 100 years—Portugal, the Netherlands, Britain, and the United States.[12] Each of these actors possessed both the desire and demonstrable capabilities to organize the world in their preferred fashion.[13] The theory of long cyclical development of the world system was further elaborated by George Modelski in co-authorship with William R. Thompson on the examples of fluctuations in global naval supremacy, which, as mentioned above, they perceived as a quintessential expression of global power. In brief, the Modelski-Thompson long cycle theory (MTLCT) addresses the phenomenon of a distinctive lengthy preponderance of a single state in global naval power and conceives world system cycles as repetitive occurrences of global wars followed by periods of peace—all happening within distinct timeframes.[14] In extending their theory beyond their initial emphasis on seapower, they accentuate the interface between the periodicity in the change of world leadership and Kondratieff's long economic waves that are predicated in the phases of economic and technological innovation.[15] The theory grounded its core thesis on the observation of the world war history beginning in the sixteenth century, which culminated in the rise of an ascending power and the fall of the old hegemon. The primary distinction of the cyclical model expounded by MT is its operationalization with respect to warfare; the theory argues that outbreaks of the past and future global wars were and will be subject to periodicity. They refer to historical data to substantiate their core thesis that the international system develops by increments (cycles), each lasting approximately 100 years and comprising successive phases of peace and war. Each phase has specific periodicity: the peace stage presents a period between the end of one global war and an outbreak of another, and lasts approximately 80 years, while global wars, on average, continue 25 years.[16] MTLCT reinstated Modelski's original thesis that the timeframe of the modern state system consists of explicit periods featured by a relative dominance of a certain nation-state. In interpreting seapower concentrations as drivers of major powers' belligerence, MTLCT is similar to offensive realism that postulates power maximization as an overarching determinant of state behavior, which, according to the realist mainstream, invariably leads to clashes between ascending and declining powers. From this standpoint, the lengthy cycles of peace present nothing more than periods of preparation for a next global war.

Despite its apparent elegance, MTLCT looks too "neat" for some of its critics. Furthermore, some scholars, such as Nathaniel Beck, question the very existence of explicit cyclicity in international relations, including a long war cycle.[17] While acknowledging the presence of autocatalytic phenomena in the realms of economic and social developments including nation-to-nation relations, Gerald Silverberg, for instance, considers the statistical data underlying the concept stochastic; his spectral analysis of the pertinent data does not support MTLCT model of century-long frequencies in world system development. In the absence of analytically verified strict lengths and recurrences in structural changes that one would need to classify them as objective proofs of long cycles in world politics, he strongly doubts its predictive power.[18]

Additionally, the theory has several other pitfalls: it presents, for example, a strikingly narrow concept of global power by equating it with seapower, while confining the latter to quantitative preponderance measured as a share of the number of capital warships, and ignoring their qualitative characteristics together with other relevant components of military assets let alone the complexity of the very notion of power. Above all, by limiting major power behavioral motives to preparation for a global war it fails to explicate the nuances of major states' behavior in periods preceding war outbreaks.

While the concept conceived in this study also addresses what it describes in terms of a cyclical phenomenon, it differs from MTLCT in many ways, and, first of all, in the object of its investigation: the latter accentuates the cyclical nature of the world political system whereas the former explores the phenomenon of periodicity in the lifespans of the major world powers and its impact on their comportment. Another principal difference is that while MTLCT understands global leadership as "the concentration of global reach capabilities," which they confine to tangibles, I understand global leadership as a universally legitimized capacity to influence developments in other parts of the world.[19]

To account for the causes of the core historical changes in world structure MTLCT refers to the power-transition theory (PTT) in accordance with which an ascending power is bound to challenge the status-quo leader of the system, first through a regional conflict where it probes its power, and next in an all-out contest of military power. Conceptualized by A.F.K Organski as early as in 1958 in his *magnum opus* "World Politics,"[20] PTT was advanced two decades later in "The War Ledger"[21]—his joint endeavor with Jacek Kugler—and presents one of the most conclusive attempts to explain the phenomenon of all-out wars.

The thrust of the theory is in an assumption that major wars have been caused by a desire of a rapidly developing big power to change the rules of international system established by a dominant state. Dissatisfied with a distribution of gains from the existing world order, the theory holds, a challenger is bound to resort to war with a hegemonic power. An outbreak of a major war results from an uneven distribution of power in the international system, which is subject to change due to a challenger's accelerated rates of economic growth in comparison with a status-quo hegemon. According to PTT, an ultimately belligerent comportment of an ascending major power is a product of its elite miscalculation of their capacity to revise the established international order on their terms. Organski and Kugler contrast their concept to two other notable approaches to explicating major war causality: the balance-of-power model (BPM) and the collective-security model (CSM). While BPM explains a major war as a corollary of shifts in the balance of power and the desire of the central elites to restore it by maximizing their states' power, CSM asserts that all-out wars derive from an inability of the international community to pool its resources and political power to deter an aggressor, and hence posits states as security maximizers. Unlike BPM that considers a major driver of global wars a stronger state's interest in upholding power balance by suppressing a challenger, PTT suggests that it is, contrarily, a weaker state that is poised to initiate a global conflict. However, by postulating an ascender's desire to change the system in its favor, PTT inadvertently implies that the rising states are power maximizers. It doesn't say much though about the motives of a dominant power except that it is interested in upholding the international status quo, which implies that it is interested in maximization of its security. It looks, therefore, that PTT holds an integrative approach with respect to offensive and defensive strands of realism by positing the rising major states as power maximizers while viewing status-quo states as security maximizers. However, the PTT does not expound why elites in the ascending powers should invariably consider existential wars with the dominant powers to be the most preferable ways of promoting their interests whereas such wars are known to be the costliest means of accomplishing political objectives, and, moreover, the least predictable ones. With respect to stages of a national lifespan, PTT appears to present them in the form of steps going upswing: potential power, power transition, and power maturity, while paradoxically overlooking the downswing phase which should conceivably determine stage-specific ways and means of the major states' conduct in world politics.

Though the periodic nature of history is usually traced down to the fate of the great empires of antiquity with the stages of a glorious rise inexorably followed by the phases of decadence and decline, it is not inconceivable that the modern world is not so much different in its cyclical character from the past as the modern great powers are subject to patterns of upswing and downswing movement similar to those of their predecessors. Positing this trend as an innate paradigm of history, the author of a perceptive study on the issue, John Bagot Glubb, stated: "Any regime which attains great wealth and power seems with remarkable regularity to decay and fall apart in some ten generations. The ultimate fate of its component parts, however, does not depend on its internal nature, but on the other organizations which appear at the time of its collapse and succeed in devouring its heritage. Thus, the lives of great powers are surprisingly uniform, but the results of their falls are completely diverse."[22] This outlook is close to the Kondratieff theory–based thesis by William R. Thompson on the periodic development of the leading world nations in that it holds that they are unable to maintain their predominant positions indefinitely in the province of hard power.[23]

A similar idea has been put forward in a fundamental research on the 400 years of history of economic competition among nations by Charles Kindleberger. Notably, its core thesis on the S-curve in the economic life of nations is grounded on Nikolai Kondratieff's long wave and Fernand Braudel's long cycle theories. Furthermore, Kindleberger has integrated the periodicity concept with the so-called Cardwell's law[24] that maintains that no nation in the world has succeeded in preserving her technological primacy for more than three generations.[25]

In addition to the concepts of long cycles, the analytical framework elaborated in this book draws on Charles Doran's power-cycle theory.[26] The latter emphasized features common for strong nations as they go through different stages of their power curve: relativity, non-linearity, role inertia, existence of high and low reflection points, and potential for resurgence. While all powers, as Doran argued, are subject to periodical stages of rise and decline through their lifespans, the trajectories and levels of their going through their individual cycles vary. In contrast to Waltz's system theory that prioritized the system level of analysis over sub-system levels, Doran operationalized both system and state levels simultaneously: "The power cycle, the generalized path of a state's relative power change over long time periods, reflects at once the changing structure of the system and the state's rise and decline as a great power. It encompasses each state and the system in a 'single dynamic' of changing systemic share."[27]

However, Doran's notion of power, while acknowledging that the latter "must include" non-tangible components, prioritizes material resources as the core underpinnings of power.[28] Contrarily, I emphasize the socio-cultural attributes of power including institutionalizing power which is an ability to set up and promote norms of international interaction as well as to establish legal rules of political behavior and standards of economic cooperation and development. This perspective enables to look beyond the orthodox approach to the issues of great power decline; for example, even though the relative economic and military power of Britain has substantially decayed, she continues to enjoy a high level of prestige not in the least due to her huge cultural influence in the world. Like Britain that decades ago has succeeded in propagating her common law and parliamentary systems beyond her core, the United States excelled in institutionalizing the world monetary and trade systems along the premises of the Washington consensus. Another difference between Doran's methodology and the one employed in this volume is that whereas the former used two levels of analysis, I use four levels simultaneously—system, state, group, and individual.

I assume that as a nation is subject to upswing and downswing stages in its life cycle, each of them determines a certain type of behavior. Unlike neoclassical realist theories who seek to explicate foreign policies of individual nation-states by focusing on the unique features of their domestic politics, the *Theory of Power Credibility (TPC)* conceptualized in this volume suggests a synthesized explanation of the recurrent common patterns in their behavior as causal effects of their relative power dynamics in the world system. Note that Kondratieff's waves pertained to the developed economies of France, Britain, Germany, and the United States. The *TPC* outlined in this volume differs from Kondratieff's conceptualization of economic waves in that it considers relative rather than absolute parameters of periodic development. While national economies certainly can simultaneously rise in absolute terms, their aggregate growth rates will likely differ so that some of them will be relatively falling with respect to the others.

2   Power Periodicity and Great Powers' Decline

In the last 200 years, the hard power potential of the contemporary great powers has been subject to conspicuous fluctuations. It is important to understand that while every individual great power continued to rise in absolute terms, some of them developed at higher rate in comparison with the others, and with the ascendency of sovereign developing nations, some

of which have embarked on the path of rapid industrial and social development on the world stage after the demise of the colonial system, the relative share of the world's leading nations in the global distribution of power have started to fall. For example, the United States had been continuously rising in 1816–1926 when its relative weight in the world tangible power (composite index of national capability) increased 6.6 times. After a relative slump caused by the Great Depression and the faster growth of military-industrial capability in Germany, Japan, and the Soviet Union in the 1930s, the speedy economic recovery and military build-up spearheaded by America's entering WWII against the background of the economic devastation in Europe and Japan enabled the United States to reach by 1945 a historical record of supremacy in terms of CINC at the level of more than 38 percent of the global capacity. However, with the postwar economic recovery in Europe and Japan, and later with the appearance of the new economic powerhouses in the Asia-Pacific, the United States has entered the stage of continuous relative decline resulting in reduction of its composite capability more than three times by 2015. With 12.4 percent of world's CINC, America, according to my calculations, though far ahead of its peers such as Britain (1.4), France (1.6), and Russia (3.9), is conspicuously lagging behind China (22.3).

In the Russian history there were several power cycles: since the peace of Vienna and four decades onward the European order marked a period of relative stability, so did the Russian relative material standing. Yet, the lack of any progressivist reforms during the absolutist reign of Nicholas I in Russia, by the end of his rule, resulted in her humiliating defeat in the Crimean War, and revealed her general inferiority in military power in comparison with Britain and France. The subsequent decade of 1856–1866 saw conspicuous diminution of the Russian empire's relative composite power indicators. Inception of the long-needed institutional reforms in the 1860s created conditions for an accelerated industrialization, which, in its turn, contributed to the rise of the country's relative fighting power in 1866–1938. Against the backdrop of rapid shifts in material power balance in Europe and the world from 1938 to 1944, the Soviet Russia experienced a temporary decline. Yet, in the three decades following the end of WWII (1945–1976), the nation succeeded in substantially enhancing its hard power faculty relative of other nations, while obtaining an exclusive status of a superpower. In terms of tangibles, Russian relative power reached its historical peak in 1976. Yet, by the end of the 1970s the factors of production underlying its labor- and resource-intensive model of development

gradually exhausted, and its political-economic system failing to produce incentives for innovation and technological modernization seized to deliver regional let alone global superiority. Hence, beginning the late 1970s, Russia entered the long period of relative decline exacerbated by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. By 2015 her CINC score dropped 4.6 times in comparison with its historical maximum reached in the Soviet era, while the nation found herself at the lowest point in her power cycle for the last 200 years.[29]

Unlike Russia that through the last two centuries demonstrated spectacular resilience in terms of her CINC capacity, the two other European great powers—Britain and France—have been incessantly fading. Thus, since its peak of power in 1816 (33.6 percent of world CINC), British share fell 23.7 times by 2015, shrinking to just 1.4 percent of the world's total. Among the plethora of studies seeking to understand the phenomena of the continuous fading of the once world's most powerful nation, one by Jim Penman is of particular interest. Comparing Britain's prolonged decline to the centuries-lasting fall of the Roman Empire, Penman explains it from a bio-historical perspective. His explication, based on the findings gained by *epigenetics*, accentuates the impact of civilizational transformations on human temperament. In brief, the radical improvement of living conditions in the United Kingdom, particularly since the end of WWII, according to him, converts into changes at the genetic level. Under the conditions of an unprecedentedly secure and wealthy environment, Britons have become more careless and less agile, more hedonistic and less assertive as their life conditions have obviated the need for them to be "harder working, more innovative, more willing to sacrifice present consumption for future benefit."[30] However, it would be fair to remark that Britain's CINC share does not represent her overall power; as it has been the most striking trend through the last 200 years of her history, except perhaps only the relatively brief periods of swift preparations for major wars, her fighting power was significantly, and at times, as some scholars note, even *abnormally lower* than her economic magnitude. In the words of Paul Kennedy who is among those who have underlined this disparity, historically unprecedented for a major power, "Britain was [and one may argue still is – S.S.] a different sort of a Great Power … [whose] influence could not be measured by the traditional criteria of military hegemony."[31]

As for France, her world power magnitude peaked in 1856 when it reached 14 percent, but since then it fell 8.7 times, and accounted for 1.6 percent by 2015.[32] There is no deficit in explanations of causes behind the

decay of French power that began in the post-Napoleonic era and lasted through the major part of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries till the outbreak of WWI. As they range from a purportedly inadequate national entrepreneurial culture or, more generally, sociocultural conservatism incommensurate with industrialization to the deficit of resources, such as coal and labor force, the most persuasive among them appears to be the one by the French historian François Crouzet who suggested that the primary cause of France's decline was her poor endowment with the factors of production in comparison with her peers—Britain, Germany, and the United States.[33] Despite having turned into a highly advanced technological society in the second half of the twentieth century, and notwithstanding her widely recognized status as one of the world's top-ranking diplomatic powers and a leader in the aerospace and nuclear industries, modern France faces a set of disturbing challenges in the economic and social realms, many of which have derived from the socialist orthodoxy of her state bureaucracy and population at large. To sustain the immense financial costs of the nation's generous welfare system, and in the first place, its gigantic public health and pension expenditures, France's state authorities promote the policy of overly high payroll taxes. Together with the rigid labor laws they are commonly seen as the major restraints of entrepreneurial incentives and the key causes of the nation's lingering economic stagnation. As the result, France has one of the highest unemployment rates among OECD countries against the backdrop of continuous deceleration.

Let's now turn to China. In the group of the contemporary great powers China presents an unconventional case: in 1866–1916 her CINC share in the world fell by half—from 17.1 percent to 8.4 percent. Staying in the range of 9–11 percent between 1936 and 1986, it started rapidly growing in the second half of the 1980s, and reached 22.3 percent by 2015, making her—according to COW—the world's leading nation in terms of hard power. One should, though, be warned against uncritically relying on the aforementioned indicators as they might not in fact correctly reflect the comprehensive power leverage of individual great powers. For example, China's share appears to be substantially inflated due to including in the indicators of a power capability in the twenty-first century such variables as crude steel production and energy consumption. Likewise, in the absence of the qualitative parameters of power the merely quantitative indicators of CINC are incapable to mirror the changes that have emerged in the course of revolution in military affairs (RAM) as well as other technological, industrial, social, and organizational developments since the second half of the

twentieth century; it is not inconceivable though that if taken into account the latter would likely present a somewhat different and perhaps surprising picture of the world capabilities distribution. However, given the need to use indicators that could make calculations possible and comparisons applicable through extended periods of time, one may wish to neglect for the moment the obvious deficiencies of COW methodology in the name of a more or less indicative general picture. The bottom line of this and similar extensive time-framed comparisons and calculations is that they give us at least an idea about the long-term trends in the world power dynamics. The aforementioned data supports our hypothesis that with a rare exception all great powers of the twentieth century—some a long time ago, while others later—have entered a joint stage of continuous, and in the case of the European great powers even a dramatic reduction of their relative tangible capabilities. This statement is also supported by the study of the dynamics of their economic place in the world through lengthy periods of time (see Table 4.1 on their share in world GDP).

The situation in the Chinese economy struggling to change the export-driven model of growth to domestic market-prompted fashion of development appears to present more grounds for pessimism than for optimism as to the prospects of its soft landing. A number of independent analysts doubt that China's official statistics reflect the real picture of her economic performance, in particular with respect to the rates of her economic growth. While official figures indicated a 7 percent growth in 2015, some sources estimated the real figure being substantially smaller—about 3 percent.[34] Moreover, the real size of China's economy that in 2014, according to the official data, has surpassed the United States in terms of GDP measured in PPP, may, in fact, be unknown even to the country's leaders: one could, for instance, recall the words of China's "fifth generation" Prime Minister Li Keqiang who while being the head of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in Liaoning province in 2007 confided to the US ambassador that one should not trust China's GDP statistics because it is "manmade" and "for reference only."[35]

3   Power and Primacy

In the previous sections we have addressed various approaches to measuring power, each of which has its strong and weak points in comparison with the others. It was also established that for the purposes of parsimony the existing power gauges can be confined to a single variable-based index—GDP. At

Table 4.1 Dynamics of World GDP Distribution among Major Powers (1–2050, % of world)

Country/ Year	1	1000	1500	1600	1700	1820	1870	1913	1950	1973	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2050
China	25.4	22.1	24.9	29.0	22.3	32.9	17.1	8.8	4.6	4.6	2.3	4.1	7.4	13.2	19.7	20.0
India	32.0	28.1	24.4	22.4	24.4	16.0	12.1	7.5	4.2	3.1	2.9	3.6	4.2	5.7	8.4	15.1
United States	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1	1.8	8.9	18.9	27.3	22.1	21.8	22.0	20.6	17.2	14.6	11.7
Indonesia	na	na	2.4	na	2.0	1.6	na	na	0.6	1.2	1.4	1.9	1.9	2.3	2.7	3.4
Brazil	na	na	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.7	1.7	2.5	4.4	3.7	3.2	3.1	2.4	2.6
Russia	1.5	2.4	3.4	3.5	4.4	5.4	7.6	8.6	9.6[a]	9.4[a]	na	na	3.3	3.7	3.0	2.4
Japan	1.1	2.7	3.1	2.9	4.1	3.0	2.3	2.6	3.0	7.8	7.8	9.0	6.8	5.0	3.9	2.3
Germany	1.2	1.2	3.3	3.7	3.7	3.9	6.5	8.7	5.0	5.9	6.0	6.6	4.9	3.7	3.1	2.1
Britain	0.3	0.7	1.1	1.8	2.9	5.2	9.0	8.2	6.5	4.2	3.8	3.7	3.1	2.6	2.1	1.8
France	2.2	2.3	4.4	4.7	5.3	5.1	6.5	5.3	4.1	4.3	4.4	4.1	3.4	2.7	2.1	1.6
World	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	1000	100.0

Notes: World GDP in PPP; [a]Soviet Union.

Sources: Years 1–1973—Angus Maddison, *World Economy 1-2030 AD* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), data for China, India, the United States, Russia, Japan, Germany, Britain, France—from Table A.6, p. 381; data for Brazil from Table 2.7., p. 88 and from Table 2.9c., p. 105; data for Indonesia from Table 3.4b., p. 117 and from Table 3.26c., p. 177; years 1980–2020—IMF, The World Economic Outlook database; year 2050—author's calculations based on data from PwC, "The Long View: How Will the Global Economic Order Change by 2050?" (February 2017), https://www.pwc.com/world2050.

the same time, the growing complexity of the modern economy has forced some scholars to express doubts as to the validity of GDP as of a reliable indicator of economic prowess. This is because the mere size of a nation's economic output characterizes neither the level of her technological advancement nor the structure of her productive forces. The corollary of this observation can be reasonably extended to other number-based indexes including those elaborated by multi-variable models. If this assumption is correct, no quantifiable parameters of power are able to serve as reliable indicators of state leverage in the system of international relations. As confining power to GDP has been criticized for simplification of power concept, a trend to create an alternative approach—primarily by continuous extension of power variables beyond economic ones—has been on the rise for the last several decades. Some scholars, such as Stefano Guzzini, suggest that these attempts, however, have not been particularly conducive to grasping the essence of power in IR, and call them "the overload fallacy of power analysis."[36] Thus, instead of weighing up levels of national power through computation, it seems more appropriate to compare qualitative characteristics of power, such as primacy and influence. While there are intuitive and logical grounds to substantiate this statement, for the reasons of frugality it would make sense to confine them to a single argument.

The self's power is an ability to generate dependency of the other. However, in bilateral relations both sides are in one way or another mutually dependent. Determining predominance of one actor over the other brings about the need to distinguish it from power. Both power and primacy are relative properties. In dyadic relations, primacy represents an ability to generate asymmetrical dependency in critical domains. According, for example, to Samuel Huntington, "International primacy means that a government is able to exercise more influence on the behavior of more actors with respect to more issues than any other government can."[37] Note that this statement's underlying ability to *influence* as a defining feature of primacy allows to distinguish it from hegemony, which is understood as an ability to *control* behavior of other actors.[38] I define primacy as a socially constructed perception of one's superiority over others in rank and status. Such superiority may result in domination—a category, which Max Weber used to denote "authoritarian power of command"—provided one's authority is legitimized by other participants of the system. However, given that in the international system there is no supreme political authority with explicitly recognized *commanding powers*, I suggest that primacy finds its source in an interaction between agency and structure by which

the former's impact on others is mediated by the latter. The sense in which Weber construed domination "exclude[d] from its scope those situations in which power has its source in a formally free interplay of interested parties such as occurs in the market." For him, "*domination* will thus mean the situation in which the manifested will (*command*) of the *ruler* or rulers is meant to influence the conduct of one or more others (*the ruled*) and actually does influence it in such a way that their conduct to a socially relevant degree occurs as if the ruled had made the content of the command the maxim of their conduct for its very own sake. Looked upon from the other end, this situation will be called *obedience*." Emphasizing that "the command is accepted as a 'valid' norm," he observed that "[p]sychologically, the command may have achieved its effect upon the ruled either through empathy or through inspiration or through persuasion by rational argument or through some combination of these three principal types of influence of one person over another."[39]

Although capabilities do constitute the necessary preconditions in attaining primacy, the latter cannot be confined to the former. That prevalence in rude force and brute power are not equivalent to legitimate supremacy has not been and still may not be an easily accepted idea by great power establishments. Yet, at the stage of relative decline in her economic and military indicators, the task of maintaining primacy by a strong nation unrelentingly calls for elaboration of novel strategic approaches by her policymakers. These approaches are poised to reflect upon the ongoing civilizational shift from material to ideational world, a world in which claimants for a status of credible primacy should be able to persuasively demonstrate their ability to promote universally appealing norms and multilateral arrangements.[40] This premise though is not an easily achieved precondition as it would need certain material and psychological sacrifices from the great powers whose policies have been traditionally guided by selfish interests frequently at odds with the core objectives of the weaker nations. For a powerful state, it would, for example, be hardly possible to maintain, establish, or restore leadership in the lack of demonstrable willingness and capacity of its government to nurture and guard a virtuous international order. To be recognized as a leader by the international majority it would, therefore, take its statesmen' courage and wisdom to renounce its non-existential interests in the name of common good. Noting that "power is not the same as influence," US political strategist Richard Haass suggested, for instance, that the key to upholding primacy is an ability to build international consensus around certain ideas, principles, and institutions. While

these ideas may not be shared in every corner of the world, they should be at least "widely attractive" so that other nations would see committing to those as acting in their self-interest.[41]

Since the ancient times, it has been commonly recognized that the ultimate test of power superiority between nations is war. In the absence of war, there was no verifiable way to judge about the genuine strength of nations. However, to elaborate vital strategic decisions, particularly in conflict situations, policymakers need to make rational assessments of their national capabilities as well as of those by their adversaries and allies. Whatever imprecise, expert inferences about the self's and other's power have become in growing demand in the era of continuous shifts in the quantifiable parameters of power, such as economic and military variables. As there are no universally established objective criteria of power in general and national power in particular, they are subjectively perceived categories. Using constructivist terminology, perceptions of power are socially constructed. While perceptions of the self and other's power may understandably differ, it is important to emphasize that they are subject to both inertia and exogenous influence. For a nation who used to identify herself as a "great power" but finds her material capabilities in decline, it is critically important that others maintain their perceptions of her prowess so that she continues to enjoy her exceptionally prestigious social status. By preserving the *credibility* of its power, an international actor with declining material capabilities can reasonably expect to maintain the habitual level of respect, submission, and compliance by others. What obtains an overarching value for such actors is their ability to shape and control others' perceptions of their power.[42]

Power credibility depends upon several variables, which reflect both objective and perceived dimensions of the self's power. A conjectured index of an actor's power credibility (PCi) should, however, not only capture a degree of credibility of one's actual power magnitude and encapsulate the efficiency of the former's ability to communicate its power to the important others, but, above all, represent their synthesis. To meet these objectives, the subsequent equation can be expressed in the following way:

$$\text{PCi} = \frac{\text{PAP}}{\text{AP}} \times \frac{\text{PCP}}{\text{CP}},$$

where AP is the self's actual power, PAP is its perceived actual power, CP is the self's communicated power, and PCP is its communicated power as

perceived by others. Note that by "punching" above its weight, the self can increase the veracity of its power in the eyes of others, and, respectively, enhance its authority and influence.

Perceived power of addressor (A) is a function of A's image formed in addressee's (B's) brain. Primacy can be defined as an image of A's superiority over B communicated by A to B, and recognized by B as authentic. Symbolic actions, such as signing acts of capitulation, concessions, expressions of servility, and other widely perceived manifestations of humiliation and submission, serve as important signals to transmit recognition of one's primacy by other international players. Consider, for instance, the case of Putin's Russia. The mere fact that she possesses nuclear forces of enormous destructive potential does not necessarily put her in the position of a preponderant power. However, Russia's intimidation tactics such as the flights of her Soviet era made strategic bombers near NATO states' shores *do* as they serve as reminders of Moscow's ability to control the most valuable property of the respective nations—their very existence. A particularly bellicose stance by Russia with respect to the West in the aftermath of Moscow's annexation of Crimea in 2014 has been aimed at upholding Russia's primacy in the post-Soviet geopolitics. By and large it has succeeded in discouraging the United States and its European allies to take a more assertive position (e.g., by supplying the Ukrainian army with lethal weapons) in Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Putin's nuclear brinksmanship coupled with the threats that Western interference would risk escalating the crisis to the level of a direct military confrontation between Russia and NATO can be seen as examples of Cold War–styled adventurist yet credible deterrence. It is important to note that the demonstrated capacity of Kremlin-controlled media to induce anti-Western hysteria on a nation-wide scale significantly added up to Putin's image of resolve and thereby contributed to preventing the West from providing its support to Ukraine beyond political-diplomatic means even though combined with painful yet non-strangulating sanctions against some sectors of the Russian economy.

4   POWER AND ECONOMIC PREPONDERANCE

Nations' shares in the world GDP/GNP have long been considered trustable indicators of their relative power. A.F.K. Organski, for example, applied GNP as "the most adequate and most readily available estimate of the pool of power resources" in his assessments of international power balance in the case of developed nations.[43]

While power-balance appraisals can certainly not obviate analysis of numerical parameters of national assets, such as a total output, quantifiable data should always be considered together with qualitative variables, for neglect of the latter by policymakers can, as history shows, lead to wrong, sometimes even fatal, decisions. Consider the following examples. On the eve of Russo-Japanese war of 1904, the Russian Empire excelled her Far Eastern contender in every visible component of hard power, including the overall size of their naval and land forces, while their population and economic resources measured 3:1. The purported numeric superiority underpinned the Russian General Staff's ignorance with respect to the foe's genuine capabilities, and triggered immense complacency in St. Petersburg, where the common belief was that one Russian soldier is equal to three Japanese, and that the "small" by Russian geographic and demographic standards island nation "lived in paper houses … and wasted hours on flower arrangement and tea ceremonies."[44]

As Russians soon had to find out to their dismay, their adversary's mocked "smallness," in effect, worked to Russia's disadvantage as the line of communications between Japanese army and navy was more compact than that of Russia's, while Admiral Togo's tactics of incremental dislodging of the Russian naval force boosted his sailor's morale, and allowed them to eventually take command of the seas.[45]

What constrained Tokyo in imposing its preferred terms of peace on Russia turned out to be not so much her remaining bargaining power but rather US interests in upholding the balance of power in the Far East; precisely, it was President Theodore Roosevelt's mediation that allowed the Russians to ultimately save the face by signing the Treaty of Portsmouth of September 5, 1905, on relatively favorable conditions.[46]

Likewise, by the middle of the nineteenth century China's GDP, for instance, exceeded that of Britain's and the United States' twofold, and even more that of Russia. These disparities, however, did not prevent these and other major powers to press Beijing for unilateral concessions. Those were legalized in treaties they imposed on the Celestial Court of the Qing dynasty, beginning with the first commercial treaty concluded between the United Kingdom and China in 1842 in Nanjing.[47]

Furthermore, economists note that under the ensuing transition to knowledge-intensive economy, GDP measurements fail to mirror the genuine economic performance of individual countries.[48] From a strategist standpoint, this means that being visibly bigger does not necessarily mean to be truly stronger. Yet, despite its controversial record and disputed

current utility in projecting outcomes of fateful power contests, the relative economic weight of nations continues to be perceived by statecraft—along with sizes of territory and population—among the core indicators of national might. The sensitivity in perceptions of this indicator in the last decades has grown especially at the backdrop of structural reforms, booming exports, and mounting consumer demand in emerging economies reflected in higher rates of their growth in comparison with the developed nations.

The tectonic shifts unfolding in the global distribution of economic power are to be felt in every corner of the world, but, arguably, their impact on the standing of European and Asia-Pacific economies will be particularly significant. Most drastically they could change the economic share of the United Kingdom which is projected to fall by five times by 2050 in comparison with its historical peak, while those by Germany, France, and Russia could shrink four times. In the Asia-Pacific, Japan's relative economic magnitude could drop about four times, and the one by the United States 2.3 times.

In the meantime, some developing nations, and in the first place, China and India, although still far from their historical peaks when they together accounted for more than a half of the world economic output, are projected to remarkably increase their relative economic magnitude by mid-century in comparison with those at their lowest inflection points (both falling in 1980): in the case of China 8.7 times, and India 5.2 times. As the emerging powers are projected to eclipse the world's traditional leaders, at least in terms of economic leverage, this prospect would hardly leave elites of the descending nations indifferent. While governments in Washington, Beijing, Paris, Berlin, and Moscow are understandably consumed by the matters of a daily routine, objective needs to work out long-term policy responses to the challenges posed by the accelerated power redistribution at the global scale are looming large. The major concern is that the fading of the traditional great powers in the global geo-economics would likely have a devastating impact on geopolitics. Such troubling assumptions stem, in particular, from the rising gap between the scope of the pressing international issues and the admittedly inadequate cumulative capabilities of the great powers and international institutions to manage world affairs. In the meantime, the rise of ascending powers, often led by elites, ambitious and nationalistic, yet poorly prepared and frequently unwilling to assume global responsibilities, is bound to create even more disorder and conflict in the otherwise unstable and dangerous parts of the world.

Notably, a futuristic report circulated by the EU contains explicit signs of alarm:

> The ways in which the new economic powers will be willing and able to translate their weight into some form of political influence will be key to the future political and security system. … The ability of the West to influence international affairs will be put to the test as its share of world population and GDP is shrinking. The emerging powers bring with them their own vision of the world, which can differ considerably from that of the established ones. Consequently, the West will probably find it much harder to set the international agenda.[49]

In elaborating responses to the growing challenges by the ascending world to the status-quo powers, their decision makers have to deal with a high degree of uncertainty. One has to keep in mind that even though the geo-economic shift away from the shores of the Atlantic to the landmass of the Asia-Pacific has already been taking place for some time, its future scope and depth are nevertheless barely predictable. Although three compatible data scenarios by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), Centre d'Études Prospectives et d'Informations Internationales (CEPII), and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that have addressed distribution of economic outputs by world's major powerhouses in 2050 concur that US and EU shares would substantially shrink in comparison with China's and India's, their authors differ substantially in measuring future gaps in the dyadic distributions of relative economic weights.

Notably, in comparison with PwC and OECD long-term projections, CEPII estimates look most positive with respect to China's relative economic prospects and least optimistic with respect to India's. Thus, according to CEPII scenario, by mid-century the Chinese economy (measured in PPP) would become 2.8 times larger than the economies of the United States and the EU plus the United Kingdom, seven times bigger than Russia's, and 14-fold than Brazil's. India's GDP would by then exceed those of the United States and Europe by "only" 20 percent, and outweigh Russia's and Brazil's three and six times accordingly.[50] Although PwC and OECD experts also predict conspicuous prevalence of China's and India's economic outputs over the West at the 2050 horizon, in comparison with the CPEII's outlook, respective dyadic discrepancies in their projections turn to be smaller. Thus, according to PwC estimates, China's GDP, while significantly larger than any of her peers by 2050, could sur-

pass European economy by 75 percent,[51] the United States' by 62, and India's by 40 percent, and exceed those by Brazil 7.7 times, Russia's 8.3 times, and Japan's 8.7 times (see Table 4.1). OECD projections suggest the most moderate macroeconomic scenario for China: with "just" 16 percent of the world economic output by the mid-century, she could outdo Europe by 45 and the United States by 33 percent, could be 5.3 times larger than Brazil and eight times "heavier" than both Japan and Russia. India's GDP, then the second largest in the world, could outstrip the United States by almost 17 percent, Europe by 27 percent, Brazil 4.7 times, and Japan and Russia sevenfold.[52] One should not, however, take these figures for more than they are—projections of the presently known and easily quantifiable trends that in the future could nevertheless be over-written by the currently unpredictable factors and processes whose synergy is bound to ultimately shape quite a different reality, less so consider them as undisputable indicators of the future power balance. First of all, as every *quantitative* index, economic scales do not necessarily mirror the *qualitative* parameters of economy, including institutions, competitive-ness, and ingenuity. Generated by various combinations of labor force, accumulated capital, and factor productivity, economic output per se does not say anything either about a type of national economy or about its level of development since a labor-intensive economy with greater labor resources can create larger GDP than a knowledge-based economy with smaller labor force. In the modern *politico-strategic* context this means that a country with an advanced economy but smaller population and output can *look weaker* than a populous and large yet immature economy, while in reality the former's ingenuity can far exceed that of the latter. In a *military-strategic* sense this means that in case of war between the two, a small and advanced nation *is likely to be stronger* than the big and less developed one.[53] Second, as experts from some international economic agencies, such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), have pointed out, the future of economic pace in the so-far rapidly growing developing economies of Asia is less certain than it may seem.[54]

One of the greatest risks that these economies appear to be facing in the upcoming decades is the danger of falling into the so-called Middle-Income Trap (MIT)—a pattern of progressive economic slowdown and immobility after achieving a certain level of wealth and structural modernization.[55] Some economists warn of not an insignificant probability for China, for instance, to follow the trajectory of Latin American countries, such as Argentina and Brazil, which after a long period of growth have experienced

recession and stagnation, and subsequently failed to reach high-income status. In re-orienting PRC economy from export-driven to consumption-stimulated growth, once successful government strategy aimed at immediate results but fearful of undogmatic approach can fail to simultaneously secure the rise of investments and ensure continuous increase of consumption.[56] Facing relocation of world's manufacturing hub to Vietnam, Bangladesh, and other economies with cheap labor costs, yet still unprepared to generate a knowledge-based model of development, China may find herself in a situation when she, in the words of Homi Kharas and Harinder Kohli, would be simultaneously "unable to compete with low-income, low-wage economies in manufactured exports and unable to compete with advanced economies in high-skill innovations."[57]

While it is not our task here to go into details of various obstacles to China's and other rising powers' transition to the group of high-income nations and growth fading, it deems necessary to underscore the specifics of their institutional models that, according to Daron Acemoglu's and James A. Robinson's classification, fall into the category of "extractive" ones. "[E]xtractive economic institutions," they underscore, "are synergistically linked to extractive political institutions, which concentrate power in the hands of a few, who will then have incentives to maintain and develop extractive economic institutions for their benefit and use the resources they obtain to cement their hold on political power." Although, as Acemoglu and Robinson emphasize, such models can generate economic growth *temporarily*, they cannot make it sustainable since they tend to block incentives for creativity, and are prone to social and political implosion. These models are distinct from those grounded on "[i]nclusive economic institutions that enforce property rights, create a level playing field, and encourage investments in new technologies and skills [and therefore] are more conducive to economic growth than extractive economic institutions that are structured to extract resources from the many by the few and that fail to protect property rights or provide incentives for economic activity. Inclusive economic institutions are in turn supported by, and support, inclusive political institutions, that is, those that distribute political power widely in a pluralistic manner and are able to achieve some amount of political centralization so as to establish law and order, the foundations of secure property rights, and an inclusive market economy."[58] In the case of China, deficiencies of her extractive model of development are exacerbated by vertical (social) and horizontal (spatial) income disparity, aging of population, expensive investment in superfluous construction and infrastructure projects, and the infa-

mous system of household registration (*hukou*) heavily bearing on labor mobility. One factor, economy-resources discrepancy common for both China and India as well as other developing nations, exacerbated by detrimental impact of climate change on economy, is worth special consideration. The latter may prove to be detrimental to the Asian Century (AC) scenario projecting to bring four billion Asians to affluence by 2050. These aspirations may prove to be unsustainable as lion's shares of GDPs in the Global South in general, and Asian countries in particular, may be continuously consumed by adaptation and recovery costs (e.g., those connected with ramifications of floods and droughts, such as providing for drinkable water in thirsty cities and villages, investing additional funds in restoring infrastructure, and securing resources to accommodate inexhaustible flows of environmental migrants).

The tasks of dealing with numerous issues caused by impending environmental degradation in Asian countries are poised to refocus attention of their governments from other policy priorities, such as education, health, and institutional reforms, and their implementation. As dealing with climate change will consume statesmen's political and intellectual energy, the fragile nations of the region may become increasingly inward-looking and nationalistic. This propensity may bear negatively not only on the prospects of regional peace and stability but also to the role these nations might play in contributing to the maintenance of political and economic order at the global level. While it is unclear whether uneven impact of climate change and global warming would also result in arresting or significantly slowing down the unfolding processes of the global power redistribution from the advanced world to the developing nations, it is likely that one of its most probable consequences would be an increasing global pressure on the affluent West to incur the major share of the rising costs in maintaining global stability. With too many variables unknown at the present, it is, apparently, impossible to capture implications of this propensity for international politics of the future. In an optimist scenario, the top high-income nations would continue promoting close integration of the world community through free trade, technology transfers, and investment; yet, one cannot exclude that they can alternatively turn to isolationism and spur security fragmentation, should the burdens of additional responsibilities seem to their elites unfair and unfeasible.

Ontologically, the new patterns of East-West interdependence could bring about comprehensive changes in normative perceptions of power, which can result in the emergence of a new power hierarchy based on sort-

ing out and ranking nations in accordance with their levels of environmental resilience and records of contribution to global sustainability. Thus, an ability to deliver public goods to the relevant audiences in line with their expectations would evolve as the dominant criterion of the governmental credibility. Most importantly, governmental inability in the low- and middle-income countries to deliver policies that would promote high growth rates is bound to collide with public expectations of the opposite. This would create a different sort of policy trap for the regionally and globally ascending yet domestically still fragile states since their leaders, in line with the diversionary theory of war, might become tempted to convert public resentment over domestic policies into support of revisionist foreign policies. War is an old remedy for consolidating internal unity; as Jean Bodin (cited by Kenneth Waltz) wrote several centuries ago, "the best way of preserving a state, and guaranteeing it against sedition, rebellion, and civil war is to keep the subjects in amity one with another, and to this end, to find an enemy against whom they can make common cause."[59] Since engaging a nuclear-armed great power in a test of military strength for the purposes of consolidating internal unity would likely prove too risky for a troubled ascendant, it might, to this end, turn its attention to a weaker state, which can happen to be allied with a great power by a security agreement. As the latter is poised to experience a decline in its relative capability, it can inadvertently (and particularly if failing to maintain its power credibility) emanate an image of a "paper tiger" which can agitate and embolden a potential aggressor. Such an implosive combination of domestic and systemic factors can produce a chain reaction of structural changes increasing the risks of war.

As the current generation of the great powers continues to decline, resurgence of Asia is poised to have complex implications for their physical and ontological security. On the one hand, it can engender a prospect of sharing global responsibilities for maintenance of global peace and tranquility between the old and the new players. On the other hand, such a prospect can happen to be a delusion. Neither China, nor India or any other emerging power has demonstrated a desire or competence to lead the world in the observable time horizon. The hopes of sharing the burden of global securitization with the new powers, therefore, could prove vain and fictitious so that in the upcoming decades the descending powers—the United States and the EU—might still continue to constitute the sole anchors of international stability and security. Next, as redistribution of the relative power balance from the West to the Global South is projected to

endure in the long run, albeit at a lower pace, the ascending powers—despite their insufficient potency to deliver global public goods including affluence and safety—are likely to become even more ambitious and demanding with respect to their international status and rank. This proclivity would risk not only augmenting the otherwise dangerously high levels of political ambiguity and strategic uncertainty in the crisis-prone parts of the world but could also create new spheres of tension and conflict in the cross-cutting areas of the old and new powers' influence. Similar to the rapidly changing international structure during the interwar period of the last century, the nascent political-economic dynamics in the global power balance might have an alarming corollary as policy elites in the emerging powers could become overly complacent about their domestic capabilities, overconfident of their supremacy, and ultimately misapprehend the real strength and intentions of their peers. It is, therefore, quite probable, that the evolving combination of economic, political, and strategic variables at the global level would make it imperative for the virtually descending political units to enhance the credibility of their capabilities, reputations, interests, and intentions in order to avoid the traditional pattern of power transition fraught with the hazards of an all-out war.

Notes

1. See John T. Burns, *Cycles in Humans and Nature: An Annotated Bibliography* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1994).
2. Edward R. Dewey, *Cycles: The Mysterious Forces That Trigger Events* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1971), 1–2.
3. For a bibliography on the subject, see Kenneth Barr, "Long Waves: A Selective, Annotated Bibliography," *Review* 2, no.4 (Spring 1979):675–718.
4. See J.J. Van Duijn, *The Long Wave in Economic Life* (Boston: George Allen and Unwin, 1983).
5. See Nikolai Kondratieff, "The Long Waves in Economic Life," *Review* 2, no.4 (Spring 1979):519–562; Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Business Cycles: A Theoretical, Historical and Statistical Analysis of the Capitalist Process*, 2 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1939).
6. An excellent summary and analysis of the core studies addressing the long cycles-war nexus is given in Joshua S. Goldstein, *Long Cycles: Prosperity and War in the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).
7. Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, Authorized translation with notes by Charles Francis Atkinson (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1926), 106.

8. See Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 12 vols. (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1934–1961).

9. See, for example, Arnold J. Toynbee and D. C. Somervell, *A Study of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 535, 578.

10. Ibid., 574.

11. George Modelski, "The Long Cycle of Global Politics and the Nation-State," 214.

12. Long cycles in the world system are different from power cycles of the major political units; the former denote periods of supremacy by a dominant power, and, according to Modelski, on average last 100 years (see ibid., 217). The latter refer to the timeframes within which a political agency can exercise leadership functions in the international structure (see Charles F. Doran, "Confronting the Principles of the Power Cycle: Changing Systems Structure, Expectations, and War," in *Handbook of War Studies II,* ed. Manus I. Midlarsky (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 332), and can last substantially longer: the Western Roman Empire, for example, existed for almost 500 years, its successor, the Eastern Roman Empire, the Byzantine, managed to survive for about a millennium, and the Ottoman Empire subsisted 600 years. The lifespans of France, Britain, and Russia as great powers have exceeded several centuries, and they continue to qualify for the title.

13. In addition to George Modelski, "The Long Cycle of Global Politics and the Nation-State," also see George Modelski, ed., *Exploring Long Cycles* (Boulder, Colo.: L. Rienner Publishers, 1987); George Modelski, *Long Cycles in World Politics* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987). On the critique of LCT of world politics see, for example, Henk W. Houweling and Jan G. Siccama, "Long Cycle Theory: A Further Discussion," *International Interactions* 20, no.3 (November 1994):223–226.

14. See George Modelski, William R. Thompson, *Seapower in Global Politics, 1494–1993* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988).

15. See George Modelski, William R. Thompson, *Leading Sectors and World Powers: The Coevolution of Global Politics and Economics* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996). Also see William R. Thompson, *On Global War: Historical-Structural Approaches to World Politics* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1988); Paul M. Johnson and William R. Thompson (eds.) *Rhythms in Politics and Economics* (New York: Praeger, 1985); William R. Thompson, ed., *Great Power Rivalries* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1999); Karen A. Rasler & William R. Thompson, *The Great Powers and Global Struggle, 1490–1990* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1994); William R. Thompson, ed., *Contending Approaches to World System Analysis* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1983); Jack S. Levy and William

R. Thompson *The Arc of War: Origins, Escalation, and Transformation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011).

16. See George Modelski and William R. Thompson, *Seapower and Global Politics, 1494–1993*, 16.

17. See Nathaniel Beck, "The Illusion of Cycles in International Relations," *International Studies Quarterly* 35, no.4 (December 1991):455–476.

18. See Gerald Silverberg, "Long Waves in Global Warfare and Maritime Hegemony? A Complex Systems Perspective," in *Kondratieff Waves, Warfare and World Security*, ed. Tessalano C. Devezas (Amsterdam: IOS Press (2006), 154–164).

19. George Modelski and William R. Thompson, *Seapower and Global Politics, 1494–1993*, 97.

20. A. F. K. Organski, *World Politics* (New York: Knopf, 1958).

21. A. F. K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). Also see Jacek Kugler and Douglas Lemke (eds.), *Parity and War: Evaluations and Extensions of the War Ledger* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Ronald Tammen, Jacek Kugler, and Douglas Lemke [et al.], *Power Transitions: Strategies for the 21st Century* (New York: Chatham House, 2000). On the critique of PTT, see, for instance, Peter Harris, "Problems with Power-Transition Theory: Beyond the Vanishing Disparities Thesis," *Asian Security* 10, no.3 (September 2014):241–259; also Richard Ned Lebow and Benjamin Valentino, "Lost in Transition: A Critical Analysis of Power Transition Theory," *International Relations* 23, no.3 (September 2009):389–410.

22. John Bagot Glubb, *The Fate of Empires and Search for Survival* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1978), 22.

23. William R. Thompson, *The Emergence of the Global Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 2000), 3–19.

24. The term "Cardwell's law" was dubbed by Joel Mokyr in Joel Mokyr, *The Lever of Riches: Technological Creativity and Economic Progress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 207, and refers to the phenomenon of periodicity in the technological development of nations as outlined by Donald Cardwell in Donald S. L. Cardwell, *Turning Points in Western Technology: A Study of Technology, Science, and History* (New York: Science History Publications, 1972).

25. Charles P. Kindleberger, *World Economic Primacy, 1500 to 1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 25.

26. See Charles F. Doran, *Politics of Assimilation: Hegemony and Its Aftermath* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971); Charles F. Doran, *Systems in Crisis: New Imperatives of High Politics at Century's End* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Also, see Charles F. Doran and Wes Parsons, "War and the Cycle of Relative Power,"

American Political Science Review 74, no.4 (December 1980):947–965; Charles F. Doran, "War and Power Dynamics: Economic Underpinnings," *International Studies Quarterly* 27, no.4 (December 1983):419–441; Charles F. Doran, "Economics, Philosophy of History, and the "Single Dynamic" of Power Cycle Theory: Expectations, Competition, and Statecraft," in "Power Cycle Theory and Global Politics," special issue, *International Political Science Review* 24, no.1 (January 2003):13–49; Charles F. Doran, "Power Cycle Theory and the Contemporary State System." In *Contending Approaches to World System Analysis*, ed. William R. Thompson (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1983).

27. Charles F. Doran, "Confronting the Principles of the Power Cycle: Changing Systems Structure, Expectations, and War," In *Handbook of War Studies II,* ed. Manus I. Midlarsky (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 332.

28. See Ibid., 365.

29. On the prospects of Russia's economic development see John P. Hardt and Robert F. Bennett, *Russia's Uncertain Economic Future* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2003); Olga Oliker and Tanya Charlick-Paley, *Assessing Russia's Decline. Trends and Implications for the United States and the U.S. Air Force* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2002).

30. Jim Penman, *Biohistory: The Decline and Fall of the West* (Newcastle upon Tyne (UK): Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 14. For a traditional account of British decline in power, see Peter Clarke and Clive Trebilcock, *Understanding Decline: Perceptions and Realities of British Economic Performance* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

31. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), 153–154.

32. On the subject of French power decline see, for example, Alain Chaffel, *Le déclin français: mythe ou réalité ?* (Paris: Bréal, 2013); Nicolas Baverez, *La France qui tombe: Un constat clinique du déclin français* (Paris: Perrin, 2003); Maurice Vaïsse. *La puissance ou l'influence? la France dans le monde depuis 1958* (Paris: Fayard, 2009).

33. François Crouzet, "French Economic Growth in the Nineteenth Century Reconsidered," *History* 59, no.196 (February 1974):167–179. Also, see François Crouzet, *A History of the European Economy, 1000–2000* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2001).

34. See, for example, Noah Smith, "China's Economy Is Worse Than You Think," *Bloomberg*, November 3, 2015. Available at: https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2015-11-03/china-s-slump-might-be-much-worse-than-we-thought.

35. *Reuters*, December 6, 2010. Available at: http://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-economy-wikileaks-idUSTRE6B527D20101206.

36. Stefano Guzzini, *Power, Realism and Constructivism* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 8.
37. Samuel P. Huntington, "Why International Primacy Matters," *International Security* 17, no.4 (Spring 1993):68.
38. On an interesting discussion of the distinctions among primacy, hegemony, and empire see, for instance, Hall Gardner, "World Hegemony and Its Aftermath," *Sens Public*, 28 février 2005. Available at: http://www.sens-public.org/article119.html?lang=fr.
39. Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, 946.
40. Some analysts, like Mackubin Owens, contrarily, view the Bush Doctrine of interventionist unilateralism, purportedly "based on the intersection of hegemonic stability theory and the theory of the democratic peace," as an embodiment of "benevolent primacy." Mackubin Thomas Owens, "The Bush Doctrine: The Foreign Policy of Republican Empire," *Orbis* (Winter 2009):26–27.
41. Richard N. Haass, "Pondering Primacy," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 4, no.2 (Summer 2003):91.
42. See H. Andrew Michener, Edward J. Lawler, and Samuel B. Bacharach, "Perception of Power in Conflict Situations," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 28, no.2 (November 1973):155–162.
43. See, for example, A. F. K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 211.
44. Quoted in Geoffrey Jukes, *The Russo-Japanese War 1904–1905* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing 2002), 21.
45. Julian Stafford Corbett, *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese war: 1904–1905*, v. 1 (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1994).
46. Contrary to the initial Japanese demands the Treaty did not impose reparations on Russia, and allowed her to maintain sovereignty over the northern (and the largest) part of the island of Sakhalin. See: The Treaty of Portsmouth, 1905—September 5, 1905. Available at: http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Treaty_of_Portsmouth.
47. The Treaty of Nanjing (Nanking), signed on August 29, 1842, laid down the tenets of UK-China relations on British terms. In "putting an end to the misunderstandings and consequent hostilities which have arisen between the two countries," the Chinese government, in accordance with the Treaty, agreed to pay the British Crown $21 million, ceded their sovereignty over the island of Hong Kong in favor of the United Kingdom, and permitted the British subjects "to carry on their mercantile transactions with whatever persons they please [in China]." "Text of the Treaty of Nanking," in *China Trade and Empire: Jardine, Matheson & Co. and the Origins of British Rule in Hong Kong, 1827–1843*, ed. Alain Le Pichon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 572–575. In China, this and

similar agreements with the Western powers are known as "unequal treaties." Note that China then failed to convert her numeric economic preponderance over the West into a superior bargaining leverage. On the "unequal treaties" in China's perspective, see Dong Wang, *China's Unequal Treaties: Narrating National History* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2005). For an explanation of the causes behind Imperial China's power inferiority in comparison with the West, in particular in the military realm, see C.J. Peers, *Late Imperial Chinese Armies 1520–1840* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 1997).

48. See, for instance, World Economic Forum, "The Inclusive Growth and Development Report 2017," Geneva: World Economic Forum, January 2017, 8–10.

49. European Commission, *Global Europe 2050* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union), 14–15.

50. Calculated on the basis of data presented in Jean Fouré, Agnès Bénassy-Quéré & Lionel Fontagné, "The Great Shift: Macroeconomic Projections for the World Economy at the 2050 Horizon," CEPII Working Paper 2012 – 03, February 10, 2012, 63. Available at http://www.cepii.fr.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

53. Much would depend, of course, on how big a gap between an advanced but smaller A and a less developed but larger B is in terms of their relative levels of fighting power as at a certain point A's advantages in qualitative superiority can be nullified by B's inferior but larger numbers.

54. See Asian Development Bank, *Asia 2050: Realizing the Asian Century* (Manila: Asian Development Bank, 2011).

55. The term "Middle-Income Trap" was coined by a team of economists from the World Bank led by Indermit Gill and Homi Kharas. (See Indermit Gill and Homi Kharas; together with Deepak Bhattasali … [et al.], *An East Asian Renaissance: Ideas for Economic Growth* (Washington: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, 2007), 17–18).

56. See Ibid.

57. Homi Kharas and Harinder Kohli, "What Is the Middle Income Trap, Why Do Countries Fall into It, and How Can It Be Avoided?" *Global Journal of Emerging Market Economies* 3, no.3 (September 2011):282. MIT is defined as an inability to "converge," that is, overcome a threshold of $20,000 GDP PPP per capita. See Harpaul Alberto Kohli, Y. Aaron Szyf, and Drew Arnold, "Construction and Analysis of a Global GDP Growth Model for 185 Countries through 2050," *Global Journal of Emerging Market Economies* 4, no.2 (May 2012):115. Also, see Huang Yiping, "Can China Escape the Middle-Income Trap?" *China Economic Journal* 9, no.1

(January 2016):17–33; Anders C. Johansson and Xiaobo Zhang, "Inequality, Growth and the Middle-Income Trap in China: Editorial," *China Economic Review* 31 (2014):365–366; Huang Yiping, Gou Qin, and Wang Xun, "Financial Liberalization and the Middle-Income Trap: What Can China Learn from the Cross-Country Experience?" *China Economic Review* 31 (2014):426–440; Randall Peerenboom, "China and the Middle-Income Trap: Toward a Post Washington, Post Beijing Consensus," *The Pacific Review* 27, no.5 (October 2014):651–673; Derong Zhang, "The Mechanism of the Middle Income Trap and the Potential Factors Influencing China's Economic Growth," *Frontiers of Economics in China* 9, no.3 (2014):499–528.

58. Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty* (New York: Crown Business, 2012), 429–430.

59. Jean Bodin, *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, translated by M. J. Tooley (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955), Book V, Ch. V, 168 cited by Kenneth N. Waltz in *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 81.

Dynamics of Primacy

1 QUANTIFYING PREPONDERANCE

The foregoing data allows us to work out certain quantified criteria of preponderance. Assumingly, to exercise external influence, a nation needs demonstrable prevalence over her immediate competitors allowing her to serve as an attractive gravitation pole for weaker states or enabling her to channel resources needed for their coercion. In the following hypothesis, one can presume that the time junctures of maximum economic shares are simultaneously the periods of supremacy zenith. This is why to determine the appropriate power threshold, the relative economic prevalence should be correlated with historical records of power extension.

While it is clear that the size of extensive variables like auspicious demographics and indigenous natural resources has been explicitly reflected in GDP shares at the lower stages of economic progress, in establishing economic domination in this century their relative salience has substantially fallen in comparison with intensive factors of growth. Still, other things, like levels of technological and socio-economic development and entrepreneurial vibrancy being equal, the productive capacity of a smaller nation is lower in comparison with a larger nation. While the role of the merely quantitative parameters of population in economic development has relatively diminished with the change of growth stages, the quality of the labor force, the size and speed of its reproduction, advancement, and expansion—spurred by investments in human capital—have emerged as

the core determinants of economic pre-eminence.[1] What follows from this observation is that for great powers with aging and/or smaller populations there is no other way to sustain primacy beyond maintaining superiority in levels of education and training, technological innovation and capital accumulation, labor productivity, and other intensive factors of production.[2]

As we can assume, a powerful nation reaches the level of *sub-regional supremacy* with a share of 5 percent in the world GDP ratio or when exceeding the economic size of her next *immediate competitor* two-fold (e.g., all major European powers at different stages of their development); begins claiming *regional dominance* when approaching 9 percent (Britain and the United States circa 1870, Germany circa 1913, and the Soviet Union circa 1950); and is poised to craft her sub-global sphere of influence or *Pax* at a level exceeding 20 percent (*Pax Sinica* in the beginning of the third century BC, *Pax Europa* circa 1600, and *Pax Americana* circa 1950).[3]

2   Asian Economy and Prospects of a New *Pax Sinica*

In the evolving global power structure, much will depend upon the prospects of Asia's economic performance. In considering long-term prospects of regional economic development, for example, by 2050, experts, such as those from the Centennial Group or the Asian Development Bank (ADP), usually contemplate two possible scenarios. An optimistic one, the Asian Century (AC), projects that in the next decades China and other fast-growing Asian nations could succeed in joining a group of the high-income economies, currently comprising the United States, EU, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and seven advanced economies in Asia. A pessimistic scenario, on the contrary, presumes that the ascending nations in Asia could fail to overcome structural barriers on the road to wealth and prosperity, and fall into the Middle-Income Trap (MIT).[4] The discrepancy between the two projections is quite significant in terms of the future distribution of economic power between the West and the China-centric world. According, for example, to projections by Harpaul Alberto Kohli, Y. Aaron Szyf, and Drew Arnold, the combined economic output (measured in market exchange rates) of Europe and North America in an Asia-optimistic scenario could account for 29 percent of the total, while that of Asia for more than a half of the global GDP by 2050, making Asia's economic magnitude

2.7 times bigger than that of the West. In an Asia-pessimistic scenario, the picture is projected though to change significantly, as their shares could constitute, accordingly, 42 and 31 percent, thus preserving the global economic preponderance of the West over Asia by mid-century, with a share in the world economy estimated by then to exceed 1.35 times that of China and the rest of Asia.[5]

The ADP refers to Centennial Group projections also based on market exchange rates to calculate current and future distribution of world economic output. According to these projections, in the AC scenario China could significantly outpace India and the United States. In the MIT scenario, China's share comprises just half of the optimistic outlook, placing her behind the United States, while that of the United States conspicuously rises, and India's substantially falls. However, one receives quite a different, and, in my view, a more accurate picture of economic power projections if GDP is measured in PPP. Depending upon a scenario, by 2050, the United States could either regain its economic supremacy over its peers, or fall behind India and China. The pecking order of the three largest economies in each scenario differs remarkably so that under AC India could be at the top, followed by China and the United States, whereas under the MIT scenario the rank order would reverse, with the United States at the first place, China the second, and India the third. Note that contrary to the majority of long-term global economic forecasts, neither the AC nor the MIT PPP-based scenarios project China to become the world's largest economy by 2050 (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Projections of the United States', China's, and India's Shares in World GDP (PPP) by 2050 (%)

Country	Asian Century scenario	Middle-Income Trap scenario
China	18.2	12.7
India	19.3	11.7
United States	10.7	15.2
World Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Author's calculations based on data from the Centennial Group presented in Asian Development Bank, *Asia 2050: Realizing the Asian Century*, 2011, 120; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, Volume I: Comprehensive Tables*, ST/ESA/SER.A/399 (United Nations: New York, 2017), Table A.9 (estimates and medium variant).

A study on the China-centric world system highlights an unprecedented longevity of the *Pax Sinica* that since its formation under the Han Dynasty had existed for about two millennia to the middle of the nineteenth century when China as a state was ultimately incorporated in the Eurocentric international order based on the tenets laid down by the Peace of Westphalia.[6] It has become almost consensual to assert that China's ascendance to the role of "superpower" is a preordained matter. The evidence of the trend, this viewpoint holds, is in the projected growth of her world economic share, which, before the end of the second decade of this century, would exceed that of the United States. By pointing to the lion's portion of the world GDP that the Middle Kingdom was accounting for before subjecting to the Western powers in the middle of the nineteenth century, the common wisdom suggests that what is happening now and is projected to happen in the future is the correction of history, its return to things normal. China, in accordance with this logic, is regaining her central place in the world, the place she was holding for almost two millennia. Indeed, as Table 5.1 demonstrates, for more than eighteen centuries China's gross output constituted, on average, 27–28 percent—larger than any other nation-state's or even region's in the same timeframe.

The sheer size of China's market and her immense productive and consuming capacities attracted merchants from the neighboring nations and secured her central place in the regional trade. By practicing tributary system as the primary tool of establishing and expanding her preponderance in Asia, Chinese rulers managed to create a distinct spatial system of patron-vassal's relations, *Pax Sinica*, at its heyday encompassing 72 participants. Some observers, such as Yongjin Zhang, perceive modern China's growth in the world commerce and production as signs of *Pax Sinica*'s re-emergence.[7]

While a comprehensive discussion of the prospects of this propensity is beyond the framework of this book, it is important to briefly identify here the principal distinctions between the past and the perceived China-centric systems.[8] First, the past system was established in the absence of serious competitors to China's preponderance in the Eastern Hemisphere. In the first millennium BC, Europe's existence went practically unnoticed in China. For the next several centuries the encounters of Dutch, Spanish, and other European nations, who accepted the rather humiliating by European standards terms of trade with the Chinese court, created an impression that its rule is, indeed, immortal and omnipotent. The arrival of Britons radically changed this perspective, and revealed the obsolescence of the "Chinese consensus."

It would be erroneous though to qualify the imperial China-centric regional order as a sub-global system because at the time of its existence the world did not constitute a global system. Second, rather than a sub-global system in the modern sense of the term, *Pax Sinica* was a unique type of civilization united by common culture. Since the tributary system's demise and replacement by the European system of law, it is hard to believe that the former would be able to compete with the latter unless China reaches total prevalence in the world power structure. The projections show that this, however, would not happen since the structural conditions permitting China to singularly prevail over her neighbors in the past have long vanished. Although her global share in the world output will reach 21 percent by 2050, the unprecedented pace of growth so far underlying her rapid ascent is projected to slow down as significantly as it was skyrocketing since inception of Deng Xiaoping's reforms—from 10 percent in 1980–2009 to less than 4 percent in 2020–2050.[9] As a recent study on the prospects of China's productivity growth demonstrates, the slowdown of the latter is caused by a combination of domestic structural factors including her aging population and loss of late-mover advantage, and is a long-term trend rather than an easily reversible decline.[10] The ensuing external commercial conditions also do not look as promising to PRC leadership's economic aspirations as in the past, particularly given the Trump administration's desire to contain China's exports to US market and limit her business attractiveness for American investors. By all counts, US neomercantilist and protectionist stance on the People's Republic is bound to bear negatively on the nation's modernization and development plans.

Above all, in promoting its international influence, the Middle Kingdom will face competitors that—in the zenith of its imperial reign—were either non-existent or too weak: a remote British North American dominion turned into the world's super-powerful state; the Continent of Europe, defragmented and warring for the most part of its history, has become economically and politically integrated; and China's biggest neighbor, India, de-centralized and too weak to be reckoned with in the past, has transformed into a consolidated and powerful geopolitical force.[11]

Those have become paramount novels, and the changes ahead promise to be even more impressive as India's empowered economy is projected to overtake China's after 2060, and the core of the Western nations will be united across the Atlantic in a powerful economic bloc with a combined economic magnitude exceeding a quarter of the world's total. Third, to be sure, China's prevalence in the ACFTA could prompt her to translate her economic power in cultural appeal, but given that the

economic ascendance in Asia converges with the rise of nationalism and national pride, the rebirth of the former patron-vassal system that was the underlying foundation of *Pax Sinica* looks improbable.

If the prospects of the regional China-centric system's revival are doubtful given the questionable power of China's cultural appeal beyond her national frontiers, it would be even less reasonable to conceive the probability of her establishing benign domination in the regions historically abstruse to her, like North America and Europe, let alone compelling those to subjection, given their own civilizational identity, global aspirations, and technological superiority. In short, there are more grounds to suggest that instead of "dominating" the globe in this century the PRC would rather resemble a gigantic "Chinatown" on the world map, a colorful tourist destination, assumingly much more prosperous and flamboyant than ever in her long history, yet surrounded by polities nurturing their own identity, wary of Chinese supremacy, and reluctant to shift their allegiances to Beijing.

3   Grandeur, Primacy, and "Élan Vital"

While it looks mostly unlikely that the evolving international system will any time soon return to bipolarity, its current structure does not resemble previous editions of multipolarity, such as the one constituted by the European great powers in the nineteenth century, or one that emerged in the interwar period. Although the new generation of ascenders to the league of major powers is considered to be a preordained trend, with India, Brazil, and Mexico projected to sideline the traditional great powers, such as the United Kingdom, France, and Russia, in the list of world economic giants by 2050, this alone would neither suffice to qualify them as "great" nor automatically uproot the status-quo states, for the birth and death of great powers take place not in the market place but in a mortal battlefield, however appalling that might seem to an enlightened mind.

Examples of nations' failure to be up to the once-held great power ranks are not rare in the European history: Spain, the Dutch Republic, Sweden, and Austria—each enjoyed comparatively long periods of regional domination, which, however, eventually ended with their irretrievable military defeats by stronger adversaries. Thus, the French victory in the Battle of Rocroi in 1643 precipitated the end of Habsburg Spain's *Siglo de Oro*, and the Dutch *Gouden Eeuw* had to expire with the United Provinces decisively put to rout on the sea by England and on the land by France in

the end of the eighteenth century. Likewise, the Swedish mastery of Northern Europe was ruined by Russia in the Battle of Poltava in 1709, and Austrian ambitions to maintain her leadership in the confederation of German states were buried by Prussian troops in 1866. "A great power does not die in its bed," remarked Martin Wight in his eloquent account of great power history. "Great-power status is lost, as it is won by violence."[12] To claim *grandeur*, a nation, therefore, would need to pride herself in beating not just *any* adversary but one in the principal power league. It is, however, highly unlikely that in the nuclear age an ascending power— no matter how strong her hard power is—would try to overcome her status discrepancy by risking to test an "old" great power's destructive strengths even in a small military conflict. Given the probability of escalation, this would not be "simply" irrational but indubitably suicidal. Above all, one should possess, perhaps, a truly peculiar fancy to imagine situations under which a military confrontation between, say, Brazil and France or Mexico and Russia could take place in principle.

The aforementioned de-concentration of technology, capital, knowledge, and other viable assets is bound to diminish the relative power levels of the most powerful nations. Above all, given the dynamic and cyclical nature of power in general, to indefinitely maintain the national share of global power at its historical maximum is improbable. This eventuality would probably not have posed a particularly dramatic challenge to policymakers should they have calmly perceived decline in national relative power as a natural process, and were eager to respond by humbly downgrading their ambitions and let others, more dynamic and agile powers, take their place in assuming world leadership.

Such an approach, however, is by no means the case with the great powers as national role perceptions by their elites are extremely conservative, and tend to remain fundamentally unchanged for indeterminate periods of time. This dichotomy does not though have to stay unabridged. It is important to understand that its mitigation is both an objective historical pattern and a function of subjective policymaking. Their synthesis precipitates an imperative pursuit of policy aimed at sustaining superiority in world politics by maintaining power credibility. In the modern times, such policies, mostly initiated at downward segments of power curve, are usually performed by accelerated appropriation of intangible rather than tangible means. Evolving as a declining great power's *modus operandi*, these policies in the long run serve to facilitate her *modus vivendi*, which I term *grand strategy of maintaining primacy*.

Note that at the upper stream of their power tide, the core nations do not need to secure verification of their power credibility by others—it speaks for itself. The situation, however, begins to deteriorate when, after reaching the highest point of their relative power, they begin to experience a deficit of tangible power capabilities. Bearing negatively not only on confidence that the important others have vested in them, but, as it will be shown further, also on their self-perception, this pattern makes them bound to face and ponder over their credibility gap. These and other cases demonstrate that a nation's share in the world GDP cannot serve as a single indicator to make a reliable judgment about her relative comprehensive power. Admittedly, to adequately evaluate the latter, one should take into account a set of variables. Some scholars suggest combining the national economic share with indexes of GDP per capita and military expenditure.[13] However, even this equation alone would not allow us to reliably assess national power, which is, as was mentioned before, too multifaceted and intricate a property to be measured only by quantitative indicators. As evidenced by military history, organizational efficiency and national spirit (a notion French philosopher Henri Bergson called *élan vital*, or "vital impetus") have proved to be of no lesser significance for stronger nations than their tangible assets in times of crisis, and failure to take these invisible properties into account by decision makers have frequently led to devastating political and material ramifications.[14]

It is worth to refer here to some novel approaches to the ontology of power, such as those suggested by constructivism. Noting that in the view of realist constructivists "power is not only instrumental," Samuel Barkin, for example, argues that "[p]ower is implicated not only in determining which social structures triumph over others, but in the construction of those structures in the first place."[15] If one maintains that the structure of the international system is hierarchical, and the relations between its participants are characterized by domination and compliance, it would be logical to assume that those at the top of the pyramid are also able to exercise their power to the ends of promoting those social constructs that are auspicious to their self-interests including maintenance of their privileged positions. Under ideal conditions, they would, for instance, be able to construct perceptions of their power by others in a favorable way, prioritize attractiveness of certain power components, and promote allegiances through elaborate mechanisms of social domination. One of these mechanisms rests upon an ability to set agendas and construct the language of discourse. Originally a poststructuralist perspective formulated

by Jacques Lacan, it is close to constructivist conception by Nicholas Onuf. While positing constructivism's major thesis that holds people and societies as products of their mutual construction, Onuf seemed to overlook the asymmetric nature of both entities' impact on each other's construction. If one agrees, for instance, that China's power image is a construct of the United States as well as of other societies, it would be fair to surmise that given US position of preponderance in global social construction resources, American interpretation of China's power would have a prevalent meaning in its perception by others.[16] For example, the centrality of English as the universal language of communication in the globalized world gives the United States and Britain exceptional opportunities in constructing the linguistic dimension of international relations in line with their preferences and interests. From poststructuralist and constructivist perspectives this qualification constitutes an underestimated competitive advantage in substantiating their power credibility. Since the latter is determined by message authenticity (see Part II), while "the message truly belongs to the dimension of language,"[17] the Anglo-Saxon world despite its relative decline in the material attributes of supremacy maintains enormous intangible resources in constructing desired images of its power. This advantage though is not absolute as messages may be lost in translation, and other important international actors like China, Russia, and the Arab states continue to hold monopoly on constructing the language of discourse within their respective ethno-linguistic domains.

4   Shrinking Pendulums and Hegemony

As one can see, the relative power of the large European nations has had ups and downs several times, and although now they are stronger than ever before in terms of their absolute might, they, by all counts, have passed their current cycle's upper point in relative terms. I call this phenomenon *The Paradigm of Shrinking Pendulums*. Note that each time after passing their full cycle France, Britain, and Russia entered their subsequent lifespan at a lower relative power point, and with a lesser share in the world population. Although they have successfully passed through stages of global power transitions by defeating (even though often in coalitions with other powers) their adversaries, their resilience came at a high price to their natural reproduction capacity. The exhaustion of demographic potential one needs to occupy a conspicuous place in the list of the largest world nations has, for instance, reached focal points in Russia and France, so that in case of the

latter her capitulation to Germany in 1940 looked as a rational option for France's national self-preservation—even at the risk of her elimination from the list of the great powers.

Likewise, Russia appears to find herself in a permanent downward trend of population decline: her population is projected to shrink from 147.6 million in 1990 to 132.7 million by 2050.[18] Europe's war experience in the last century suggests that a war-at-any-price scenario is no more acceptable for her major powers, and, supposedly, is rejected by powerful nations in other parts of the world. A new policy has to be worked out to preserve their primacy without a costly sacrifice that might totally nullify fruits of their victories.

The seeds of big powers' fading are contained in their very development which passes through several common stages. One can find a remarkable similarity in the power curve of the modern great powers and that of the past empires. John Glubb's seminal essay on empires defined six distinct periods (ages) in their life cycles. Beginning with the phase of outburst (Pioneers), they include Conquests, Commerce, Affluence, Intellect, and Decadence. Notably, each specific period creates conditions for an ensuing step, and like any living organism a nation passes from youth to maturity followed by old age and decrepitude.

A big nation enters the first phase, the Age of Pioneers, full of exuberance. This excessive energy forces her to seek extension of her territory and economy, giving way to two almost parallel processes—military expansion and development of trade—marking the Age of Conquests and the Age of Commerce. With time, exhausted by conquest and enriched by commerce, the nation enters an intermediate phase of "high noon" accompanied by defensiveness and pacifism in foreign policy before the stage of affluence fully unfolds. A showcase of prosperity, she becomes a coveted destination for foreigners whose loyalty to the new motherland in the Age of Affluence appears to be beyond suspicion. Satiated by material good, the society develops a lust for knowledge; sciences and arts blossom as with the abundance of wealth a new age, the Age of Intellect ensues. But with the development of knowledge comes moral malaise: self-sacrifice and sense of duty give way to frivolity and cynicism. The firm moral beliefs and virtues, indispensable for sustaining a consolidated society and a strong state, erode, and common decay paralyzes the nation's will and resilience. The Age of Decadence does not, however, result so much in her physical death as in her moral degradation: the nation loses her credibility. She is not "great" anymore.[19]

Johan Galtung and his colleagues came to an even more straightforward conclusion: while analyzing developments that led to the decay of the Roman Empire, and comparing them to processes taking place in the modern West, they found spectacular commonalities, particularly in that the decision makers in both entities turned out to be so overwhelmed with expansionist missions that they left internal affairs in their homelands out of appropriate attention.[20] Thus, the very logic undergirding the development of strong nations precipitates their eventual decay and destruction.

The commonality among the foregoing concepts is that they posit the decline and eventual fall of hegemonic powers as inevitable. Since this proposition is based on the studies of historical cases, an inquiry into the future of the contemporary great powers should not necessarily be bound to consent with the foregoing hypothesis. In other words, one can reasonably question the purportedly preordained fatality of a great power destiny. First of all, any decline is relative, and examples of such European powers as Britain, France, and Russia that have demonstrated a spectacular longevity of their international status provide substantial doubts as to whether the fall of any great power is indeed an imminent finale. Second, ours is an era of spectacular scientific progress and technological achievements, revolutionizing the life of the mankind in numerous instances.

Hopefully, the realm of politics should not stay out of the mainstream of universal change. Unfolding against the backdrop of globalization, and in many ways triggered by the latter, the paradigm of the universal advancement opens unprecedented horizons for resourceful nations to generate prosperity and endure security. At the same time, third, the ensuing age of universal change creates additional prerequisites for the strongest and most ingenious among nations to retain their positions of primacy and international leadership despite the gloomy predictions of their purportedly inevitable waning.

In other words, there are sufficient reasons to surmise that due to their inexhaustible innovative potential and "smart" policies aimed at sustaining their credibility in world politics, the current generation of the leading Western powers can manage others' perceptions about their primacy and thereby mitigate structural trends detrimental to their exceptional status quo.

The task of retaining primacy, understandably, not simple by itself, is not in the least confronted by the very nature of great powers, and namely their predisposition for hubris. For example, in accomplishing her tasks of

aggrandizement, any great power (in)voluntarily is interfering in the sphere of interests of her peers. Such interference irrevocably causes the great powers to struggle with each other by unleashing arms races, waging proxy wars, and other wasteful undertakings, while diverting precious resources that they might have hopefully used for retaining primacy in more cost-efficient and benign ways.

The costs of aggrandizement tend to rise proportionate to efforts undertaken by a state in attempts to promote its goals, and in correlation to attempts by its adversaries to repel these efforts. This pattern inevitably causes exhaustion of great power resources that her leaders originally plan to apply for a grand design. Next, faced with the issue of resource scarcity—demographic, political, economic, financial, and military-technological—a state often resorts to offshore balancing by engaging other nations in containing its adversaries.[21] To do this, they have to transfer their military technology and economic resources to their proxies to enhance their power faculties. This pattern inadvertently leads to dissipation of power capabilities, earlier concentrated in a limited number of power centers, to a wider number of states. Additionally, once a regional hegemon poses security dilemmas to its weaker neighbors, they opt in favor of forging alliances with the former's peer-competitors.

Thus, powerful nations become, in effect, voluntarily engaged in processes of global power distribution whereby comparative diminution of their international salience becomes perpetual. The larger the power dissipation, the lesser the internal capabilities that can generate forces able to consciously control actions of others let alone manage the entropy of international affairs. Power erosion reduces expediency of crafting grand strategies—an endeavor that makes sense under predictable geopolitical settings; instead, policy managers become progressively mired in devising responses to anarchical events unfolding beyond their discretion.

Overwhelmed by this need, they can hardly elaborate vision required for a timely anticipation of long-term trends and challenges, as well as generate appropriate ingenuity to successfully deal with them in the future. Although the inability of decision makers to efficiently respond to a growing number of domestic and external emergencies may be conceived as a reasonable, albeit unfortunate, account for inadequate policy measures, this can hardly justify their follies, which many tend to view among the causes rather than effects of power decline.[22]

5   The Lippmann Syndrome, Structural Shifts, and Burden-Sharing

The primary issue with the "greatness" though is what can be called the "Lippmann syndrome"—a gap between great power ambitions and inadequate policy means to bring them to fruition. What the political writer Walter Lippmann described as a purely American phenomenon—a discrepancy between strategic obligations and resources needed to sustain them—can be attributed to any great power. Statesmen's utmost strategic task in the realm of international politics, argued Lippmann, is to balance commitments with capabilities. By a foreign commitment, for instance, in the case of the United States he understood "an obligation outside the continental limits of the United States, which may in the last analysis have to be met by waging war." Such pledges must be supported by "adequate power," which Lippmann defined as "the force which is necessary to prevent such a war or to win it if it cannot be prevented." This should be distinguished from what he called the "necessary power." The latter's notion included "the military force which can be mobilized effectively within the domestic territory of the United States and also the reinforcement which can be obtained from dependable allies."[23] As one can see, the aforementioned concept anticipated deterrence and offshore balancing, which, as will be demonstrated further, have evolved as highly contentious policy means to sustain supremacy in the new century. Ceteris paribus, the novelty of the ensuing age is that with the global dissipation of sensitive dual-use technologies, and in the first place the nuclear ones, the monopoly of the great powers on the most harmful means of violence risks being undermined. As the second atomic age unfolds, the emergence of a new generation of nuclear states risks making the exceptional status of the "old" nuclear powers obsolete.

The growing demographic discrepancy between the developed and developing worlds makes the otherwise compound picture of the global power distribution even more complex. While the total population of the Global North, including Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan, is projected to grow from 1.190 billion in 2000 to 1.298 billion people by 2050, its global share could dwindle from 19.4 percent to just 13.3 percent. In the meantime, the total population of the Global South, embracing Africa, Asia (except Japan), Latin America and the Caribbean plus Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia is projected to grow 1.7 times—from almost 5 billion to almost 8.5 billion people, with its

global share increasing respectively from 80.6 percent to 86.7 percent (see Table 5.2). Therefore, by mid-century the number of people living in the developing countries could surpass that of the developed nations 6.5 times in comparison with 4.2 times in 2000 and 2.1 times in 1950.[24]

By 2050, the United States is projected to be the only developed nation staying in the list of the world's top ten most populous countries. Although in the next several decades, the population of the United States is projected to substantially increase, so is the population of Latin American, African, and Asian countries—but at much higher rates. While ranking third after China and India in 2017, three decades later the United States is predicted to be surpassed by Nigeria, whose population by then could reach 410 million. Moreover, through the second half of this century Nigerian population is expected to continue rising at a rate of 7.7 million people a year in contrast to 1.2 million annual population growth in the United States, while dwarfing—together with India and China—even the most populous advanced nations in terms of their population size. Consider that by mid-century the combined population of the three most populous Western European states—Germany, the United Kingdom, and France—could be less than the number of people living in any of such developing countries as Nigeria, Indonesia, or Pakistan (see Table 5.3).

With declining fertility and growing longevity in the developed countries, the share of older persons (60+) in the high-income economies is projected to rise (from 18.3 to 32.9 percent in 2000–2050). In the meantime, with a share of 51.1 percent by 2050, young people (up to 24 years) are projected to constitute the dominant age group in the low-income countries.[25]

As the relatively shrinking economic and human assets of the world's most powerful nations limit their abilities to provide aid and assistance to the rest of the world, the gap between the globe's wealthy minority and the needy majority is projected to widen. The demographical changes in the United States and other developed countries including aging, coupled with the growth of political apathy, can reduce their traditional commitment to ensuring global security. Political parties and governments in the West would have to adjust their platforms and policies to the interests of non-traditional groups of voters including visible minorities. "Demasculinization" of foreign policy could be one implication. Another can be the rise of isolationism resulting from internal demographic dynamics between different ethnic and religious groups away from the Caucasian majority, traditional agents of expansionism and liberal interventionism.[26]

Table 5.2 More Developed and Less Developed Regions in World Population (1950–2050)

Region/Year	1950		1970		2000		2015		2030		2050	
	Million people	*%*	*Million people*	*%*	*Million people*	*%*	*Million people*	*%*	*Million people*	*%*	*Million people*	*%*
More developed regions	815	32.1	1009	27.3	1190.5	19.4	1253	17.0	1290	15.1	1298	13.3
Less developed regions	1721	67.9	2692	72.7	4954.5	80.6	6130	83.0	7261	84.9	8474	86.7
World	2536	100.0	3701	100.0	6145	100.0	7383	100.0	8551	100.0	9772	100.0

Notes: More developed regions comprise Europe, Northern America, Australia/New Zealand, and Japan. Less developed regions comprise all regions of Africa, Asia (except Japan), Latin America and the Caribbean plus Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, Volume 1: Comprehensive Tables*, ST/ESA/SER.A/399 (United Nations: New York, 2017), Table A.9 (estimates and medium variant); author's calculations based on these data.

Table 5.3 Most Populous Countries and Major Powers: Shares in World Population (1950–2050)

Country/ Year	1950		2000		2017		2050	
	Total population (in thousands)	Percentage of world total	Total population (in thousands)	Percentage of world total	Total population (in thousands)	Percentage of world total	Total population (in thousands)	Percentage of world total
World	2,536,274	100.0	6,145,006	100.0	7,550,262	100.0	9,771,822	100.0
India	376,325	14.8	1,053,051	17.1	1,339,180	17.7	1,658,978	17.0
China	554,419	21.9	1,283,199	20.9	1,409,517	18.7	1,364,457	14.0
Nigeria	37,859	1.5	122,352	2.0	190,886	2.5	410,637	4.2
United States	158,804	6.3	281,983	2.6	324,459	4.3	389,592	4.0
Indonesia	69,543	2.7	211,540	3.4	263,991	3.5	321,551	3.3
Pakistan	37,542	1.5	138,523	2.3	197,016	2.6	306,940	3.1
Brazil	53,975	2.1	175,288	2.9	209,288	2.8	232,688	2.4
Bangladesh	37,895	1.5	131,581	2.1	164,670	2.2	201,927	2.1
Mexico	28,013	1.1	101,719	1.7	129,163	1.7	164,279	1.7
Russia	102,799	4,1	146,397	2.4	143,990	1.9	132,731	1.4
Japan	82,802	3.3	127,534	2.1	127,484	1.7	108,794	1.1
Germany	69,966	2.8	81,488	1.3	82,114	1.1	79,238	0.81
United Kingdom	50,616	2.0	58,951	0.96	66,182	0.88	75,381	0.77
France	41,880	1.7	59,608	0.97	64,980	0.86	70,609	0.72

Sources: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017). World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, Volume I: Comprehensive Tables. ST/ESA/SER.A/399 (United Nations: New York, 2017), Table A.9 (estimates and medium variant); United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, Key Findings and Advance Tables, ESA/P/WP/248 (United Nations: New York, 2017), Table S.2; author's calculations based on these data.

Apparently, the subsequent diminution of normative incentives in the United States and Europe to interfere in the world affairs in the absence of alternative global securitizers would hardly contribute to constraining international anarchy. However, while the structural changes in the world economy and demographics do create objective pressures on the principal states to abandon hubris and turn to humility in foreign policy, such realignment in their international conduct does not look plausible. Before starting to explicate reasons behind this paradox, it is vital to respond to the following question that follows from the foregoing narrative: Will the great powers be able to make up for their shrinking share in the world economy and population by sustaining primacy in what for centuries has been regarded as a major hallmark of their international salience—military power?

Indeed, despite the growing impact of technological potential, financial resources, human capital, political institutions, and other civil components of power on a nation's world rank, military force is still considered to be the most potent instrument of nation's power projection capabilities. Not surprisingly, the world's renowned great powers—the United States, China, Russia, Britain, and France—have invariably been staying in the list of the world's top five military spenders through the second half of the last century and the first decade of the current age.[27] With their total defense budgets amounting to $983.6 billion in 2015, they accounted for 59 percent of the world military spending.[28]

To imagine the scope of these resources it would suffice to note that less than every three years their total military expenditures equal the entire size of British economy. Although the shares of major powers in world military spending distribute unequally (with that of the United States 1.5 times exceeding those of China, Russia, the United Kingdom, and France combined), US peers regularly allocate from around 2 (PRC, the United Kingdom, and France) to about 4 (Russia) percent of their GDP for defense,[29] and, perhaps except for China, have approached the upper limits of their financial capabilities to sustain their military without undermining their social programs.

The long-term projections of the world economy present a controversial picture of the great power disposition by 2050.[30] Notwithstanding the differences in methodology, they, however, agree that by mid-century the global economic power would dramatically shift away from the developed nations to the currently developing ones. Several existing reports commonly predict the following order of the four largest economies in 2050: China, India, the United States, and the EU. There is, however, a signifi-

cant variance between their projected minimum and maximum shares in the world GDP. Weighed in PPP, China's economy could account by then for 16–28 percent, India—12–15 percent, the United States—10–13 percent, and the EU (including the United Kingdom)—10–12 percent.[31] According to different global projections, by mid-century the size of Chinese economy could, thus, become 25–180 percent larger than that of the United States.[32]

Given the relative decline of the Northern great powers' economic and financial capacities, it looks unlikely that in the future they could preserve primacy in sustaining the world's largest military budgets. By 2050, the military potentials of the today's developed great powers—the United States, Britain, France, and Russia—are projected to be, conceivably, challenged by these of China and India. The challenges could primarily arise from the enhanced economic capabilities of the Asian giants which—if measured at PPP—are projected in 2016–2050 to rise about 2.8 times in China, and more than 5 times in India. The projected rise of Chinese and Indian economies in 2016–2050 looks even more impressive—4.4 and 12.5 times respectively—if their GDPs are measured at market exchange rates.[33] At the same time, US, UK, French, and Russian GDPs are projected to grow much slower that could not only increase their current gaps with China but in the case of the United Kingdom and France place them behind Mexico.[34]

How could the global economic realignment project on military budgets? In responding to this question, one can consider the available data on the defense expenditures in GDPs of the major powers for a reasonable timeframe. The beginning of the twenty-first century has marked a distinct period of tectonic shifts in the global distribution of economic power, international relations, and world geopolitics that are likely to continue affecting national defense planning and military budgets in the years to come. In 2001–2016, average shares of military expenditures in the GDPs differed significantly across the core powers in the developed world—from 1.0 percent in Japan to 3.8 percent in the United States; so they did among the leading developing countries—from 1.5 percent in Brazil to 9.1 percent in Saudi Arabia.[35] Given that payments for arms imports have traditionally constituted substantial portions of defense budgets in the developing countries, it is reasonable to conduct international comparisons of military spending at market exchange rates. If the average shares of military expenditures in GDPs of the largest military powers are maintained through the upcoming decades, the list of the world's top five military spenders in 2050 could look as follows: the United States—$1.3 trillion, China—$997 billion, India—$729 billion, Saudi Arabia—$318 billion, Russia—$205 billion (see Table 5.4).

Table 5.4 Top 15 Military Spenders (2016 and 2050)

Country/ Year	2016			2050			2016–2050 increase of military expenditures (times)
	Rank	Amount (at MER US $ millions)	As a share of US military expenditures (%)	Rank	Amount (at MER US $ millions)	As a share of US military expenditures (%)	
United States	1	611,186	100.0	1	1,295,876	100.0	2.1
China	2	215,176	35.2	2	997,06	76.9	4.6
Saudi Arabia	4	63,673	10.4	4	318,045	24.5	5.0
Russia	3	69,245	11.3	5	205,08	15.8	3.0
India	5	55,923	9.2	3	728,546	56.2	13.0
France	6	55,745	9.1	7	108,215	8.4	1.9
United Kingdom	7	48,253	7.9	6	118,118	9.1	2.5
Japan	8	46,126	7.6	13	67,79	5.2	1.5
Germany	9	41,067	6.7	11	79,794	6.2	1.9
South Korea	10	36,777	6.0	10	88,475	6.8	2.4
Italy	11	27,934	0.5	15	52,955	4.1	1.9
Turkey	12	14,803	2.4	8	106,26	8.2	7.2
Iran	13	12,685	2.1	12	74,994	5.8	5.9
Pakistan	14	10,063	1.7	9	99,934	7.7	9.9
Indonesia	15	8183	1.3	14	54,999	4.2	6.7

Notes: MER-Market Exchange Rates.

Sources: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database; amounts for 2050—author's calculations based on average shares of military expenditures in GDP for 2001–2016 using data from SIPRI and PwC projections of country GDPs for 2050 contained in PwC, "The Long View: How Will the Global Economic Order Change by 2050?" (February 2017), https://www.pwc.com/world2050.

As Table 5.4 demonstrates, by 2050, several countries out of the 15 world's largest military spenders could preserve places they occupied in 2016: the United States (first), China (second), Saudi Arabia (fourth), and South Korea (tenth). Russia could go down two spots to the fifth position as she is outstripped by India (third) and Saudi Arabia. France and the United Kingdom could change their respective sixth and seventh places with each other, and Japan and Germany leave the top ten. In the meantime, relatively higher rates of economic growth projected for the next three decades in Turkey and Pakistan could enable them to climb a few positions up, and by mid-century occupy places held by Japan and Germany in 2016. Most importantly, unequal GDP rates

could conspicuously change the global balance of military power as well as respective dyadic power balances. China and India, for example, are projected to significantly cut their gaps with the United States so that by 2050 their military budgets compared with that of the United States could reach respectively 77 and 56 percent of the American level. Except for the military spending in France, Germany, Italy, and Japan, those in all other powers are projected to grow faster than in the United States. The most spectacular growth could take place in India (13 times), Pakistan (almost 10 times), and Turkey (more than 7 times). Although the relative capacity of the United States to keep the current distance from its competitors in terms of military spending could decrease, US defense budget is projected to continue staying atop of those of its peers at least through the next three decades. At the same time, the existing relative disparities in the dyadic balances of power measured in proportions of military balances could further increase in favor of China, India, and Russia accordingly in the following pairs of states: China-Japan, India-Pakistan, and Russia-individual Western European powers.

The foregoing projections—most likely imprecise in comparison with the future actual data—might nevertheless serve as good indicators of the increasing hard power magnitude of the developing world. It would be incorrect though not to mention here alternative approaches to calculating long-term scopes of defense spending by projecting the current trends in the growth of military budgets in the non-Western world, and especially in China, to the decades ahead. The well-respected London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), for example, made linear forecasts of China's military expenditures by extrapolating her annual +15.6 percent military budget growth (that was taking place in 2001–2012) to the next 30–40 years.[36] The basic assumption underlying these projections (made in current prices and exchange rates) is that in the future China will be able to maintain doubling her military budget every five years, which could allow her to overtake the United States by 2028. Yet, as critics rightly suggest, projections of complex processes based on extrapolation of abnormal trends are bound to be factually erroneous,[37] and, as one can reasonably presume, also dangerously misleading for those who might make strategic decisions on their basis. Any projections of China's military expenditures should consider financially burdensome challenges she is facing now and which will continue to loom large in the next decades, such as her aging population and environmental degradation. Since the PRC's Communist leadership is preoccupied with main-

taining its popular image as of an agent able to deliver continuous growth of prosperity to the nation despite the immanent deterioration of demographic and ecological conditions, it should sooner or later moderate its superpower ambitions and concentrate an increasingly larger portion of economic resources on upholding its domestic credibility. But even if the formidable rise of China would, in principle, allow her to allocate comparatively more funds for military purposes than the United States, this alone may not guarantee her military superiority. This is because numeric preponderance in military expenditure does not automatically convert to technological and organizational supremacy of the armed forces, and the United States and its Western allies might well continue to preserve their competitive military advantages over the rest of the world in what Thomas F. Homer-Dixon calls the "ingenuity supply" even under relatively smaller defense budgets.[38]

For instance, the sheer size of Indian defense budget, projected to exceed Britain's more than six times by mid-century, would not necessarily obliterate London's military superiority over New Delhi, particularly given the disparity between their educational attainment, communication and transportation infrastructure, governance, business environment, and above all their ingenuity capabilities. However, it would be imprudent to underestimate the role of economic agility in the emerging economies in closing their ingenuity gap with the West. Their technological catch-up capabilities, if coupled with the projected trends in the growth of their military budgets, would serve as catalysts of dramatic recalibrations in dyadic and regional power balances by 2050, for instance, between China and Japan, and Russia and the leading West European nations.

The fading of the great powers' military primacy and their attempts to arrest this trend have inter alia the following implications. First, the military expenditures and other image-sustaining costs are progressively exhausting great power capabilities; as a result of overstretching, the great powers' capacity to attend to global issues like the sweeping climate change, resource scarcity, financial imbalances, poverty, and failing states is about to drain.[39] Hopes of some Western intellectuals that by 2050 the traditional great powers will be joined by the ascending nations like India, Brazil, and South Africa in sharing their financial and political burden in managing and securitizing global commons are closer to wishful thinking than to the plain reality, since they don't take into account that before these countries would be able (and willing) to assume the genuine great power responsibilities, they would have to substantially upgrade life stan-

dards of their own people—a long way to go, given the projected growth of their own populations and the scope of developmental issues they would need to resolve.[40]

Second, in the view of great power pawns, military budgets of their patrons, curtailed by austerity measures, constitute manifestations of comprehensive decay. For instance, Washington's defense cuts, as Robert Kagan has repeatedly suggested, might erode the credibility of US security assurances with respect to its allies in Europe, and, most recently, in North-East Asia as Japan and South Korea become increasingly concerned by military build-up in China and war-mongering by North Korea.[41]

The first implication threatens to leave the growing part of the world's population one on one with their corrupt and ineffective governments, while the wealthy countries will have to look increasingly inward to meet the demands of their own populations ranging from universal health care to affordable education to sustainable employment to decent pensions. The second implication portends to trigger nuclear proliferation as the second-tier nations may wish to obtain atomic weapons as the means of deterrence against the rogue states in East Asia and other regions, and cause a sweeping nuclear arms race worldwide.

Thus, the universal belief in the purported omnipotence of the great powers risks further vanishing. From this standpoint, the wealthy countries have reached their limits of resilience and agility, and objectively cannot anymore perform their traditional functions of global securitizers. Concomitantly, as security supply by the principal states is dipping, security demand on the part of the rising multi-billion population of the rest of the world is growing. Pressed by critical non-traditional threats—diseases, scarcity of drinking water and other precious resources, and, above all, poor governance—the Global South, as the Arab Spring has signified, appears to be further mired into what can become a perpetual civil unrest. In the era of globalization, the former is poised to loudly resonate in the relatively wealthy countries of the Global North. The ghost of the universal systemic crisis is in the meantime nurtured by the escalating skepticism and disillusion in the West induced by huge financial debt, budget deficits, high unemployment rates, and social inequality.

The ascendance of the anti-Western forces worldwide ranging from the radical leftists and ultra-nationalists to extreme religious fundamentalists is also facilitated in the Global South by the continuous accusations of the Western power core in neo-imperialism, egotism, and vested interests. Should these forces strike a chord with the governing elites in non-Western

countries, like Russia or Iran, who by nurturing anti-Western sentiments of their populations seek to secure their illiberal regimes, a dangerous mix of opportunistic state policy techniques and subversive activities of non-state radical groups might critically undermine the influence and security of the United States and the West at large. This could be not only detrimental to the international standing of America and other great powers, still widely perceived as the guarantors of universal peace and stability, since blows to their homeland security in the fashion of 9/11 bombings might completely deconstruct their pertinent images, but could also prove fatal to the world at large. Additionally, financial woes in America and Europe, systemic unpredictability in China, and political and economic uncertainty in Russia cast doubts over the great powers' purported internal strengths.

But this is only a part of the problem concerning the great powers' credibility since the disturbing pressures from within are supplemented by worrisome squabbles from without. The notion of harmony in the purported "great power concert" has long sunk into oblivion as the "musicians" have been replaced by a group of conductors who are simultaneously performing their own compositions. Not only the West (the United States, Britain, and France) and East (China and Russia) refuse to play in concert but, most remarkably, Euro-Atlantic allies, each with their own note desk, more frequently than ever fail to coordinate their policies.

The United States and Europe appear to diverge on every major international issue from global warming to Israeli-Palestinian conflict to Iran to Syria. The growing distance between their ensuing geopolitical foci is only bound to enhance this divergence: while the United States is increasingly preoccupied with the troubling economic and military-security developments in the Asia-Pacific, and especially China's rise and North Korea's belligerence, the Europeans, after the paramount political changes brought with the Spring of sweeping regime replacements in the Arab world, and the rise of Political Islam in the Middle East and North Africa, are bound to be concerned with their strategic repercussions for migration flows, energy security, and religious extremism.[42]

Consequently, the US-formed international institutional structures, the West-linked alliances and partnerships risk being exposed to further imbalances, erosion, and deconstruction. If the elites in the great democratic nations of the West do not see eye to eye in the realm of the world affairs, small wonder there is even less congruence between them and the ruling groups in authoritarian powers—China and Russia. Exemplified by the UN Security Council's incapacity to reach a consensus on such matters

as Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Iran where the interests of Beijing and Moscow collided with that of Washington, London, and Paris, the absence of great power solidarity in the face of the growing challenges to the global security and well-being does not bode well for the future of the human civilization. Note that the system of international relations got used to rely on the great powers as the islands of stability and the agents of reassurance and protection in times of uncertainty and crises.

As the result of the foregoing trends and their interaction, the system risks vanishing, most disturbingly, with no encouraging prospects for something more efficient and viable to emerge on its remnants in the foreseeable future. Accordingly, the international order that has so far been promoted by the great powers, while resting upon their credibility as its reliable guarantors, can give place to forces that perpetuate anarchy and chaos. Therefore, the task of sustaining the great powers' veracity as the world's genuine leaders and securitizers, centers of ingenuity, and—in case of the major Western nations—agents of good governance should not be perceived as a narrow egoistic objective, but rather an imperative that fits universal interests.

6   THE BIAS OF STATES, STATUS, AND HEGEMONY

According to prospect theory introduced by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky as an antithesis to expected utility theory, decision makers—as people in general—are inclined to bear risks to prevent losses, and prefer to avert risks to obtain gains.[43] This counterintuitive but experimentally supported proposition explains another cognitive bias—the so-called status-quo bias of states—determination of decision makers to sustain their state's position in the international system. Steered by their cognition as well as by public expectations, leaders of a great nation view their mission in upholding its *grandeur*, at times disregarding human and economic costs this might incur. Given that demographics, rates of economic growth, and efficacy of institutions and other power assets of a given nation change relative to these of the others, its international status should fluctuate accordingly. In practice, modification of status happens much slower than structural changes unfold, a phenomenon known as "status discrepancy."[44]

Consider the cases of Britain after and Japan before WWII. In decades preceding the Pearl Harbor, Japan's military and economic accomplishments *objectively* put it in the rank of a great power. However, the United

States, France, and Great Britain denied Tokyo "special rights" in the Asia-Pacific, particularly by refusing to recognize Japan's regional primacy and grant her a "sphere of influence" in China and elsewhere. Dissatisfied with the "unequal" international status, the Japanese elites contemplated aggression as the means to close the status discrepancy gap.

Contrastingly, despite progressive decline in her relative economic and military capabilities since the second half of the nineteenth century, the United Kingdom succeeded in maintaining her great power status, mainly because other victorious nations considered extending the status premium to London fitting their own interests. For the United States, Britain became an indispensable ally in containing the Communist threat during the Cold War. Her vehement devotion to Atlanticism served as a check on the Continental Europeanism that was seen politically dangerous for solidarity within NATO. Dissimilarly, in France, inspiring and aspiring for *l'Europe de defense*, Britain—in the years preceding its people's decision to exit the EU—was viewed as a crucial partner in creating a robust European military capability, and for both France and Germany, the major proponents of a strong and influential EU, British support of the European idea looked requisite. Some experts believe that the referendum over Britain's EU membership made a serious and unrepairable blow to the United Kingdom's diplomatic clout, and diminution of London's importance for its major partners in North America and Western Europe is inevitable. This hypothesis, however, looks more like a hasty and unnecessarily alarmist conclusion than a balanced and thoroughly thought-over conjecture. While the long-term consequences of Brexit are yet to be seen, the United Kingdom's departure from the EU might, on the contrary, produce additional political energy in London, where concerns with the challenges of maintaining its image of a great power and its credibility are bound to loom large. As a new diplomatic game fostered by Brexit in the Transatlantic relations and among the European states ensues, the undisputed status of Britain as a military and diplomatic heavyweight creates new opportunities for London to play an even more active and influential role in the European geopolitics. This can be achieved, for instance, by becoming an informal leader of Atlanticism-minded EU members, thus increasing the United Kingdom's leverage in the post-Brexit diplomatic configuration in Europe and the West at large.

Of no less magnitude is UK leverage in the post-Communist East, particularly in Russia. A staunch promoter of firm policy with respect to totalitarian and authoritarian regimes in Eastern Europe and Eurasia during

the Cold War, London, after the fall of the Communist bloc, has emerged as an influential power broker in Europe's relations with Russia and other post-Soviet states, and the key supporter of tough economic and political sanctions to press Moscow to respect their sovereignty. Moreover, with London having become a key destination of political and business immigration from the post-Soviet Russia since 1990s, Britain, traditionally a major venue of Moscow's political and industrial espionage, has conspicuously diversified and strengthened her overall importance for the Kremlin.[45]

Despite substantial shifts in the Sino-British dyadic power balance in favor of China in the last decades have weakened UK authority in the Middle Kingdom, Britain has not stopped to gravitate PRC diplomacy. Although the views of Chinese experts on the possible implications of Brexit for China's interests look controversial, some of them appear to quite reasonably believe that with London's regaining sovereignty over trade policy, its commercial significance for the PRC can increase. Even though British influence on China appears to be constrained by Beijing's irritation over the United Kingdom's continuous empathy toward Dalai Lama, and London's criticism of human rights violations by the Chinese authorities, one should not ignore a set of factors that are poised to endure British clout in the bilateral relations. In addition to the United Kingdom's nuclear and UNSC permanent membership status, these factors, for instance, encompass the legacy of British rule in Hong Kong and Macau as well as Britain's support of China's interests in London's financial opportunities to promote *renminbi* as an international currency.[46]

As for Britain's international influence in the twenty-first century, objectively shattered in comparison with her imperial age, London has been keen to build upon the historical vestige left by the enlightening power of the British Empire. Establishing and sustaining the Commonwealth has certainly been instrumental to this end.[47] Even though the depth of British political impact on the members of the Commonwealth is frequently under harsh criticism by the British MPs, one is to consider that for 2.2 billion people in 53 countries the British monarch remains the official head of their states, and that their loyalty to the British crown, adoption of the British system of parliamentary democracy, common law, and the English language remain important factors in closing the civilizational divide between the West and the developing world.[48] Thanks to the White Hall's skillful diplomacy through the periods of peace and war in Europe, Britain has invariably been on the "right side of the history," particularly by staying in agreement with the predominant values of the international system.[49]

The case of Britain teaches us an important lesson: should structural changes risk to erode a state's status, a smart policy can attempt to arrest its downfall. Importantly, such a policy should seek to dissuade any doubts of the nation's allies and adversaries about its ability to act in line with its status quo. Alternatively, a declining state may try to change status criteria by which it is judged by others, for instance, by attempting to "dematerialize" stratification standards. However, as William Wohlforth reasonably remarks, such a state would ultimately face a problem of legitimizing her immaterial (moral) power criteria among its peers. In the absence of supporting material resources, the odds of this policy to succeed can be highly doubtful.[50]

This situation further highlights the aforementioned credibility dilemma. Traditionally, the latter has been exacerbated by imprudent behavior on part of a failing great power (e.g., the Soviet Union under Brezhnev). As its statesmen attempted to arrest unfavorable changes by inflating national power image at the given juncture, they tended to become careless about long-term security implications of their newly found assertiveness. At home, they were keen, for instance, to increase the share of military expenditures in national GDP risking to overstretch national economic and financial resources and aggravate domestic social conditions. Abroad, they were prone to risky military interventions (Soviet invasions in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Afghanistan in 1979). In the meantime, a great power's peers are carefully watching her conduct, and tend to perceive any attempt of her aggrandizement as an alarming challenge to their own national security and international status. Traditionally, they are keen to reciprocate symmetrically to emerging security or credibility dilemmas, and once they start flexing their own military muscles or engage in diplomatic squabbling, a spiral of risky confrontation becomes unleashed.

While realists maintain salience of the balance of power as a sine qua non condition of international peace, they tend to overlook the importance of another overarching condition of peace—*positional balance*. I concur with Robert Powell's proposition that parity between distribution of power and distribution of benefits from the status quo between a pair of great powers constitutes an imperative condition for maintaining peace in their relationship. In other words, it posits that chances of war are the smallest when both states are not only equally strong but also satisfied with their possessions.[51] While the narrative of status quo in the "Powell equilibrium" implies stability in the distribution of material gains from

upholding stability (e.g., the territorial status quo of the great powers), it can be as well extended to the political status quo. This means a higher probability of a confrontation between the principal states should the distribution of power between them deviate from their international stratification.

Attempts to overcome international structural changes and prevent rank downgrading by outpacing a stronger peer through boosting military investments can, however, undermine the statecraft's original purpose, which was "just" upholding their nation's status quo for it risks exhausting the nation's finite resources and thereby derail her standing even further. With few cases of status recovery (propelled by institutional advancement rather than by linear increase in military expenditures), this policy pattern can make a great nation subjective to permanent decline. In some cases, it can induce state failure and even collapse, as was the case with the Soviet Union—some observers believe it was dismissed ceteris paribus due to its systemic inaptness to withstand an exorbitant arms race with the United States.

The foregoing cases of Britain and the Soviet Union, exemplifying, respectively, the successful and failed models of a great power status sustainability, can be framed in a wider concept of hegemony. There are numerous definitions of hegemony, some being more clear-cut than the others.[52] A recent scholarship on the subject, for example, suggests looking at hegemony beyond being a mere "domination," but as (a) "both a process that occurs before power is institutionalized as well as an outcome of that process of institutionalization," and (b) "complex operation of coercion and consensus."[53]

Here we need to make an important caveat. In principle, application of the term "hegemony" in IR as a narrative defining the status of any great power even at the zenith of her might is misleading. This is because genuine hegemony means *absolute domination*. Note that none of the core dominant powers in the world history has ever achieved the position of genuine hegemony. The historical peaks of national economic preponderance were reached by China in 1820 with 33 percent, and by the United States in 1944 with 35 percent in in the world GDP, but even then, neither the Chinese nor the Americans could dictate their terms of the world order to every nation. Moreover, in the case of China her international influence was at best limited to her immediate periphery, and, given the Europe-centered nature of the international system was, essentially, negligible. As for the United States, notwithstanding that its international clout by the end of WWII was exceptionally high, it was limited by the existence of the Soviet Union, and later, the People's Republic of China, nations with alien political-economic systems that prevented spatial extension of

liberalism and market economy promoted by the *Pax Americana* world-wide. Incidentally, the economic and social-political magnitude of the British Empire has been consistently overrated: even at the heyday of her colonial rule, Britain's share in the world economy has never exceeded 9 percent. Peaked in 1870, her relative economic power has been fading ever since, falling twice a century later, and three times by the beginning of the new millennium.[54] While achieving the maximum of power, or *total supremacy*, is a realist ideal formulated by Machiavelli, it is important to understand that it is neither feasible nor expedient. The reasons behind impossibility of absolute power, brilliantly summed up by von Treitschke, beat what he calls the "naturalistic school" by its own arguments. First, according to Machiavelli, a state is an absolute power, and this means that it should not be restrained by law in its relations with other states. This narrative, remarks Treitschke, represents a mechanical perception of state, in accordance with which a state is nothing more than an "absolute physical power." But this deprives the notion of state of its meaning, for power without qualification has no meaning.

Still, the state is seeking wealth and security. But being above the law that a limitless expansion of power would presume, and this is the second argument put forward by Treitschke, is against the state's own interests, for this would antagonize other states who would spare no effort in constraining their reckless contender. Since statesmen are not mechanical subjects programmed to expand power for the sake of power, and are subject to reason, it would be unreasonable to surmise that they would be incapable or unwilling to restrain themselves from actions that might bring up their own destruction.[55]

But even if one imagines a possibility for a strongest of states to reach an absolute power in international system, how would it be conducive to its *causa causans*—maintenance of absolute power? First of all, we need to discern if any type of state would be more efficient than others in imposing its rule over the mankind. As we know, the only imaginable form of such a state can be an empire. Let us imagine a repressive and a liberal type of empire. For a repressive empire, the costs of subjugating all other nations to a single order would be enormous, and, as the history of the world's most powerful empires suggests, would eventually overburden its core to the degree that could devalue the whole project, and lead to the empire's decline and ultimate collapse. But what if this is a liberal empire that allows for a representative democracy and fair taxation to the periphery? What dangers are awaiting its center—and empires do not exist without a center—if its absolute power is seeking to ensure an absolute happiness of its subjects?

By suggesting that absolute happiness is possible in principle, we should ask why its institutional setting should necessarily be an empire. Logically, such a setting would be necessary if nations need protection from their external enemies by a strong patron. But let us not forget that under the conditions of absolute power there would be no enemies—neither external nor internal, and hence it would make no sense for one to voluntarily continue giving up their sovereignty in exchange for no good on the part of the imperial center. But if others cease being interested in exposing their plight to the center's will at its absolute discretion, the empire could find itself in trouble because it exists as long as the conditions of its absolute power—total subjugation being the primary one—are totally met. One can suggest that for the purposes of justifying its utility, the center would seek to artificially create internal dangers and enemies, but should it be the case, it risks losing its liberal fleur, and morphing into a repressive empire presents a plausible scenario, which has the foregoing dangers of its own. Remember that even the most liberal of all empires, Austria-Hungary, seized to exist not so much because of external pressures but as a result of intrinsic corruption that an absolute power is poised to engender.

As the first part of this study tackled issues of power operationalization, it is worth noting that despite a large variety of its interpretations, in world politics power continues to be perceived as the means of domination, or, in the words of Raymond Aron, "the capacity of a political unit to impose its will upon other units."[56] Similar perceptions have not lost their popularity with the officials in the foreign offices and defense departments around the world concerned nowadays with the risks emanating from the shifts in the contemporary system of international relations where the rivalry among the great powers has resurfaced as the most conspicuous and frightening trend since the end of the Cold War. "[A] resurgent Russia on the European continent, and a rising China in the Far East has ushered in what we consider to be a new era of great power competition," observes Deputy Secretary of Defense Bob Work. "And the absolute worst thing that could happen in the global system is to have two great powers go to war with each other."[57]

However, with strong existential impediments to a deliberate outbreak of an inter-great power war in the nuclear age, major states admittedly cannot defy the logic of mutually assured destruction (MAD) and employ war in relations with their peers as the ultimate means of imposing their will on the latter. This is why Aron's notion of power needs

certain modifications that should take into consideration the new game-changing realities of the modern era. It appears that the definition of power that Aron applied to an individual (a "capacity to act but above all to *influence* the actions or feelings of other[s]" [italics added][58]) grasps the substance of a state's social power better. Drawing on Aron's definitions of power, power in world politics can be defined as an ability of an international actor *to make* other participants of the international system perform in accordance with its will. Such a definition allows to identify the connection between power and credibility: the latter can be conceived as an enabler of the former. At the same time, the degree of one's credibility depends on their ability to convert their actual power assets into desired images of power. The linkage between the actual power and the perceived power though is not linear so that actors with equal resources differ in their relative power which is proportionate to their mastery of influencing perceptions of the important others in the desired and credible ways. Note that this ability is morally neutral, and depends upon the magnitude and efficiency of the addressor's *symbolic* appeal to the addressee's emotions and reasons. Most importantly, stronger actors—to be *perceived* as such—should be able to ensure fungibility of their power assets including those examined above.

The self's concerns about credibility correlate inversely with her level of physical power. When the self is perceived as demonstrably superior to the others, her power looks persuasive enough without resort to any extra intangibles aimed at making others believe in its genuine superiority. However, as her tangible capabilities begin manifestly fading, the self becomes understandably alarmed about her social standing. This is because her tangible decline relative to others' ascendance can be seen by her rivals as an opportunity for them to revise the existing pecking order so that this could infringe on the self's core interests. As the decline progresses, these concerns can intertwine with or morph into worries about her ontological security. To ensure her ontological survivability, guarantee self-respect, and continue benefiting from her privileged status in the system, the self should sustain veracity of her power at a level that was generated at the stage of her undisputed supremacy. The second part of this study focuses on the notion of credibility and elaborates further the arguments substantiating causality of the link between a comparative material decline of the great powers and the growing concentration of their policies on image consolidation.

Notes

1. For a concept of human capital and its application in modern economy at micro and macro levels, see Gary S. Becker, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993). For an instructive analysis of human capital's impact on economic development, see Andreas Savvides and Thanasis Stengos, *Human Capital and Economic Growth* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

2. An HSBC report, for instance, referring to the work of eminent Harvard economist Robert Barro, evaluates eight fundamentals of "economic infrastructure" needed for a robust economic growth: GDP per capita; average years of male schooling; life expectancy; fertility (average children per person); rule of law; government consumption; democracy index; and inflation rate. As for regime impact on economic performance, the views stated in contemporary literature on the subject are frequently counterintuitive: democracies can restrain growth, while autocracies can advance it. Some economists, such as Robert Barro, suggest that the pattern of democracy-prosperity is reverse rather than linear. For an explanation of this phenomenon, see Robert J. Barro, *Determinants of Economic Growth: A Cross-Country Empirical Study* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998). Note that a projected list of innovation phase ascenders, disregarding the measure of their political liberalism, includes such states as Israel, Hong Kong special administrative region (SAR), Taiwan, Singapore, and the United Arab Emirates. This row can be extended, once Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Turkey complete transitions from the efficiency-driven stage of their development. See: "The Global Competitiveness Report 2011–2012," World Economic Forum, 2011, 11.

3. The term "sub-global" international system was coined by the English School. Sub-global systems present distinct international societies that include states united by common culture. "Sub-global international societies lose their point if there are no significant differences among them," points out Barry Buzan, "and if the differences become too great then the global level disappears." Barry Buzan, *From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 236. Also see Martin Wight, *Systems of States* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977); Alex J. Bellamy, ed., *International Society and its Critics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Hedley Bull and Adam Watson, eds., *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984); Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society* (London: Routledge, 2009).

4. See Asian Development Bank, *Asia 2050: Realizing the Asian Century*, 119–120.

5. See Harpaul Alberto Kohli, Y. Aaron Szyf, and Drew Arnold, "Construction and Analysis of a Global GDP Growth Model for 185 Countries through 2050," *Global Journal of Emerging Market Economies* 4, no.2 (May 2012):116; author's calculations.

6. See Yongjin Zhang, "System, Empire and State in Chinese International Relations," *Review of International Studies* 27, no.5 (December 2001):43–63. An important precondition for the *Pax Sinica* was formation of the unified Chinese state, the Chinese Empire. It dates to 221 BC when the Kingdom of Qin began its conquest of the adjacent six Chinese kingdoms. See Michael Loewe, "China's First Empire," *History Today* 57, no.9 (September 2007):12–19. Some authors differentiate though among China-centric systems established under the Chinese imperial dynasties: Charles Horner, for instance classifies them as the *Pax Mongolica* under the Yuan Dynasty, the *Pax Sinica* under the Ming Dynasty, and the *Pax Manjurica* under the Qing Dynasty. Charles Horner, *Rising China and its postmodern fate: Memories of empire in a new global context* (Athens, Ga.: The University of Georgia Press, 2009). An excellent overview of empires was made by the English School in Michael Cox, Tim Dunne, and Ken Booth, eds., *Empires, Systems and States: Great Transformations in International Politics* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

7. Yongjin Zhang, 52.

8. On the current discussion concerning the prospects of China-centric system's re-emergence, see Emile Kok-Kheng Yeoh, ed., *Towards Pax Sinica? China's Rise and Transformation: Impacts and Implications* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Institute of China Studies, University of Malaya, 2009); Y. Y. Kueh, *Pax Sinica: Geopolitics and Economics of China's Ascendance* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013).

9. The growth rate data from Dominic Wilson, Kamakshya Trivedi, Stacy Carlson, and José Ursúa, "The BRICs 10 Years On: Halfway Through the Great Transformation, Global Economics," Goldman Sachs Global Economics, Commodities and Strategy Research 208 (2011):29.

10. See Chong-En Bai and Qiong Zhang, "Is the People's Republic of China's Current Slowdown a Cyclical Downturn or a Long-Term Trend? A Productivity-Based Analysis," *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy* 22, no.1 (January 2017):29–46.

11. Notably, 83 percent of Indians view China as a security threat, while 65 percent believe that India should ally with other countries to contain China in the region. Rory Medcalf, "India Poll 2013," *Lowy Institute for*

International Policy, May 20, 2013. Available at: http://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/india-poll-2013

India's foreign policy experts appear to concur here with the majority of their compatriots. They agree that the rapidly changing balance of power in the Indian Ocean in favor of China is not in their country's national interests, and that New Delhi can best countervail this trend by actively forging economic and security partnerships with the interested nations. "India's economic integration with ASEAN," suggests, for example, a paper by an Indian think-tank, "needs to be accompanied strongly in tandem with India's strategic integration in ASEAN's security matrix**." Subhash Kapila, "ASEAN Region: India Needs to Stand Strategically Tall," Paper No. 5332, South Asia Analysis Group, December 20, 2012. Available at: http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/node/1097

12. Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, edited by Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad; foreword by Jack Spence (New York; London: Continuum: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2002), 48.
13. See, for instance, Christopher Chase-Dunn, Rebecca Giem, Andrew Jorgenson, Thomas Reifer, John Rogers and Shoon Lio, "The Trajectory of the United States in the World-System: A Quantitative Reflection," Department of Sociology and Institute for Research on World-Systems, University of California, Riverside, IROWS Working Paper # 8, presented at the XV ISA World Congress of Sociology, Brisbane, Australia, Wednesday, July 10, 2002.
14. At the time, as Barbara Tuchman suggested in her famous account of the pre-WWI history, *élan vital* was the driving force behind French resolve to make up for their disastrous defeat at Sedan in September 1870 should they only have had a chance to prove their "all-conquering spirit" to Germans in a new military duel. See Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (New York: Presidio Press, 2004), 34–52. On the concept of *élan vital* see Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (New York: Cosimo, 2007).
15. Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, Daniel H. Nexon, Jennifer Sterling-Folker, Janice Bially Mattern, Richard Ned Lebow, and J. Samuel Barkin, "Bridging the Gap: Toward a Realist-Constructivist Dialogue," *International Studies Review* 6, no.2 (June 2004):351.
16. Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 41.
17. Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits*: the first complete edition in English, translated by Bruce Fink in collaboration with Héloïse Fink and Russell Grigg (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006), 19.
18. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017). World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, custom data acquired via website.

19. Sir John Bagot Glubb, *Fate of Empires and Search for Survival* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1978).

20. Johan Galtung, Tore Heiestad, and Eric Ruge, *On the Decline and Fall of Empires: The Roman Empire and Western Imperialism Compared* (Tokyo: United Nations University, 1979).

21. Christopher Layne, "From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing: America's Future Grand Strategy," *International Security* 22, no.1 (June 1997):86–124.

22. "It is far too easy for a president to jump from crisis to crisis, dealing with one hot spot after another," asserted, for instance, the former Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney. "But to do so is to be shaped by events rather than to shape events. To avoid this paralyzing seduction of action rather than progress, a president must have a broad vision of the world coupled with clarity of purpose." Quoted in Philip Rucker, "Mitt Romney Calls for New 'American Century' with Muscular Foreign Policy," *The Washington Post*, October 7, 2011.

23. Walter Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1943), 9.

24. Author's calculations based on data from United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017). World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, custom data acquired via website.

25. Ibid.

26. By 2050, the share of whites in US population, for instance, is projected to drop to 47 percent from 67 percent in 2005 and 85 percent in 1960 while the share of Hispanics will grow to 29 percent from 14 and 3.5 percent in the same time, those of blacks will stay more or less stable at the level of 13 percent, and those of Asians will grow to 9 percent from 4 and 0.5 percent respectively. Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, *U.S. Population Projections: 2005–2050* (Washington, DC, Pew Research Center, February 11, 2008).

27. Since 2013, the European great powers have been sidelined by Saudi Arabia. With US $87,186 billion in defense expenditures in 2015, she became the world's third largest military spender. *Source*: SIPRI 2016. Available at: www.sipri.org

28. Author's calculations based on SIPRI 2016 data.

29. Ibid.

30. See, for instance, John Hawksworth and Anmol Tiwari, "The World in 2050 – The Accelerating Shift of Global Economic Power: Challenges and Opportunities," *Price Waterhouse Coopers*, January 2011; Karen Ward; HSBC Global Research, "The World in 2050: From the Top 30 to the Top 100," *HSBC Bank plc.*, 2012; Jean Fouré, Agnès Bénassy-Quéré & Lionel Fontagné, "The Great Shift: Macroeconomic Projections for the World

Economy at the 2050 Horizon," *CEPII Working Paper* no 3, (2012); Åsa Johansson, Yvan Guillemette1, Fabrice Murtin1, David Turner, Giuseppe Nicoletti, Christine de la Maisonneuve, Guillaume Bousquet1, Francesca Spinelli, "Looking to 2060: Long-Term Global Growth Prospects: A Going for Growth Report," *OECD*, no 3, 2012; Uri Dadush and Bennett Stancil, "The World Order in 2050," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, April 2010.

31. Fouré et al., "The Great Shift," 64.
32. Author's calculations based on data from Fouré et al., "The Great Shift."
33. Calculated on the basis of PwC projections for 2050. Data available at: https://www.pwc.com
34. See PwC projections for 2050. Available at: https://www.pwc.com
35. SIPRI.
36. The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance* 2013 (London: Routledge, 2013), 255–256.
37. Defense Industry Daily staff, "Bold Projections Taken Out of Context Overstate China's Leeway for Military Budget Growth," *Defense Industry Daily*, March 17, 2013. Available at: http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/china-military-spending-projections-010980/
38. The term "ingenuity" in Homer-Dixon's connotation describes "ideas applied to solve practical technical and social problems." Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, *Environment, Scarcity, and Violence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 109. Referring to the proponent of the *endogenous growth theory*, economist Paul Romer, who defined ideas as "the instructions that let us combine limited physical resources in arrangements that are ever more valuable," Homer-Dixon identifies the "ingenuity gap" as a discrepancy between the demand for and supply of creative ideas. (Paul Romer as quoted in Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, "The Ingenuity Gap: Can Poor Countries Adopt to Resource Scarcity?" *Population and Development Review* 21, no.3 (September 1995):587–612.) In comparison with the developing nations, he posits, the developed societies have a greater potential in supplying ingenuity that immeasurably increases their adjustment capabilities in the complex environment. See Thomas Homer-Dixon, *The Ingenuity Gap*, 1st ed. (New York; Toronto: Knopf, 2000).
39. NATO's appeal to Russia and China to share the $4 billion annual burden of financing the Afghani military after the alliance withdrew its troops from that country in 2014 is just but one case in point. *Reuters*, April 19, 2012.
40. Consider, for instance, that in 2050 India's GDP per capita will be just somewhat 12 percent, and China's about 30 percent of US level. (See Dadush and Stancil, "The World Order in 2050," 10.)
41. Robert Kagan, "The Price of Power: The Benefits of U.S. Defense Spending Far Outweigh the Costs," *The Weekly Standard* January 24,

2011, available at http://www.weeklystandard.com/articles/price-power_533696.html; Robert Kagan, "No Time to Cut Defense," *The Washington Post*, February 3, 2009.

42. See Secrétariat Général de la Défense et de la Sécurité Nationale, "The International and Strategic Evolutions faced by France: Preparatory Document for the Update of the White Paper on Defence and National Security," (Paris: SGDSN, 2012), 37.

43. Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, "Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk," *Econometrica* 47, no.2 (March 1979):263–291.

44. Maurice A. East, "Status Discrepancy and Violence in the International System: An Empirical Analysis," in *The Analysis of International Politics: Essays in Honor of Harold and Margaret Sprout*, eds., James N. Rosenau, Vincent Davis and Maurice A. East (New York: Free Press, 1972), 299–319.

45. See Richard Norton-Taylor, "Russian Spies in UK 'at Cold War Levels,'" *The Guardian*, June 29, 2010.

46. In April 2012, the City of London, for example, initiated making the British capital an international center for renminbi (RMB) trading and liquidity.

47. For a comprehensive account of British imperial legacy see, for instance, Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (London: Allen Lane, 2002).

48. Foreign Affairs Committee, "Fourth Report: The Role and Future of the Commonwealth." Available at: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmfaff/114/11402.htm

49. For a detailed account of Britain's judicial legacy in its former dominions, see Jerry Dupont, *Common Law Abroad: Constitutional and Legal Legacy of the British Empire* (Buffalo, New York: William S. Hein & Co., 2001).

50. William C. Wohlforth, "Unipolarity, Status Competition and Great Power War," *World Politics* 61, no.1(January 2009):28–57.

51. Robert Powell, "Stability and the Distribution of Power," *World Politics* 48, no.2 (January 1996):239–267.

52. For an informative account of the hegemonic concept evolution see, for instance, Jeffrey D. Kentor, *Capital and Coercion: The Economic and Military Processes that Have Shaped the World Economy, 1800–1990* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000).

53. Lenore Lyons, "Foreword"; Richard Howson and Kylie Smith, "Hegemony and the Operation of Consensus and Coercion," in *Hegemony: Studies in Consensus and Coercion*, eds., Richard Howson and Kylie Smith (New York: Routledge, 2008), IX.

54. Author's calculations based on data from Angus Maddison, *The World Economy Volume 1: A Millennial Perspective* (New Delhi: OECD, 2006), 261.

55. Heinrich von Treitschke, "International Law and International Intercourse" in *The Theory of International Relations: Selected Texts from Gentili to Treitschke*, eds., M. G. Forsyth, H. M. A. Keens-Soper, Peter Savigear (London: Allen & Unwin, 1970), 332.
56. Raymond Aron, *Peace and War*, 47.
57. U.S. Department of Defense, "Remarks by Deputy Secretary Work on Third Offset Strategy as Delivered by Deputy Secretary of Defense Bob Work," Brussels, Belgium, April 28, 2016. Available at: https://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech-View/Article/753482/remarks-by-d%20eputy-secretary-work-on-third-offset-strategy
58. Raymond Aron, *Peace and War*, 47.

The Theory of Power Credibility

This section explains the causality of various modes in great power conduct in world politics. In so doing it begins with a critical re-evaluation of realist and constructivist explanations of great power behavior. Initially, it considers theoretical vitality of various realist threads and points out to their limitations in explicating comportment of contemporary great powers. Next, it assesses the salience of constructivist approach in the same venue and pinpoints respective constraints in this analytical framework. Subsequently, it proceeds by re-examining the narratives of power and credibility, and then explores the latter's connection with and differences from such notions as prestige, resolve, and reputation. Finally, it elaborates on the causal relationship between the stages of great power cycle and patterns of great power behavior, and introduces a new theory of international politics, the Theory of Power Credibility (TPC).

Re-examining Modern Realist and Constructivist Concepts of World Politics

1 STRUCTURAL REALISM

Two schools of thought in the realm of international relations—neorealism and constructivism—are of supreme valence to this volume. As the vantage point of the *Theory of Power Credibility (TPC)* is a redistribution of power at the system level, it draws significantly on the systemic approach to studying international relations pioneered by Kenneth Waltz. According to Waltz, "In international politics the appropriate concerns, and the possible accomplishments, of systems theory are twofold: first, to trace the expected careers of different international systems, for example, by indicating their likely durability and peacefulness; second, to show how the structure of the system affects the interacting units and how they in turn affect the structure."[1] He states elsewhere that "to sustain a systems approach, one must be able to say which changes represent the normal working of the system's parts and which changes mark a shift from system to another."[2]

No systems theorist of international relations, though, including Richard N. Rosecrance, Waltz contended, has been able to conceptualize a genuine theory of world politics. Rosecrance's input, he argued, at best was a suggested framework rather than a theory: it supplied the science with an observation that political units affect the international structure as its disturbers and regulators. He, however, failed to notice and analyze the system's influence on the behavior of the units.

Waltz appears to see the work of another venerable theorist, Stanley Hoffmann, in more laudable terms as the former attempted to operate with the notion of structure as an "intellectual construct." Yet, his inductive method of research did not allow him to dissect the construct from the real, and therefore distinguish the changes within systems from the changes of the system.[3] While Waltz (though reluctantly) seems to concur both with Hoffmann and Aron in that units rather than systems determine outcomes in international politics, the overarching issue in his interpretation is conceptualizing the causality of variations in the strength their mutual influence is correlated with different types of systems.

The third realist author in the Waltz list of the prominent theorists with a systems approach, Morton Kaplan, ranks at the top for his deductive method of international structure conceptualization. He, however, "has been unable," in the words of Waltz, "to conceive of the international system in relation to its environment in a useful way or draw a boundary between them … [and] distinguish the interaction of units from their arrangement."[4]

Yet, Waltz's theory—considered as the most influential realist concept since Morgenthau's—is not without flaws itself. For example, it seeks to explain a complex social phenomenon by the means of a single discipline, political science, and at a single level of analysis. As such, it is seen by some as inconclusive and failing to correctly predict significant systemic changes and alternations in actors' behavior.

Perhaps, no other doctrine has been claimed to have more intellectual heirs than realism, a traditionally rigid and pessimistic intellectual worldview with a focus on self-interest and power politics. Trying to make it more flexible and comprehensive to account for complex international phenomena, some scholars seek to incorporate methodologies of competing intellectual streams into their reappraisal of realism while putting forward new versions of realist thought. While not completely abandoning the doctrine of power, they nevertheless are more concerned with other theoretical milieus, such as norms, values, beliefs, and ideas. This eclecticism makes some analysts wonder whether the proponents of the new strands of realism are indeed genuine realists. As ideational and normative milieus of politics are explicitly elaborated by non-realist schools of thought, incorporating them into new strands of realism risks making it too vague a concept without strict methodological and distinct subject borders. Notably, in attempts to elaborate new theoretical strands of realism, most scholars tend to criticize Waltzian neorealism as a major diversion from the core realist tradition.

In his critique of neorealism, Alastair Murray, for example, has argued that the former discarded the thrust of realist methodology, which he perceives as conducive to reconciliation of ideal and real worlds in the study of international politics. The task of a neoclassical realist would, therefore, constitute a return to the roots of the "genuine realism's" concern with integrating transcendental moral code into the concept of power. "[I]f it is apparent that realism presents a doctrine of power politics," notes Murray, "we must also recognise that it simultaneously presents a doctrine of moral cosmopolitanism."[5]

2   NEOCLASSICAL REALISM

Dissatisfied with the shortcomings of structural realism in explaining conduct of individual states and defying intellectual limitations of Waltzian analytical framework, a new branch of scholarship identified as "neoclassical realism" emerged in the 1990s. Among others, it incorporates such prominent authors as Mark R. Brawley,[6] Thomas J. Christensen,[7] Colin Dueck,[8] Benjamin O. Fordham,[9] Steven E. Lobell,[10] Norrin M. Ripsman,[11] Gideon Rose,[12] Randall L. Schweller,[13] Jennifer Sterling-Folker,[14] William C. Wohlforth,[15] Jeffrey W. Taliaferro,[16] and Fareed Zakaria.[17]

The major dissimilarities between Waltzian neorealism and the neoclassical realist stream stem from their different subject matter and levels of analysis. While neorealists focus on the nature of and the changes in the international structure through the lens of the system-level analysis, neoclassical realists study foreign policies of individual states by employing unit-level analytical tools. In explicating the dichotomy between these two strands of realism, Jeffrey Taliaferro suggests seeing it as a "continuum" rather than as an insurmountable schism. He illustrates this idea by an arguably brand-crossing the nature of the research made by such neorealist authors as Randall Schweller, Dale Copeland, and John Mearsheimer "because they seek to explain both systemic outcomes and the foreign policy behaviors of particular states."[18]

In contrast to structural realism, neoclassical realism is concerned with the role domestic actors play in shaping foreign policy. In the collection of papers written by some prominent disciples of the school, Norrin M. Ripsman specifies these concerns in the following way: "(1) Which domestic actors matter most in the construction of foreign security policy? (2) Under what international circumstances will they have the greatest influence? (3) Under what domestic circumstances will domestic

actors have the greatest influence? (4) In what types of states will they matter most? (5) How is their influence likely to manifest itself?"[19]

In the words of neoclassical realists, their research "seeks to explain the grand strategy of a *particular modern great power at a specific time and place and not recurrent patterns of international political outcomes*" [Emphasis added].[20]

Indeed, neoclassical realists focus on what Waltz was keen to omit from the notion of structure (the focal point in his concept of international politics)—states' attributes and interactions. Instead, they are concerned with what Waltz deliberately sought to avoid: rather than conceptualizing the arrangement of structure components they prefer to discuss the individual characteristics, behavior, and relations of actors. By applying the state level of analysis, their scholarship, for example, has sought to demonstrate how in the 1930s different governmental approaches to linking domestic economy with military power impeded the European great nations such as Britain, France, and the Soviet Union to form an alliance counterbalancing the rising might of the Nazi Germany.[21] By referring to group-level analysis in the context of national identities and bilateral relations, the school's representatives attempted to explicate why extensive economic interdependence between China and Taiwan and the United States and China has not resulted in deconstruction of their war-prone mutual antagonisms.[22]

To explain foreign policy preferences of individual states, neoclassical realists frequently attempt to integrate realist perspectives with those of non-realist ones like liberalism and constructivism. In addition to identity, they often incorporate the notions of institutions, for example, political parties and presidency, as well as national interests, individual perceptions and beliefs, such as those by predominant political leaders. The latter case can be exemplified by studies addressing the role a combination of systemic and domestic factors play in presidential choices concerning major military interventions by the United States. In a characteristic way of recognizing the role of internal politics in "influencing" but not "determining" foreign policy, neoclassical realists see common grounds in US presidents' decisions to wage wars in Korea (by Harry S. Truman), Vietnam (by Lyndon B. Johnson), and Iraq (by George W. Bush) in that each of them *believed* that their actions were in the best interests of the nation.[23] However, by borrowing from other international theory streams, neoclassical realism has, in the view of its critics, eroded the rigid foundations of the realist strand. In focusing on *Innenpolitik,* neoclassical realists depart from the realist paradigm and essentially defect to the liberal

camp, an allegation they would likely vehemently deny by referring to their recognition of structural factors as important policy determinants. Such a reference would not, however, look persuasive to those who classify the school as a subdivision of "liberal analytics" that while being preoccupied with *Innenpolitik* is wary to exclude systemic factors from the final equation. In its turn, *Innenpolitik*, as Peter Trubowitz reasonably remarks, does not constitute a single theory of domestic politics, but rather presents a set of various concepts concerned with the study of different domestic variables.[24] Some authors question the cognitive utility of what Benjamin O. Fordham calls "additive" approach to studying foreign policy by neoclassical realists. He remarks that by separating domestic variables from international ones, the theory disciples assume that domestic actors *sui generis* perpetuate national interests, while the latter, in reality, are determined by international pressures. Viewing it as a serious drawback, he puts forward an alternative concept that proposes to consider exogenous and endogenous factors in an "interactive" way. However, the core assumptions underpinning this approach are rather controversial. On the one hand, writing about the possible impact of the external and internal variables on sub-unit political actors, Fordham asserts that their policies "will depend as much on international circumstances as on the interests that form the basis for their concern."[25] On the other hand, his study of shifts in the Republican and Democratic parties' approaches to US Cold War military spending has demonstrated that while these approaches did change in different directions, in the final analysis what constituted the primary cause of these alterations as well as partisan interests behind them were *pressures from without.* "In principle," Fordham had to acknowledge in a de facto neorealist fashion, "changes in the international environment or the behavior of other states can account for shifts in the positions of domestic political factions as well as overall policy choice."[26]

In responding to the major points of critique with respect to the neoclassical realism, its proponents, such as Marc Brawley, note that this branch of scholarship has rather moderate ambitions. It, they maintain, has never claimed to propose a comprehensive theory of international relations of a Waltzian scope; rather, its scientific significance is in drawing attention to the role of domestic politics, purposefully ignored by structural realists. As such, it presents a theory of foreign policy. But what about other competing theories that assert their primacy in accentuating the salience of domestic factors in the study of international politics, such as analytical liberals? It would be incorrect though, maintains Brawley, to

ignore the differences between neoclassical realist and analytical liberal approaches to interpreting the ways domestic politics influences foreign policy. In distinguishing between these approaches, he emphasizes their incongruence in viewing the role of state and domestic actors. While neo-classical realists view the state as the major force in shaping foreign policy choices and long-term strategies, analytical liberals perceive domestic groups as the core determinants of state policy. These are the latter's pref-erences, the liberal school believes, that shape policy decisions, rather than the other way around. Contrarily, neoclassical realists refute the "bottom up" approach, as they postulate that it is the state which in most cases has an upper hand in deciding upon a nation's international conduct. Most importantly, however, they define such a conduct as corollary of systemic pressures.[27] This looks rather misleading for if neoclassical realists sub-scribe to the primacy of systemic factors, they, by definition, should view other levels of analysis including the state one as auxiliary. If this is the case, one may reasonably doubt the validity of drawing border lines between the two scholarly approaches with respect to the theme that appears to constitute quite different priorities in their analysis.

While neoclassical realists can certainly be praised for being instrumen-tal in studying various domestic variables behind foreign policies of indi-vidual countries under different historical circumstances, neoclassical realism has so far failed to evolve as a coherent theoretical strand in cog-nizing phenomenon of state behavior. By and large it continues to present a set of carefully selected historical cases each analyzed through individual rather than common lens. The major reason behind this failure, some crit-ics, such as Shiping Tang, insist, is that the neoclassical realist scholarship has not been synthesized. "Although all neoclassical realists submit to the assumption that domestic politics is a key for understanding state behavior, they do not share an integrative the framework for analyzing the actual process through which states formulate and implement policies," observes Tang. "More often than not, each author develops his/her own explana-tory framework without attempting to build upon each other's work, although there has been some apparent and substantial overlapping among different authors' frameworks."[28] Furthermore, neoclassical realists' asser-tion that domestic politics surpass systemic pressures in determining for-eign policy outcomes (e.g., Schweller) is not particularly helpful neither in understanding the patterns of states behavior nor in predicting the exact ways in which internal variables of a given nation would shape her interna-tional conduct.[29] This inconsistency prompts some scholars to criticize

contemporary realists for "recasting realism in forms that," in the words of Jeffrey Legro and Andrew Moravcsik, "are theoretically less determinate, less coherent, and less distinctive to realism." They write elsewhere that "many realists now advance the very assumptions and causal claims in opposition to which they traditionally, and still, claim to define themselves." As the result, "the ... realist rubric now encompasses nearly the entire universe of international relations theory (including current liberal, epistemic, and institutionalist theories) and excludes only a few intellectual scarecrows (such as outright irrationality, widespread self-abnegating altruism, slavish commitment to ideology, complete harmony of state interests, or a world state)."[30]

Characteristically, neoclassical realists take an integrative stance with respect to offensive realists' claim that states are power maximizers and a contending assertion by defensive realists that states are guided primarily by concerns to strengthen their security. "[L]ike other variants of realism," explain the authors of a seminal text on the new theoretical strand, "neoclassical realism assumes that politics is a perpetual struggle among different states for material power and security."[31] Contrarily, the *TPC* assumes that the struggle for power and security presents two different paradigms of states' conduct which correlate with different stages in their power cycle. Once their relative power enters the phase of diminution, their political leaders become largely concerned with sustaining credibility of their nations' great power image rather than with other preoccupations.

Neoclassical realists rightly assume that elite perceptions of relative power do matter. The question is how exactly they matter. Is their role confined to what the school disciples postulate as intervening variables in their conceptual constructs? It appears that the role of perceptions can be seen in a different way than neoclassical realists or the proponents of other schools perpetuate. What is overlooked is that elites are most concerned with what feelings their policies create in the hearts and minds of the important others. When their states' material power relatively declines, what they seek most is to instill in their audiences at home and abroad certain feelings, which—depending upon their specific message receivers—should subsequently experience confidence and reassurance or fear and uneasiness. In other words, what they care most is the impression their policy makes on the relevant actors, and hence credibility of their power becomes the primary objective of their actions, whereas concerns with credibility should be seen as a variable dependent upon shifts in the distribution of relative power.

The all-encompassing nature of the new realism's assumptions can, perhaps, be best explained by the fear of fallibility. Indeed, it is no accident that the emergence of neoclassical realism dates back to the last decade of the past century. Notably, the school's predecessors were unable to predict an unexpectedly peaceful transformation of the international system that marked the end of the Cold War and the departure of bipolarity. The school's arrival can be seen, therefore, as an attempt to find creative responses to accusations of realism in that it proved unable to predict the closing of the distinct historical era of balancing on the edge of a new hegemonic war that for half a century had been determining the fate of the mankind.[32] It appeared that few even in the realist camp were persuaded by Kenneth Waltz's argument that his theory of structural realism has preserved its explanatory power no matter what, and ostensibly because the unfolding transformation reflected *changes in the system* rather than *changes of the system*.[33] The fear that realism might sink to oblivion made its self-identified disciples contemplate innovative ways of reviving the old school's fame. This fear, however, prompts the theory's adherents to make malleable statements, like the one made by Gideon Rose in claiming the predictive omnipotence of the new intellectual stream. "Neoclassical realism," he wrote in his seminal article in *World Politics*, "predicts that an increase in relative material power will lead eventually to a corresponding expansion in the ambition and scope of a country's foreign policy activity, and that a decrease in such power will lead eventually to a corresponding contraction."[34]

The neoclassical realists' claim that there exists direct proportionality between the increase in relative power and the rise of foreign policy ambitions, however, is erroneous. Empirical facts cited as "anomalies" by some neoclassical realist authors such as Fareed Zakaria—the Netherlands in the eighteenth century and the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century—cannot be explicated as mere "exceptions" from the purported "rule." Indeed, neither the Dutch nor the Americans that accumulated significant economic and financial resources in these periods were seeking to convert them in international political power.[35] Likewise, notwithstanding her conspicuous economic, demographic, and military rise since obtaining state independence from the British rule in 1949 and through the first decades of the new millennium, India has failed to translate her capabilities into universal political influence comparable with the one still enjoyed by her relatively shrinking in terms of material might former colonizer. Equally, there is no deficit in facts of the opposite nature that go against the theory's premise. For example, Russia and France, the

major architects of the European political order in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, continued to pursue active foreign policies through the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries despite significant and progressive decline in their relative material capabilities. Thus, lacking the comprehensive explanatory power of realism and structural realism, neoclassical realism falls short of cognitive utility in terms of a grand theory. This by no means diminishes its relevance as an analytical tool in comprehending foreign policy of individual states. By interpreting the latter as a complex product of systemic and domestic pressures, it accentuates the need to consider the role of *Innenpolitik* as a critical factor in shaping decisions by policy managers in the international realm, and can be instrumental in avoiding mirror imaging by the self in contemplating possible actions by its partners and foes.

By applying domestic politics as a cause in a neoclassical realist fashion one can, for instance, make interesting observations concerning the functionality of credibility for power. As Daniel Wirls has pointed out in his study of US military and security policy, "[E]ven minor international crises or events that at least superficially went against U.S. interests or plans were often interpreted by those out of power as a sign of [powerholders'] weakness. … [I]f possible they were seized on by the president as a threat requiring a strong response that empowered the president and his party."[36] The foregoing phenomenon of viewing minor threats as opportunities for boosting power credibility are characteristic of every major power leader's pattern of behavior, especially when domestic and international environment conditions are not conducive to sustaining perceptions of their power invincibility by relevant actors.

3   Perceptions of Power and the Power of Perceptions

Perceptions of power present a central theme for some neoclassical realists like Wohlforth. Placing US and Soviet inferences about distribution of power in the center of his analysis of the world politics during the Cold War, he has sought to improve "power-centred analytical frameworks … with the accumulation of historical knowledge about how political elites perceived power in various times and places."[37] It is, perhaps, one of the first times that the term "credibility" entered academic literature on international relations and foreign policy. Thus, when discussing US-Soviet

power contest in post-WWII Europe, Wohlforth argues that American decision makers tended to underestimate Soviet power because their perceptions of national might did not include the USSR's ideological influence that far exceeded its palpable faculties.[38]

However, Wohlforth's and other neoclassical realist research, whatever historically rich, have focused on elite views on power with respect to individual countries and certain time periods rather than on analyzing causality and patterns of power-credibility paradigm. It is, therefore, vital to delineate here important commonalities and differences between perceived power and credibility of power. Perceived power (and power in general) and credibility of power are social constructs that can be conceived in various ways and open a borderless field for contesting views and debates. There appears, however, to be a consensus among contemporary IR scholars that power in international politics is not confined to physical attributes of a nation, such as her economic and military indices, but is a complex category that along with material components engrosses political and other non-tangible attributes including authority, status, role, and influence. Despite this consensus, perceptions of power continue to differ. One of the points of contention is, for example, the degree of correlation between material capabilities and soft power. While some scholars see a linear correlation between these two power ingredients, others see it as malleable. Specifically, the notion of power credibility depends, firstly, on proposition of what power is; secondly, by what means it is mediated between addressors and addressees; and, thirdly, how it is connected with the notion of international status. As we have discussed the first two issues in the foregoing parts of the book, it is the turn of the third one to be examined now. Anne Clunan's observation that "status cannot be objectively inferred from the distribution of material capabilities in the system" provides a good point of reference here. She further argues that "[s]tatus is not fixed; it is a contingent and dynamic concept dependent on perceptual judgments of the self and others, social institutions, and the interaction of actors over time."[39] Indeed, in some social situations, status can be vague or undetermined. Yet, in a set of social systems like the one of international relations, status is often fixed (e.g., the status of a permanent member of the UNSC, or a status of a nuclear power). Thus, it makes sense to identify two types of status: one—official, associated with the country's longstanding and commonly recognized position in the international system. Another type of status is rather subjective, and unlike the first one represents mainly a product of conjecture. Quite naturally, if such

an informal status is inferred as "weak" to the degree it significantly diverts from the officially strong and prestigious standing, once legitimized it can be quite detrimental to functionality of the latter. At the first signs of such a discrepancy are cognized by decision makers, they are bound to urgently begin devising policies that would provide their power's posture and status with elevated confidence and veracity.

I deem it necessary here to revisit the notion of national power by conceiving it as a comprehensive confidence in the self's *force* and *authority*.[40] Drawing on Robert Bierstedt's concept of power as a force-authority synthesis, I hypothesize that since power constitutes a dynamic synergy of the two properties, once national capabilities to generate *force* decline, thereby risking to bear negatively on the general confidence in national power at home and abroad, statesmen are poised to make up for diminution in coercive capability by upsurge in power *authority*.

These relentless efforts take a form of policy aimed at boosting state's credibility through compelling manifestations of supremacy in influencing outcomes. The primary challenge though for a national strategist arising in this regard is in finding a proper balance between hard and soft components of national power while investing—not only financially, but no less importantly, politically, spiritually, and intellectually—in their veracity. For there are no omnipresent policy templates, the task of crafting optimal solutions for the given historical period, specific issue, and area is intricate, so is the mission of staying in great-power rank by upholding both material and intangible primacy.

But how far can and should states go in sustaining their reputation by power? Do the recipes of relying on brute force asserted by proponents of raw *Realpolitik* still remain the most efficient and preferable means of policy? Can one automatically apply the lessons of the British interwar experience to the contemporary era? And, most importantly, has anything changed in relations among nations since then that is bound to make great powers substantially revisit their policies primarily aimed at sustaining their international pre-eminence?

In responding to these questions, one should first identify the most significant changes that have occurred in the narrative of power, and above all in the premises of its indiscriminate application—something that has distinguished strong powers from weaker nations. Although since the end of the last world war, the domain of international relations has witnessed many radical changes—the most important one has arguably flown from constraints that nuclear weapons have put on both physical and political application of force without qualification.

4   Constructivism

Constructivist school, while concurring with realist and neorealist assumptions regarding the presence of anarchy as the dominant feature of world politics and focus on state-centered system, differs from them in conceptualizing the independent and dependent variables. For them, the causal forces are ideas that constitute an independent variable which determines outcomes in power, a dependent variable. In other words, the world of perceptions, ideas, and beliefs is shaping the world we are living in, and not the other way around. The most interesting question, however, is how constructivists explicate the nature of forces that cause changes in the world of ideas. Notably, they tend to differ in identifying the primordial factors behind transformation: for example, some postulate that the latter is the product of "cognitive evolution,"[41] while others see it as resulting from "constitutive norms."[42]

The ideational milieu of politics plays, thus, a conspicuous role in constructivist theory. Commenting on the role of ideas in sustaining primacy on the example of US politics, Robert J. Lieber, for instance, has claimed that "elite and popular beliefs, policy choices, and leadership remain critical in shaping outcomes. In this sense, the challenges facing the United States are at least as much ideational as they are material."[43] Most importantly, "the ability to avoid serious decline," he argues elsewhere, "is less a question of material factors than of policy, leadership and political will."[44] Here, it is necessary to underscore that the power of ideas to shape outcomes is not constant, while the *need* to resort to this reservoir of composite power is objectively bound to rise when the national material capabilities relatively fall. "Credibility resides not only in capacity but also in constancy of purpose," argue A. Wess Mitchell and Jakub Grygiel.[45] Furthermore, as Lieber contends, "[a]lthough the extant American capabilities, measured in troops, weapons, defense dollars, and ability to project power at great distances, matter greatly, the elements of policy, determination, and willingness to meet its commitments constitute a vital element in any assessment of American power."[46] A similar view on the role of non-tangible factors of power one can find in the works of other constructivists. Christian Reus-Smit, for example, puzzled with the discrepancy between America's huge material capabilities and her fading political and moral influence in international relations in the Bush era, sought to explain the phenomenon by fundamental misperception by US neoconservative administrations of the role social power, and eminently

morality and ethics, play in world politics. To sustain global political influence, he asserted, American policymakers should grasp the essence of "an alternative, social conception of power, one that stresses the importance of authority, legitimacy, and institutions."[47] Interestingly enough, political elites in the declining great powers seem to understand the salience of non-palpable policy instruments as power multipliers; yet, they adopt this understanding mostly in an eclectic and inconsistent fashion. This can be explained by their belief that to maximize power credibility in the contemporary world of interwoven Hobbesian, Lockean, and Kantian practices, values and norms, they should act accordingly, that is, combine *Realpolitik* with liberal policies. This is why along with referring to morality and ethics in their political rhetoric, they continue to resort to methods that by modern civilizational standards cannot be considered as moral and ethical (e.g., threats to use force and the use of force, coercion, brinkmanship, blackmailing, and espionage).

For the *TPC* that presents an attempt to integrate constructivist and rationalist models of international relations, the social concept of world politics elaborated by Alexander Wendt is of exclusive utility.[48] Although his ontological assumptions about the domain of international interaction contrast ideational and structuralist premises of constructivism to materialist and individualist tenets of rationalism, he nevertheless does not see these approaches as antagonistic. When discussing the rationalist approach to identities and interests, Wendt defines it as an assumption "that identities and interests will not change over the course of an interaction."[49] This thesis presumes the finite number of behavioral choices and allows for a relatively high degree of their predictability. Yet, constructivists suggest that in the course of long-lasting social interactions agencies, including states (which they as a matter of fact happen to anthropomorphize), may, at times, quite extravagantly, change their identities and revise their interests (i.e., e.g., how they—though *post factum*—tend to explain the phenomenon of the metamorphosis in the Soviet Union's role identity—from perceiving itself as an "enemy" of the United States through the most part of their bilateral relations' history to identifying itself as an American "friend" in the last years of the Soviet era). While rationalists are concerned with what happens *here and now*, they, constructivists argue, are poised to overlook the impact that social interaction exercises on identities and interests in the long run. In Wendt's perspective, the latter are not once and for all "given," but are in constant movement, in a state of perpetual "process," so that "actors are also instantiating and reproducing

identities, narratives of who they are, which in turn constitute the interests on the basis of which they make behavioral choices."[50] Thus, Wendt tends to explicate changes in role identities within the framework of a broad theory of socialization that accentuates the role of idealist variables in contrast to materialist factors, the latter being "overemphasized" by realists. The *TPC* does not opt for one milieu in favor of the other, but sees them in a holistic way. For instance, it construes the notion of power as both a material capability and an ideational ability, which do not preclude each other, but act in *dynamic* congruence with tangible and unobservable elements changing their relative salience depending upon the structural conditions of the system they are operating in.

As for the notion of credibility, as applied in the context of this research, it draws significantly on the constructivist approach. Although the index of Wendt's *magnum opus* does not mention credibility, his explication of the premises underpinning social relationships between the Ego and the Alter can be attributed to exploration of the causes behind the mutual pursuit of image credibility in their dyadic relations. For example, in Ego's desire to make Alter see Ego *in a certain way*, one can discover the urge to achieve credibility of the role which Ego seeks to play. Expressly at the time of its relative power decline, Ego cannot confidently play its customary role without receiving signals of verification from the Alter. Note that Wendt overlooks to correlate *the degree* of the need for such a verification with the phases of power cycle. Conceiving this predisposition omnipresent and dubbing it "perspective-taking," he, however, rightly holds that "The problem facing rational actors … is making sure that they perceive other actors, and other actors' perceptions of them *correctly.*"[51] Yet, this is not the only problem they face. Since, paraphrasing Wendt, one can assume that what Ego *is* depends on what Alter *thinks* Ego is, in order to perceive itself in the way it feels comfortable, Ego needs an appropriate perception of itself by Alter. From our standpoint, therefore, no less important a problem for the self is an ability to *make* others perceive itself in the way the former aspires.

Karl Deutsch's notion of *power* defined as "the ability to afford not to learn"[52] is specifically instrumental to the ends of explicating the intrinsic logic of power credibility–seeking paradigm. Indeed, at the stage of power rise, the agency has little concerns over perceptions the others might hold in its regard because it considers its supremacy as an undeniable fact. Its self-confidence serves as a major source of its high self-esteem, and it is this hubris that prompts it to neglect any additional verification of its primacy

so that it can easily afford itself not to significantly care for signals symbolizing recognition of its power by the others. Yet, as its power finds itself in the downstream stage to the extent that even its arrogant elite has to tacitly recognize that its material capabilities have indeed relatively decayed, it can no more continue to ignore opinions the others hold of itself. These opinions begin growingly to serve as powerful reference points in making reasonable judgments about its power status in the new social hierarchy. Therefore, to preserve its habitual degree of self-respect which it expects to be commensurate with its traditional status inherited from its supremacist role in the golden age of his material preponderance, the self needs to receive from the others encouraging signs of habitual respect. Hence, a demand for a policy that transmits the pertinent signals. If the response by the others is incongruent with expectations of the self, restoring its credibility becomes the predominant pattern of its behavior which can plausibly account for irrationalities and other deviational phenomena in its actions at the stage of capabilities' decline.

The *TPC* differs though from constructivism in that it does not overestimate an anthropomorphized state's ability to learn, nor does it underestimate the power of inertia or the magnitude of traditions and entrenched beliefs on the part of decision makers. Wendt's social theory draws substantially on the ideas put forward by Herbert Blumer and his predecessors, above all, George Herbert Mead—ideas which constitute what Blumer defined as a concept of *symbolic interactionism*. "Symbolic interaction, does not merely give a ceremonious nod to social interaction [but] recognises social interaction to be of vital importance of its own right," emphasized Blumer. "Put simply, human beings in interacting with one another have to take account of what each other is doing or is about to do; they are forced to direct their own conduct or handle their situations in terms of what they take into account." Referring to Mead's analysis of symbolic interaction, Blumer accentuated the former's input in comprehending the fact that "the parties to such interaction must necessarily take each other's roles."[53] One may add to this thesis that in order to productively exchange their subjectivities with one another, actors need to ensure that the opposite side understands the role of its alter authentically. To this end, the self has to operate with symbols that can transcend the cultural barriers separating it from the alter. Drawing on Ludwig Wittgenstein's thesis that our language puts limits to thoughts,[54] and respectively, perceptions on the cognitive level, one may suggest that what is not understood at the analytical level can be replenished by emotional comprehension.

The constructivist approach to international relations as a field connecting social constructions of reality with power accentuates the causal role of social power in underlying political power. Bourdieu called this feature of social power "the specific symbolic power," and emphasized its salience in "impos[ing] the principles of construction of reality, in particular, social reality." This symbolic property of social power constitutes, in his view, "a major dimension of political power."[55] Thus, social/symbolic power presents an independent variable, while political power is conceived as a dependent variable. If one applies this approach to the narrative of power credibility, the latter would occupy the place of an independent variable determining outcomes for distribution of aggregate power in the international system.

5   The Cultural Perspective

Unlike realist concepts of international relations that focus on crude power of states, constructivist perspectives on world politics accentuate cultural notions—such as identity, glory, honor, self-esteem, discourse, and language—applicable to a variety of social actors. For Richard Ned Lebow, these terms, for example, constitute the basic analytical categories underpinning a *cultural theory of international relations* that he outlined in his *magnum opus* of the same title.[56] The theory focuses on explicating the roles that cultural and psychological motives such as fear, interest, honor, glory, prestige, and self-esteem play in guiding politics and policies of nation-states through human history. These narratives constitute psychological anchors for the feelings of safety, relaxation, and confidence which politicians are intuitively seeking in dealing with the tumultuous and insidious world—a phenomenon which has been comprehensively examined in a concept of "ontological security." For Lebow's project, the latter concept, first elaborated by Ronald David Laing and later adopted by Anthony Giddens, is strongly inter-linked with his own theoretical perspective of international relations. Since the concept of ontological security is of substantial importance for this research, it makes sense to briefly outline its major thesis. According to Laing, individuals (and, one may add, nations as well) possess a "firm core of ontological security," provided they do not doubt their identity and autonomy, and live "as a continuum in time; as having an inner consistency, substantiality, genuineness, and worth."[57] For this study, the concept is of no lesser significance inasmuch as it allows us to suggest that commitment to pursuit of traditionally primacist roles by foreign policy elites of the major powers in world politics ontologically stems from

the desire to perpetuate socially respectful identities in line with deep-rooted expectations of their populations.

In contrast to Lebow who posits self-esteem as a perpetual policy motive, and tends to ignore its relatively different magnitude in a set of other factors such as security and power maximization, I differentiate among various stages of power cycle while assuming that credibility—as both ends and means of ontological security and power—tends to occupy an overarching place in politicians' mindset at the stage of the cognized decline of their nations' power capabilities. An indicator of the new reality is a growing usage of the word "credibility" since the 1970s when it first appeared in the discourse of economists and then was borrowed by politicians. It has been used first in the seventeenth century, first in moral (as trust vs. lie) and then religious connotations.[58]

As it was stated above, the major puzzle that this book addresses and attempts to explain is the fact that foreign policy elites of the major powers tend to neglect "rationality" in their interactions with the outside world and invest much time and energy in promotion of their state's images of credible strength and authority largely when their national relative material capabilities enter the downfall phase of their power cycle. This proclivity prompts statesmen to act "irrationally," frequently discounting mid- and long-term costs of their decisions in terms of blood and treasure and often disregarding objective structural constraints to their actions in the name of short-lived political goals. I dub the concept the *Theory of Power Credibility (TPC)*, for it posits a causality between decline of relative power capabilities and foreign policy elites' actions aimed at maximizing their state's credibility as a principal power.

Though the declining major powers attempt to avoid a direct military clash with their peers that could be fraught with their total destruction, their credibility-seeking behavior tends to unprecedentedly rapidly destabilize international system (e.g., by wars with inconsequential states); as a result, their conduct is poised to bring relatively more dynamism, uncertainty, and chaos in the systemic structure than during their power rise stages. In effect, the conceptualization of this phenomenon by the *TPC* continues the Gilpinian postclassical realist tradition of looking into an explanation of how decision makers manage to close "gaps between the capabilities of states and the demands placed upon them by their international roles."[59] However, unlike Gilpin who posited that the changes resulting from the subsequent redistribution of power among actors interested in the international change would be in congruence with their long-lasting interests,[60] the postulated concept argues that the unfolding changes

would rather lead to unpredictable and tumultuous outcomes that might well be opposite to the expectations of policymakers.

6   The Centrality of Role Identities

The *TPC* is close to the constructivist perspective in that it emphasizes the centrality of role identities in shaping policy objectives. Agencies' roles reflect their unique capabilities and positions in the international system, which allow them to perform exceptional social functions (e.g., patrons of minor actors, regional or global securitizers, and coalition leaders) that distinguish them from the rest. In the process of actors' social and cultural interactions with the others, roles become integrated with identities so that, citing the words of Wendt, "even if a state wants to abandon a role it may be unable to do so because the Other resists out of a desire to maintain *its* identity."[61]

Identity, as Wendt has put it, is "a property of intentional actors that generates motivational and behavioral dispositions."[62] In other words, an actor's intention to perform in a specific way stems from a set of sociocultural premises or identity features that are embedded in its individual social construct.

> [While] … identity is at base a subjective or unit-level quality, rooted in an actor's self-understandings, […] the meaning of those understandings will often depend on whether other actors represent an actor in the same way, and to that extent identity will also have an intersubjective or systemic quality.[63]

Thus, a great power performs as such due to the interaction between two major processes: the structural formation of her major role at the international system level, and its entrenchment in her identity at the subsystem levels. So, while on the one hand, her role dictates her identity, on the other hand, it is her identity that determines her foreign policy role.

Assuming role identity is a complex self-cognizing process by both a nation and her foreign policy elite. Intersubjective by nature, self-cognition is affected by speech acts that communicate certain narratives among the self-cognizing subjects, with veracity constituting an overarching condition of such an exchange. As Cristopher Browning observed in his analysis of narratives in formation of identities, "the self remains in process, always needing to be reaffirmed, re-found and re-articulated because in a world

of multiple narratives and relationships self identity is always in question in that it is always in construction as the self responds to the changing world and the changing narratives of which it is a part."[64] The need to sustain an appropriate degree of narrative's veracity is an imperative for any sort of communication, but even more so when perceptions of role identity have to pass through inflection points in nation's power cycle. It is then that in promoting narratives conducive to the customary images of confidence, strength, and resolve, the focus of the respective governmental policies is bound to shift to their preservation. Together with elaboration and promotion of narratives aimed at eliminating the opposite images, it becomes the core mission of the statecraft.

One might, however, believe that the perpetual self-identification is necessarily poised to produce substantial alteration of identities. To think this way would be to ignore forces of continuity in perpetuation of established, self-comforting identities that, as history shows, tend to prevail over those of change in self-perception.

In the constructivist interpretation of identities, the latter are products of "constitution," which presents a set of rules, hierarchies, and norms. In explicating the drivers and outcomes of actors' behavior, some constructivists construe constitution as an antithesis to positivist tradition of law-based causation. Instead, they postulate that individual and collective behavior is subordinate to socially established rules, which differ from laws in that they streamline behavior in a non-linear way and allow for meaningful social interaction. However, in refuting objective causality as a viable concept of social processes while linking *meaning* exclusively to the notion of constitution, the constructivist stance looks overly exclusive for the notion of *cause* is another legitimate social construct to explicate behavior as a meaningful process of policy choices to accomplish actors' objectives. As found by Lebow, the difference between the two cognitive systems seeking to explain social action lies mostly in the degree of freedom they attribute to actor's behavior and the role they ascribe to intentions in determining outcomes.[65] In other words, both theoretical approaches can be seen as mutually compatible as rules, in fact, can be defined as a more general semantic notion to delineate laws. *TPC* draws, in part, on the commonly accepted distinction between positivist and non-positivist explanatory logics in that it (a) addresses the notions of power and credibility by treating them in a non-positivist way, and (b) establishes causality between them in a positivist fashion.

To transcend the purportedly descriptive nature of constitutionalist approach, Wendt suggests addressing a certain phenomenon with "what-question." This, in his view, allows to ward off allegations by the critiques who accuse constitution of lacking explanatory power.[66] It should be noted though that it is not the purpose of this book to engage in epistemological debate between disciples of positivist and non-positivist approaches to the realm of international relations. Instead, I see it more productive to synthetize their strands where possible for the purposes of making a step forward in ontological comprehension of international politics. For example, the *TPC* gains from the constructivist notion of constitution to the ends of explicating the notion of credibility. Since roles are constituted by self-identification as well as by social structures in which they are played, one can define credibility as a match between constitutions of role by the self and that of the self as constituted by the others so that the self is seeking to achieve such a constitution of its image in social structure (international system) that fits its vision in the most authentic way.

NOTES

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3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 54, 56.
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CHAPTER 7

The Narratives of Power and Credibility

1 Power as Confidence

To proceed, we should first define major categories that we will be operating with through the book. In international relations theory, the notion of *power* has been understood as the key faculty to determine the incentives for and outcomes of interactions between international players. In the most general perspective, it may be surmised that power presents an ability to change others' conditions by making them better off or worse off. As one of the most renowned socio-cultural thinkers on power, Friedrich Nietzsche argued in his brilliant albeit controversial magnum opus *The Will to Power* that any notion of power "always includes both the ability to help and the ability to harm."[1]

In IR theory, two different approaches to discerning power have emerged since the "national power" and the "balance-of-power" narratives were elaborated by Hans Morgenthau: one in the framework of the classic realist paradigm—power as capability or resources as posited, for example, by Kenneth Waltz; and another one as conceived through the lens of behavioral or relational approach—power as control or influence overtly ensuring compliance to domination as perceived by such scholars as Robert Dahl, Nelson Polsby, and Karl Deutsch.[2] Highly critical of "elitist" (sociological) and only partly satisfied by "pluralist" (political scientists') approaches to power, Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz proposed to view power as a two-faced property: one which is easily detectible, and another which is not easily identified.[3] They construe power not only

as an ability of the self to directly impact the other's freedom of maneuverability, but also as a capacity to form such an operational environment in which the other is prevented from imposing its will on the self in conflictual situations.[4]

Discontent with the notions confining power to acts of decision-making and agenda-setting *involving conflict*, Steven Lukes elaborated an even more nuanced, three-dimensional, approach to the concept of power by theorizing the third dimension of power over people as one enabled by *conflict-free* processes of "shaping of their perceptions, cognitions, and preferences."[5] The foregoing approaches to power overlook, however, that in order to propel any of its hypothesized attributes, the latter should possess specific quality that ensures their successful realization. And this quality is credibility.

2   The Fourth Dimension of Power

Credibility is the fourth dimension of power that actualizes and perpetuates all power properties including material capabilities and intangibles, such as ability to set agendas, shape norms, and fashion modes of behavior. Without recipients' *belief in authenticity* of those, an addressor would have no power.

Realists' accentuation of the quantitative, assumingly visible if not entirely tangible features of power has been long criticized for overlooking the subtle characteristics of this intricate notion. As a counterweight to the realist portraying of power in terms of hard strength, Nye has put forward the concept of soft power. However, in the final analysis, it is still unclear what criteria except for a victory in an existential battle one can use to determine who is stronger—an opponent with stronger hard power characteristics or the one with shrewder soft power abilities. What both power narratives tend to overlook is that in a non-existential collision between two actors it is not necessarily the one with a larger hard or soft power assets or any combination of both but rather properly *recognized power* that may have more *situational power* than the other.

To clarify this idea, let us consider two types of relationships between a weak and a strong actor—a stable one and a dynamic. In the first type of interaction when relations between the two actors are not subjected to any unpredictable move on the part of the weak, power distribution in favor of the commonly perceived stronger actor is hardly questioned by those inside as well as outside the dyad. It is not necessary that these relations

should take the form of explicit subordination to judge about who dominates in the given power equation; the entrenched perception of the pertinent parties about their status in the dyad is a sufficient condition. However, the established power pattern can promptly change once the mode of the considered relationship morphs into a dynamic one as the weaker undertakes an action with respect to the stronger that causes the latter to react. In an ideal-type of relations this can be any move that results in a reaction on the part of the stronger. As reaction ensues yet does not lead to destruction of the weaker, the balance of power shifts to the latter: if the weaker makes the stronger react to its actions, it pushes the stronger out of balance, and not only situationally, but also positionally, that is in terms of its place in the established power hierarchy. Of course, one can argue that a decision to act or to ignore the weaker's move is entirely up to the stronger. But is it? If the weaker targets vulnerable points in the stronger's power image, it hardly leaves any other option to the stronger but to react. The essence of the considered causality is not in that the weaker ultimately wins over the stronger by imposing its will on the latter; rather it lies in the fact that by daring to push the stronger out of balance it publicly exposes the stronger's vulnerability, thereby undermining credibility of its power.

The phenomenon of a weak state's disproportional endowment with potential power is exemplified by several historical cases, such as defiant policy by Fidel Castro's Cuba with respect to the United States' or Moscow's submission to East German authorities' desire to build the Berlin Wall. This irregularity, coined "power of the weak" by Arnold Wolfers,[6] stems from five major prerequisites. First, as shown by Erling Bjøl, unlike great powers that have to attend to numerous set of issues and actors and thereby are bound to overstretch their power assets making them, in Wolfers' words, a "scarce commodity,"[7] small states can afford to concentrate their resources on a few highly prioritized challenges and players. Second, such a concentration of faculty and focus, according to Bjøl, enables them to ground their decisions on more elaborate information and develop a relatively higher degree of specific international expertise in comparison with big states.[8] Third, as Wolfers noted, given the interest of great powers in re-asserting their status through the system of alliances and partnerships with weaker nations, the latter can obtain concessions from their patrons by threatening to shift their loyalties to patrons' opponents.[9] One can add to this list the fourth characteristic of the weaker—an ability to set agendas in relations with the stronger, an ability

that is considered one of the salient power components. Finally, the weak can defy on the strong by refusing to recognize its authority.

By engaging the vital interests of a stronger player in a game, a minor actor is essentially forcing the strong one to play the game on the minor actor's conditions. An imperative of the frustrated principal player to sustain its credibility by a tough response to what it perceives as humiliation and a blow to its strong image and prestige, therefore, presents at once an innate policy deficiency of a physically superior power and the underlying calculus in an asymmetric warfare of *credibility attrition* by a skillful and determined provocateur, be it a rogue state or a terrorist organization.

Recent and current history provides us with a sufficient set of pertinent examples ranging from the 9/11 attacks on US soil to America's exaggerated reaction to Taliban's intransigence with respect to Bush's demand to hand over to the United States all al-Qaeda leaders in Afghanistan to the Obama administration's decision to spend a larger portion of American military and financial resources in response to the executions of US citizens by the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq; these and similar events have demonstratively exposed the vulnerability of a superior actor in the face of a unwavering minor foe. But if the self's moves of a highly symbolic nature are able to undermine its opponent's image of strength and invincibility while publicly shaking its confidence and power veracity, they can simultaneously propel the credibility of the self's power beyond proportion. In its turn, a declining political entity can utilize this algorithm to uphold and upgrade its power image.

This algorithm calls for resort to an unorthodox form of power that is neither "hard" nor "soft" but rather "symbolic"—close to the notion suggested by Bourdieu, "as a power of constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world and, thereby, action on the world and thus the world itself, an almost magical power which enables one to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force (whether physical or economic), by virtue of the specific effect of mobilization."[10]

The realist and idealist interpretations of power are respectively close to the notions of the "actual power" and the "feeling of power" outlined in Nietzsche's *der Wille zur Macht* (the Will to Power) concept.[11] However, in contrast to classical realism's major claim that survival or self-preservation is the driving tenet of being, Nietzsche argued that a living being "seeks above all to discharge its strength—life itself is *will to power*; self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent *results*."[12]

We can see, thus, a striking resemblance between Nietzsche's approach and that of Gramsci: for both thinkers, the self's composite power, despite diminution of its actual power (e.g., coercion capability), may be sustained through an increase of *the feeling of power* by establishing normative or moral settings in which its authority is preserved through symbolic structures determining others' behavior.[13]

For the both schools of thought, to exercise power's function in establishing one's superiority over others, the latter should recognize (i.e., have an appropriate image of) the self as "truly" powerful, or capable to dominate. Should others doubt the self's power or think it is not real, the overarching function of power would be nullified. No matter how strong one may be in "reality," its strengths can be of no value in exercising its will should others disbelieve its capabilities and determination. In other words, the self's power should *look credible* for the addressees.

Max Weber defined power (*Macht*) as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests."[14] Yet, from a Foucauldian standpoint, the most visible, raw forms of power are the least cost-efficient as they are bound to be met with protest. Hence, "*[p]ower is most effective when it is invisible, when it flows through rather than impacts one, and therefore cannot be resisted*" [emphasis added].[15] This thesis, in our view, not only acknowledges the importance of intangible underpinnings of power, but, in effect, allows for a hypothetical replenishing of tangible foundations of authority with intangible ones in exercising power utility. The mere possession of hard power assets is not, however, sufficient for transforming power's potential into social and political energy that brings about the desired outcomes. Weber specifically noted that it is the quality of "domination" (*Herrschaft*) to generate "a probability that the command will be obeyed."[16] In the context of our discourse, this qualification implies that the *source credibility* constitutes the necessary condition for exerting compliance, for it is hard to imagine that obedience can occur without acknowledgment of the source trustworthiness by the addressee.

Note that a comprehensive notion of power disguises specific realms in which the source may have different degrees of credibility. For example, European countries may be considered as having a comparatively lower credibility in military power in comparison with the United States, while their credibility in the realm of normative power can be ranked higher. Building on Raymond Wolfinger's thesis that reputational power in local

communities is dependent upon the scope (domain) of power where the source has the largest reputation for influence, we will rank different power realms—economic power, military power, cultural power, and so on—in a way that would enable us to reasonably compare power credibility of different world actors.[17]

Since powerful states possess *unequal capabilities* while their elites have *unequal skills* and *determination* in using them to their policy ends, they enjoy *unequal degrees of power credibility*. Stratification—states' position or rank in the international hierarchy—is a natural way to structure international order and reduce anarchy. Since status, prestige, and influence are socially constructed images, their authenticity is a function of their agents' veracity; the latter is an indispensable qualification to secure the former. To put it differently, status, prestige, and influence of nations in the system of international relations are *conditioned* upon credibility of their power.

Confidence is the key attribute of one's ability to exercise control and influence, the two primary expressions of power. When attributing confidence to power, I mean a set of different "confidences" that go well beyond one's confidence in tangible primacy, and encompass other sources of confidence, such as morals, spirit, resolve, and knowledge. Therefore, it would be correct to define power as *synthesized confidence*. On par with the trust in the self's comprehensive supremacy, such a synthesized confidence often rests upon beliefs in adversaries' vulnerability and weaknesses. The self can be informed of the adversarial tangible and moral deficiencies and inferiority by their actions, common knowledge, intelligence sources, and open recognition by the foe itself. Additionally, policy actions by the self, aimed at testing adversarial confidence, can serve as valuable tools in unveiling the latter's trepidation. But at the bottom end, confidence must flow from the self's belief in the *rightfulness* of its *cause*, whereas universal legitimization is the only way to confirm its just nature.

3   Credibility and Intersubjectivity

Credibility is a subtle notion. It derives from one's need for recognition—a socially and psychologically determined desire to have the self's self-image verified by others in the course of social interaction and self-cognition. In Hegel's view, the drive for recognition and the urge for self-respect constitute an overarching incentive in human existence. Assumingly, these objectives can be met only through receiving satisfactory signals in interaction with other subjects conforming to the perceptions of self-image in gratifying ways.

The key to understanding the role the urge for credibility plays in individuals and nations alike is the concept of intersubjectivity, in one way or another expounded, among others, by such thinkers as Ludwig Binswanger,[18] Pierre Bourdieu,[19] Martin Buber,[20] Jürgen Habermas,[21] Edmund Husserl,[22] George Herbert Mead,[23] Maurice Roche,[24] Alfred Schutz,[25] and Ludwig Wittgenstein,[26] who, in the words of Nick Crossley, sought to explicate the "fabric of social becoming" through the processes of symbolic interaction, self-cognition, and reflexivity underpinned by language, perception, and imagination.[27]

Hence, credibility is intersubjective and denotes the quality of authentication of the self's message and image by transcendental exchange between the self and the others. This exchange enables the self not only to judge about its credibility in the eyes of the others, but also to construct, communicate, and correct its image by speech acts and other policy means to the ends of authenticity. In the realm of contemporary world politics, these patterns can, for instance, be illustrated by US President Donald Trump's overt threat to meet North Korea's nuclear saber rattling with "fire and fury like the world has never seen,"[28] or attempts by the French President Emmanuel Macron to reinvigorate his nation's image as of the EU's genuine political and diplomatic leader by his diplomacy of simultaneously challenging and engaging America and Russia through Paris-set political agenda.

Edmund Husserl's perceptive discussion of transcendental phenomenology is of exceptional salience here for it elucidates useful cognitive ways to comprehend the rise of concerns with credibility as a new phenomenon of international relations. Concerned with the immortal philosophical issue of grasping the ways of cognizing the world, he referred, as a vantage point, to René Descartes' philosophical method of solipsism. The latter was grounded on the self's "pure inwardness" in deducing "an Objective outwardness." For Husserl, the method of *ego cogito* lacked the necessary degree of apodictic certainty not in the least because it excluded from the process of cognition all elements that can affect it beyond the cognizing self, such as "sociality and culture."[29] In *Cartesian Meditations* he put forward an alternative approach to comprehending the mechanism of cognition—the method of intersubjectivity.

The essence of intersubjectivity is in the thesis that the self can understand the self's ideas, desires, images, beliefs, and other attributes only with and through the process of socialization, that is, in the process of placing itself in others' shoes and looking at itself through the eyes of

other subjects. "Exchanging" subjectivities and experiencing empathy ensure human cognition of themselves through the minds of the others. They constitute unparalleled phenomenological attributes of human beings as reflection-prone social subjects, and are strongly connected to language, perception, and inference. The intersubjective imperative of cognition, therefore, contrasts with Descartesian solipsism. Note that Descartes' taxonomy of a human as of a "thinking thing … that doubts, understands, conceives, affirms, denies, wills, refuses; that imagines also, and perceives"[30] refutes socialization as an innate premise of reflection.

Since people understand that things may be deceiving, they try to manipulate others' perceptions to achieve certain objectives, such as recognition. To make actions succeed, one is to present them in the most favorable way making them look credible yet in line with the self's intentions. The difference between the need to look credible in everyday life and the imperative of seeking credibility in politics is in that the former presents a requisite condition in satisfying a plethora of earthy desires whereas the latter serves the single (and supposedly superior) aim of *power enjoyment*. Furthermore, since the notion of power can be dissected in two major categories—capabilities or resources that are visible to the others, and intangible, subtle qualities of power that the modern political science commonly defines as an ability to control outcomes—the approaches to nurturing each of them are not identical.

While increasing tangible power depends upon circumstances that are more often than not beyond the control of politicians, fostering soft power at least looks like a more manageable task. For example, faced with an objective diminution of their nation's relative military capabilities, statesmen can reasonably attempt to increase national security by such measures as forging alliances with others or demonstrating compliance by speech acts. One can illustrate this with Prince Metternich's initial submission to Napoleon to ensure France's guarantee of Austria's integrity. By practicing an adroit and seemingly *credible* tactics, defined by Henry Kissinger as "collaboration," Metternich succeeded in outwitting Napoleon, managed to maintain good relations with two major French nemesis—Britain and Russia—and secured Austria's survival. The triumph of Austrian diplomacy, Kissinger concluded, had rested upon "its *appearance of sincerity*, on the ability, as Metternich once said, of seeming the dupe without being it" [emphasis added].[31]

Equally, policymakers can increase control over outcomes by initiating and actively participating in the process of institutionalizing favorable international environment. Additionally, not an infrequent method in the arsenal of tools used by statecraft to the ends of maximizing their political efficiency is deceptions of the targeted domestic and foreign audiences.

Noting that deception for domestic and foreign policy purposes is a common trait for both authoritarian and democratic governments, John Mearsheimer, for instance, distinguishes different types of political manipulation of facts—lying, concealment, and spinning. In the arsenal of international lies he detects several specific types of false statements ranging from interstate lies to nationalist myths. In the context of credibility-seeking, the most salient among them are interstate lies (lies aimed at foes and, sometimes, allies to gain strategic advantages or cover up strategic vulnerabilities); fearmongering (exaggerating a threat posed by a foreign actor to national security); and strategic cover-ups (withholding or distorting the true information on policy actions in crisis situations).[32] Disregarding the methods used to secure their interests, the urge for boosting credibility of their actions and image becomes an obsession for foreign policy elites once the relative power resources prove to be insufficient as the *sui generis* properties in securing their *recognition* by the others in the desired and habitual ways.

According to Hegel, the desire for recognition constitutes the core determinant of the self's aspirations and acts. As a philosophical concept, it sought to unravel the mechanism of cohesion among truth, consciousness, and universality. Hegel explicated this mechanism in the following way:

> consciousness recognizes that it is the untruth occurring in perception that falls within it. But by this very recognition it is able at once to supersede this untruth; it distinguishes its apprehension of the truth from the untruth of its perception, corrects this untruth, and since it undertakes to make this correction itself, the truth, qua truth of perception, falls of course within consciousness. The behaviour of consciousness which we have now to consider is thus so constituted that consciousness no longer merely perceives, but is also conscious of its reflection into itself, and separates this from simple apprehension proper.[33]

The process of self-cognition unfolds through mediation of two self-consciousness in which "they *recognize* themselves as *mutually recognizing*

one another."[34] In the context of this research, one, however, needs to specify Hegel's thesis on the self's drive for recognition: it is not "just" an urge to be recognized that guides human actions, but rather a desire to be recognized in a *certain way*. The mechanism of mutual recognition enables the self to mediate its purpose so that the other cognizes it as a reality; *credibility* of one's action is, therefore, communicated once its purpose is authentically comprehended by the addressee. "The action," explained Hegel, "is thus only the translation of its *individual* content into the *objective* element, in which it is universal and recognized, and it is just the fact that it is recognized that makes the deed a reality."[35] But to make its actions *credible*, the self must clearly discern its objectives as dutiful, and it is only through this confident comprehension that the others can cognize them as genuine deeds. Hegel elaborates on this idea in the following way: "The deed is recognized and thereby made real because the existent reality is directly linked with conviction or knowledge; or, in other words, knowing one's purpose is directly the element of existence, is universal recognition. For the *essence* of the action, duty, consists in conscience's *conviction* about it; it is just this conviction that is the *in-itself*; it is the *implicitly universal self-consciousness*, or the state of *being recognized*, and hence a reality."[36]

Of an exceptional interest to phenomenologists is comprehension of the interface between intersubjectivity and power. Nick Crossley, for example, finds "that power is parasitic upon intersubjectivity, that it needs intersubjectivity and draws upon intersubjectivity to create its effects."[37] The self's dependency upon others is taking place "because others matter to us and we are, in a sense, incomplete without them."[38] This effect is a corollary of the self's craving for recognition; without the latter, the self cannot form its desired identity.[39] This observation suggests a paradoxical view on power relations deriving from intersubjective dependency. Indeed, dependent upon recognition by the other, the self involuntarily subdues to the other's opinion with respect to the self's actions and image. This interpretation implies a reversal configuration of power between conceivably strong and weak actors, for as long as the strong would wish to be seen by the weak as genuinely strong they are brought into relations where the weak possesses power over the strong.

Since power relations presume acknowledgment of one's superiority over the other, social performance of an actor claiming preponderance should be especially persuasive, or credible.

4   THE NOTION OF CREDIBILITY

The notion of credibility is certainly not new. Some works date it back to persuasiveness of speech acts first analyzed by Aristotle, and understood as a political orator's modes of "urging his hearers to take or to avoid a course of action."[40] Analytically, credibility is one of the most challenging phenomena in social & behavioral studies, and its complexity dictates its comprehensive examination on an interdisciplinary basis. Not surprisingly, it is with accumulation of knowledge across humanities and social sciences that its exploration has become remarkably productive. Since the second half of the last century it has attracted the growing interest on the part of various representatives of the epistemic community, especially in North America. Erving Goffman, for example, championed investigation of this phenomenon in the post-WWII sociology, while Thomas Schelling pioneered its analysis in strategic studies.[41] In giving a tribute to Goffman's work on symbolic interaction, Philip Manning, for instance, emphasized that the latter was guided by Goffman's interest in exploring ways and means that make social performances between agencies credible or "convincingly real" rather than in examining agency per se.[42]

Historically, the utility of veracity stemmed from the early days of collective action (e.g., hunting), and matured with the development of more complex forms of existential activities, such as trade. In the absence of legal systems that later endured the principle of *pacta sunt servanda*, reciprocal confidence in reliability of commercial partners presented an indispensable condition of business relations. While credibility became an imperative premise of economic development, the commonly acknowledged attributes of certain types of images—father, prince, soldier, and so on—perpetuated functionality of family and state, and ensured their normative grounding. The need to minimize risks from deviations undermining credibility and constraining social relations—deceit, mistrust, uncertainty, fear—prompted development of legal systems that institutionalized credibility as a legal norm. To be credible in business means to be profitable. To be credible in politics means to be predictable.

The phenomenon of credibility has gained a special attention in psychological and communication studies, which accentuate through different approaches to grasping its meaning. Applied psychology, for example, conceives credibility as B's belief in veracity of A's qualities. Communication theorists perceive credibility as an undistorted message delivered from A to B in their joint signaling system. Both approaches, however, overlook

an important attribute of credibility, its biased nature; *A*'s message to *B* is precipitated by *an* a priori understanding by *A* of what *B* might see as credible. In other words, *A*'s credibility is a function of the self's perceptions of what should look trustworthy, contingent upon the system of norms, values, and beliefs engrained in *A*'s psyche, and embodied in its actions. By discerning this proclivity, one can understand why policy actions seeking credibility in the eyes of the important others might appear to be lacking rationality in the eyes of those who tend to analyze these actions through the lens of their own belief systems.

In a nutshell, credibility is an approximation of truth. The latter, however, is a relative category, and represents a subjective reflection of reality in the human brain. Humans' predisposition to be guided by emotions no less than cognition in discerning reality and making decisions has not been easily recognized by political scientists, including IR theorists. Contrarily, the current study emphasizes the role of cognition-emotion synthesis[43] in prompting members of various social systems, including the international system, to seek credibility in relations with others.

The need for credibility, truth likelihood, derives from discrepancy between truth as an "objective reality" and its reflection in the mind of a subject—a "subjective reality." To project the desired image of reality on the recipient's mind, the self needs to maximize the truthfulness of its communicated image. One should not underestimate the importance of emotional prerequisites in the recipient's psych for the appropriate cognition. Assumingly, the recipient's negative emotions with respect to the source or message can induce mistrust and disbelief. In contrast, positive emotions of the receiver toward the source, like affinity or sympathy, can increase credibility of the message.

Hence, the task of the self's acts is to nurture positive feelings toward itself by the important others. We will examine possible policy tools to maximize credibility in this chapter. Perhaps, the most challenging one is to describe the notion of truth, which the humanity's greatest minds have been trying to grasp since Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato. It has been widely assumed that truth is an essentially subjective category, and, therefore, presents an image of reality that can at times significantly divert from the object. Hence, as a reflection of an object in a human's mind, it can be constructed in the way desired by "social engineers."

The *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* denotes credibility as "the quality or power of inspiring belief," and *Roget's 21st Century Thesaurus* gives several synonyms to the word "credibility"—trustworthiness, integrity,

authority, standing, sincerity, believability. All of them, in one way or another, can be applicable to the meaning of credibility so frequently used by US politicians in denoting the belief in steadfastness of American supremacy, and which their counterparts in Russia, China, Britain, and France apply when positioning their states as great powers.

While the gist of credibility as it is understood in the world of politics is more or less consensual, academic literature contains a plethora of different interpretations to account for its notion. They are often used interchangeably with other political categories such as prestige, influence, position, and reputation. The veracity of one's great prowess has four major groups of audience—the self's elite and domestic population, and the foreign governments and populaces.

As we can see from the experience of all major powers disregarding of their system of government, their power holders have been keen to address all the targeted groups with unwavering fervor for at least two major reasons. First, there exists an undoubted link between the maintenance of great power image by incumbent statesmen and their domestic and international legitimacy. Second, the utility of a *credible* superiority is not only in that it perpetuates legitimacy, but also in that it allows for ensuring security by supplying deterrence with the needed degree of intimidation.

Since preponderance is a relative category, in case of its decay, policy managers are prone to boost political and diplomatic activity to maintain the comfortable levels of power legitimacy and national security. This hypothesis has found its empirical proof in different types of social communication, for example, in manager-employee relationship. As demonstrated by the pertinent studies, credibility is of indispensable value for an authority with a relatively low level of objective power.[44]

Normally, under conditions of a stable international system, the statesmen's task is not so much to construct new brands of social power as to maintain the existent power images. Traditionally, this is achieved through policies seeking to cultivate symbols associated with military pre-eminence. However, with the relative decline of their tangible capabilities, the states seek to maximize their soft power that would allow them to "punch" above their weight. Under the conditions of a highly dynamic and uncertain strategic environment, at the heart of great power credibility is its statecraft's ability to present its policies as intended to deliver public good for as many international players as possible. Note, that by pioneering a good cause, even a middle power can boost its credibility and thus climb several steps up the ladder of the global power stratification.

Canada can serve as an excellent example in this regard: in 1985, despite US and British opposition, the Mulroney government championed the international fight on apartheid in South Africa, and thereby received an unprecedented recognition and honor among many members of the international community at large and developing countries in particular.[45] This ultimately enabled her to eclipse UK authority in the Third World, and emerge, at least temporarily, as an informal leader of the Commonwealth. Two decades earlier, in 1956, Ottawa's energetic and innovative diplomacy enabled to deactivate the otherwise devastating international confrontation over the Suez Canal, and from then on has gained Canada a reputation of a credible peace broker.[46]

Insofar as credibility can be denoted as *psychological acceptability* of message and veracity of its source by addressees, it can be defined as *message and source authenticity*. The existing literature has concentrated on studying saliences of message and source credibility while disputing which of them is more salient than the other. Message credibility is commonly denoted as having a persuasive effect in representation of empirical facts. To be perceived as credible, it should be specific and verifiable.[47] Source credibility is generally understood as possessing cognitive—expertise and trustworthiness, and affective—attractiveness and prestige—attributes.[48]

The subfield of social psychology specializing in communication studies has been mainly concerned with the causality of changes in attitude and behavior as the result of motivational and cognitive impacts by both message and source. In a wider perspective, these changes are posited to occur as effects of power influence. As conceptualized by Herbert Kelman, three different processes are involved in individual or group conformity: compliance, identification, and internalization. These processes, though rooted in different psychological incentives, are united by addressee's desire of satisfaction: compliance is motivated by expectations of reward or avoidance of punishment; identification is anchored in desire to construct identity associated with that of the source of induction; internalization stems from similarity between inducee's and inducer's value systems.[49]

Assessing the veracity of message information by receiver, as posited by communication theorists, presumes iterative processes of judgments before making a final decision to accept or disavow its credibility. The quality of arguments and peripheral cues (e.g., source reputation) involved in the message are important factors in affecting judgments and causing receiver's attitudinal change to the message content.[50] In making judgments, as Michael Slater and Donna Rouner have shown, people tend to

process three information sources: first, their prior knowledge about the subject; second, the credibility of the information source; and third, the quality of the message.[51] Unlike the majority of studies that postulate the primacy of source credibility over message credibility, the one by Slater and Rouner has established the salience of message trustworthiness and persuasiveness on judgments about source credibility. In fact, in case of addressee's familiarity with the object, evaluation of one's credibility is a process of comparison between the cognitive biases and the new information. Should a discrepancy exist in the pre-constructed and the newly imposed images of the object, the addressee can, in principle, be influenced by the object's speech and other acts that can change the inducee's opinion in the direction desired by the inducer. Furthermore, in accordance with the cognitive response model, the *subject of a message* also presents an important variable of persuasion; a high-credibility source has more induction power if the message is of low salience to receivers. Should it concern a topic relevant for the inducees, their inclination to defer to it tends to decrease.[52]

Notably, various source attributes, such as expertise, trustworthiness, and argument power, have dissimilar persuasion impact on inducees with different educational and cultural backgrounds as well as psychological types. For highly educated, critically thinking addressees from liberal cultural settings, source expertise appears to be less significant than the quality of their arguments.[53] Of no less impact are the contextual contexts of message reception, as well as the timing factor. The latter, for example, manifests itself in the growth of persuasiveness effect on inducees should identification of high source credibility precede the message.[54] The timing is also correlated with receiver's mood under high cognition; should mood inductions precede message—they influence thoughts, should they follow the message—they affect confidence.[55]

Additionally, induction outcome depends not only upon source credibility and respective external variables, but also on the personality of inducees. Tests of William McGuire's *inoculation theory* demonstrated that people who were pre-exposed to counterarguments to their beliefs, that is, have an experience in defending their views, demonstrate low susceptibility to persuasive arguments, for their beliefs tend to possess a high immunizing efficacy.[56] Similarly, individuals with high self-esteem and intelligence are arguably less submissive to influence and persuasion.[57] In practice, it means that professional politicians, people with experience in debating, indoctrinated and narcissistic personalities, as well as individuals with deeply

entrenched value systems (e.g., through early childhood education, religion) appear to possess higher than average resistance to persuasive messages that contradict their views.

Although an assumption that authoritarian personalities exhibit low conformity is highly disputable, there are certain examples substantiating its validity. In case authoritarian individuals hold positions of predominant leaders, they tend to demonstrate overconfidence and defiance that can lead to misperceptions. As exemplified by a number of historical cases, a leader's overconfidence can bear negatively on homeland security and might present a serious impediment to threat signaling by the third parties, for example, for the purposes of deterrence.

5   Credibility and Deterrence

Deterrence is a military strategy based on *threat credibility* so that "an enemy will not strike if it knows the defender can defeat the attack or can inflict unacceptable damage in retaliation."[58] A successful deterrence is based on threat credibility operationalized by potential aggressors' beliefs that in case of aggression their expected gains would pale in comparison with their potential losses—beliefs that purportedly prevent realization of aggressive plans. Credibility of a threat or of a punishment capacity, therefore, is an imperative condition for nuclear deterrence as a strategic concept, but in the last decades it has been subject to substantial erosion resultant from a phenomenon some scholars, such as T.V. Paul, have defined as "self-deterrence." The latter represents a nuclear power's reluctance to apply nuclear weapons that stems from normative and reputational considerations. However, such a reluctance progressively weakens the probability of retaliation, tends to undermine deterrence credibility, and, subsequently, degrades the entire concept's utility.[59]

To endure utility of deterrence and signal their commitment to resolve in the age of uncertainty and instability, great powers are bound to dissuade their peers from infringing on their vital interests by resorting to demonstrative practices of doing harm through sanctions or waging wars on unimportant countries.[60] Thus, a credible deterrence presumes maintaining a damage-prone, and in effect, belligerent image by the self.

In applying a social-psychological approach to analyzing the efficiency of deterrence, Ahmed Sheikh, for example, has rightly suggested that for deterrence to be efficient, it should meet three principal conditions. First, a deterrer should demonstrate both a capability and willingness to inflict

an unacceptable damage to a potential aggressor. Second, this propensity should be appropriately "perceived, understood, and feared" by the targeted actor. And, third, a would-be-aggressor should be rational. Should any of these conditions be absent, his concept finds, deterrence is bound to fail.[61] Once the interface among these conditions has been properly comprehended by great power strategists, and the cases of deterrence failure have been thoroughly analyzed, the need to find credible ways to sustain national security beyond deterrence has become evident.

Additionally, non-conformity of an addressee can constitute a serious challenge to an addressor seeking to endure the credibility of its power images.

Consider, for example, President John F. Kennedy's dilemma in dealing with the Soviet impertinent leader Nikita Khrushchev. During their historical meeting with Kennedy in Vienna, the Soviet Chairman's conduct confirmed assumptions the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA's) analysts had earlier made about his strong character. Khrushchev, stated a memo prepared for Kennedy on the eve of the Vienna summit, "has a truly unusual ability to project the force of his own powerful personality ... [and] can draw false conclusions from his conversant's apparent acquiescence in his own statements, even if that apparent acquiescence came about as an effort to avoid offense."[62] Contrarily, in Vienna, President Kennedy, who in the eyes of his interlocutors was representing a personified image of American power, looked too soft, too intelligent, and too indecisive for a leader of a "genuine" superpower—and by any count revealed a deficit of toughness that could make him a match for the Soviet in a sparring of will and grit. These personal traits, as many analysts later tended to believe, reinforced Khrushchev's perception of Kennedy's weakness that the Premier had already formed on the account of US failure in the Bay of Pigs five weeks ahead of the summit.

Even overconfidence of predominant leaders in inferior states presents a serious problem in perpetuating the great powers' images of strength and self-confidence, and is of extreme sensitivity to their deterrence credibility.[63] Markedly illustrative in this regard can be the case of Iraq's dictator Saddam Hussein who violated 16 UN Security Council's resolutions, countervailed Western sanctions, and ignored stark warnings by the United States.

It looks like that America's pre-imminent military power, including her devastating nuclear component, failed to deter him both in 1990 in his reckless invasion of Kuwait, and later when he repeatedly confronted the entire international community by restricting access of UN and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) weapons inspectors to Iraqi sites. In Kuwait, he

dismissed Washington's call to withdraw his troops or face a prospect of war with the US-led coalition of 33 states. In the crisis over his alleged Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), he continued to publicly expose bravado by defying UN resolutions in an open neglect of US military threat. In effect, by challenging US ability to coerce rogue states into compliance without resort to the use of raw force, Saddam compromised US credibility as of a global securitizer.

What follows from the foregoing examples and generalizations is that neither message nor source credibility invokes automatic compliance by receiver. Likewise, credibility is not the only variable taken into consideration by addressees. This said, statesmen continue seeking credibility of their capabilities (positional credibility) and policies as reliable manifestations of national power. We now proceed by exploring the roots of this phenomenon.

6   Teleology of Credibility

In the modern age, supposedly beginning with WWI, and through WWII, the Cold War, and "the war on terror," the art of being "credible" has been studied through the lens of "strategic communication" that confined it to propaganda techniques aimed at influencing adversarial behavior in a conflict.[64] My understanding differs in that it discerns credibility simultaneously as a form of power and a power booster. Understood as social power, credibility allows for the rise of perceived power at the backdrop of its objective deficiency or compensation of capability reduction, and its practical utility can be found in the realm of economic policy (e.g., in attracting investment), diplomacy (negotiation and boosting one's bargaining power), and security (deterrence). Our focus is on functionality of credibility in maintaining the great power status quo to the ends of avoiding drastic and uncontrollable changes in the international system that can be fraught with a devastating violent collision between the old and emerging powers.

The task of increasing credibility of reduced national power is not trivial; it necessitates outstanding political skills, vision, and determination. De Gaullian France is exemplary in this regard. Note, that after her pricy victory in WWI, France displayed embarrassing diminution of power in other major battles of the last century. This, with a high degree of certainty, should have precipitated her being ultimately written off from great power ranks.

Yet, with her institutional modernization embodied in the Fifth Republic, France managed to reinvigorate her confidence. This confidence

flowed from re-energized and re-concentrated societal and political will channeled through the new—modernized—political mechanism of power distribution between the legislature and the executive. Cemented by strong presidential powers, it allowed to overcome the intrinsic timidity of the previous systems of governance; unlike in the past, it gave her top authorities constitutional competences to deliver bold and trustworthy policy responses to pressing domestic and international challenges. But not only the letter, but the very spirit of the new Republic, its *grandeur*, based on the senses of honor and prestige, carefully nurtured by de Gaulle, was destined to exert national confidence.

Grounded on this overarching premise, France's self-confidence has endured conspicuously with two developments. First, creation of her *force de frappe*, an impressive arsenal of striking nuclear weapons, serving as unique instruments of power projection and national prestige; and second, her diplomatic advance as a founder and leader of an authoritative multilateral organization, the European Community. As the result, France managed to significantly boost her power credibility both at home and worldwide, and has from then on successfully maintained her primacist legacy rested upon a smart combination of her hard and soft power assets.[65]

7   CREDIBILITY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND STRATEGIC STUDIES

The notion of credibility in international relations theory is based on a state's image in the eyes of others. "A desired image … can often be of greater use than a significant increment of military and economic power," Robert Jervis famously pointed out in his seminal study on the role of image perceptions in world politics. "An undesired image involves costs for which almost no amount of the usual kinds of power can compensate and can be a handicap almost impossible to overcome."[66] The narrative of credibility in IR has been mostly applied to defining US foreign and security policy. For US policymakers, noted, for example, Robert McMahon, credibility "has served as a code word for America's image and reputation." While portending "a blend of resolve, reliability, believability, and decisiveness," this notion presumed an "ability to convince adversaries and allies alike of its firmness, determination, and dependability."[67] For former US State Secretary Henry Kissinger, credibility "is a key component of strategy." In his view, "[c]redibility for a state plays the role of character

for a human being. It provides a guarantee that its assurances can be relied upon by friends and its threats taken seriously by adversaries."[68]

Indeed, in the domain of strategic planning as well as in the realm of strategic studies, the credibility narrative has been mainly construed and investigated through the lens of threats, deterrence, and commitments.[69] The notion of credibility has become one of the major operational categories in war games by the great powers in evaluating, for example, the reliability of their strategic deterrence. For instance, during the Cold War, for US strategists concerned with the credibility of American extended deterrence in Europe in the eyes of the Soviets, game exercises constituted the key way to judge about its dissuasion capacity. The major challenge in the Pentagon, as unveiled by some experts, was to resolve the issue of "subgame perfection"—the problem of achieving consistency through all stages of a conflict, from a threat issuance to its execution—complicated by a hypothetical perception in Moscow that US strategic commitment to Europe is a bluff. The grounds for this assumption could have stemmed from reasonable doubts in the Kremlin that should the Soviets invade Western Germany, Americans would risk launching the mechanism of mutually assured destruction (MAD) by striking the USSR with nuclear weapons.[70]

The logic of international politics is such that it creates incentives for cooperation in the long term, but, in accordance with the prisoner's dilemma, downplays them in the short term. This makes each player embark on the path of double-crossing the other, and induces international disorder.[71] Since the first and the second nuclear ages have coincided with the downward trend in the lifespan cycle of great powers, and given that the reliability of their ultimate threat capability is untestable, they are bound to boost their power images (i.e., their credibility) by restructuring their available deterrence capabilities. This is achieved by increasing the operational efficiency of each leg of the nuclear triad in line with the Wohlstetter's parallel deterrence model.[72] According to the latter, the following six "hurdles," integrated in the single system, undergird credible deterrence: deterrent's peacetime readiness sustained by appropriate financing (1) and system survivability (2), as well as by its capacities to communicate the threat (3), reach the enemy's territory (4), penetrate its defenses (5), and destroy the target (6).[73]

The power-credibility approach enables us to understand the nature of incentives behind prima facie threatening moves on the part of adversary and thereby find the way out of the modes of behavior prescribed by the prisoner's dilemma. One way to do this is to realize that the seemingly

offensive type of adversary's conduct is in reality triggered by security concerns. To avoid the spiral of mutual suspicion and reach reconciliation, as Glenn Snyder, for instance, has suggested, while drawing on Robert Jervis' "mirror image" model, it is important to understand that such concerns are exacerbated in response to the security dilemma induced by the self's policy of boosting its deterrence credibility.[74]

One may suggest, therefore, that in order to mitigate others' security concerns caused by the self's military upgrading, and thus decrease the chances of a costly and perilous arms race, the latter should in parallel make conciliatory moves by engaging other components of its power that possess a high potential of economic and political benefits for the concerned parties. While turning foes into friends should be considered, therefore, as the core objective of a nation seeking to maintain her authority or increase her influence with respect to the others, enhancing affinity of her power should be conceived by her statecraft as the key prerequisite of their credibility-seeking policy.

Notes

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66. Robert Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 6. For other accounts of images in international relations, see Richard K. Herrmann, James F. Voss, Tonya Y. E Schooler, and Joseph Ciarrochi, "Images in International Relations: An Experimental Test of Cognitive Schemata," *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no.3 (September 1997):403–433; Alpo Rusi, "Image Research and Image Politics in International Relations—Transformation of Power Politics in the Television Age," *Cooperation and Conflict* 23, no.1 (March 1988):29–42; Noel Kaplowitz, "National Self-Images, Perception of Enemies, and Conflict Strategies: Psychopolitical Dimensions of International Relations," *Political Psychology* 11, no.1 (March 1990):39–82.

67. Robert J. McMahon, "Credibility and World Power: Exploring the Psychological Dimension in Postwar American Diplomacy," *Diplomatic History* 15, no.4 (October 1991):455.

68. Jeffrey Goldberg, "World Chaos and World Order: Conversations with Henry Kissinger: The former secretary of state reflects on war, peace, and the biggest tests facing the next president," *The Atlantic*, November 10, 2016. https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/11/kissinger-order-and-chaos/506876/#4.

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70. See R. Preston McAfee, *Competitive Solutions: The Strategist's Toolkit* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 122. The essence of subgame perfection under asymmetric information is in achieving credibility in the eyes of opponent through the entire game since the players are presumed to choose a strategy that is best suited for their interests at every specific stage, and, accordingly, may well renege on their previous commitments that were embedded in their strategy at the previous stage. See Alex Cukierman, *Central Bank Strategy, Credibility, and Independence: Theory and Evidence* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992), 206. For a detailed explanation of subgame perfection, see James N. Webb, *Game Theory: Decisions, Interaction and Evolution* (London: Springer, 2007), 99–100.

71. See, for instance, Glenn H. Snyder "Prisoner's Dilemma" and "Chicken" Models in International Politics, *International Studies Quarterly* 15, no.1 (March 1971):68.

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Distinguishing Credibility

1 Credibility and Reputation

While drawing on various theoretical venues in the field of IR and other disciplines in elaborating the concept of power credibility, I must emphasize the difference between some notions operationalized in this book and those conceptualized by other research paradigms.

For example, the notion of reputation used, even though as an auxiliary one by neoclassical realism, may seem similar to the notion of credibility. Reputation, though, is a central theme in institutionalist theory, and is considered mostly in the context of compliance to the international rules and regimes. Keohane, for example, uses the term "reputation" in the context of choices made by rational actors who are interested in maintaining good reputation in repeated acts of cooperation. Rational egoism, in his view, determines the need for reputation as a tool of cost minimization. The concern for reputation is sustained even under most disorderly developments in the world system because states are interested in predictability of their partners, while the latter's success in promoting new institutional networks is conditioned upon manifestations of their reliability by complying with their obligations in the earlier concluded agreements.[1] Thus, to enjoy gains of positive reputation, the self needs to demonstrate its trustworthiness. Therefore, in discussing advantages of a good reputation, one cannot neglect its connection with the notion of credibility. Keohane, for example, conceives this connection by referring to Philip Heymann's article published by *Harvard Law Review*,[2] which emphasizes the rationale

behind the need for the self to uphold a reputation of a credible partner in the following way: "Since coordinated actions to obtain outcomes of benefit to all parties often depend upon trust, each actor who wants to be a participant in, and thus beneficiary of, such cooperative schemes in the long run and on a number of separable occasions has an important stake in creating and preserving a reputation as a trustworthy party."[3]

However, although both notions are intersubjective, they are neither identical nor interchangeable. Quite symptomatically, index pages of books authored by neoclassical realists do not contain the word "credibility." Characteristically, while reputation appears to constitute the central topic of studies by some disciples of neoclassical realism, they do not define it.[4]

As for the term "credibility," neoclassical realists operate with it in its narrow sense. Thus, in his seminal text on power and perceptions during the Cold War, William Wohlforth has referred to the notion of credibility as *reliability* of security guarantees, and downgrades the role of perceived power in international politics (at least in the Cold War era) by considering it as "only one among numerous variables bearing on diplomacy, crisis and war."[5] Contrarily, this book construes power credibility in a broad sense including the past record of action or reputation for power, as well as resoluteness to apply force along with such attributes as power attractiveness, and abilities to patronize and award, while conceiving power credibility as the most important dependent variable of world politics at the stage of relative decline of material capabilities in the principal states.

Opposite perceptions of the independent variable in the causality of international change are stipulating fundamental differences between realism and constructivism. In the opinion of realists, "Because interests and ideas are a function of relative power, changes in relative power produce changes in interests."[6] For constructivists, it is the other way around: power is a social construct, and as such it is a function of ideas.[7] Christopher J. Fettweis makes a strong case for this assertion on the example of the United States. In his research devoted to the study of the role ideas play in determining American foreign policy, he contends that these are primarily pathological beliefs and ideas—fear, honor, hubris, and glory—that for many decades have been shaping decisions by US foreign policymakers.[8]

2   Resolve and Credibility

Shiping Tang, in a study on the role of reputation for resolve and credibility in international crisis, distinguishes between the two notions by viewing the former as a part of the latter. He posits that credibility includes "a

reputation for or perception of capability, the perception of interest, and a reputation for resolve."[9] This taxonomy, however, appears to imply that credibility is formed singularly by perceptions of the others, while in reality it is an intersubjective property that results from social communication in which the self's perception of the self constitutes an important construction block of respective image *integrated* with perceptions of the self by the others. Tang's notion of credibility also appears to overlook the difference in the taxonomic nature of reputation and credibility: reputation derives mainly from mores while credibility is primarily indifferent to morality. In other words, while talking of repute one usually operates with such categories as "good" or "bad"; these characteristics are hardly applicable to credibility which equates to authenticity of image desired by the self and more or less successfully transcended to the minds of others. The self, therefore, is more concerned with these images to be the right ones rather than them being necessarily ethical.

The United States, for example, in contemplating the ways to ensure the ending of the Vietnam War on their terms, was attempting to blackmail Hanoi with what American policymakers deemed as a credible threat of resorting to nuclear bombing in case of the North Vietnamese noncompliance. Note that the North did not have verifiable information as to the seriousness of American warnings; anyhow, Americans had a history of conducting atomic bombings in Japan in WWII, and in the 1950s were openly considering a possibility of breaking "nuclear taboo" in Korea and Indochina. The veracity of US threat was not, therefore, dismissed by the North Vietnamese on the grounds of its low probability as is widely believed.[10]

Moreover, that the North Vietnamese did believe in the credibility of American threat to use nuclear weapons is well documented. Rather, Hanoi's non-compliance stemmed from their commitment to their war cause of standing up to the hazard of recolonization of their country by the West, and they were determined to continue fighting no matter what.[11]

3   Prestige and Credibility

Ralph Hawtrey's and Robert Gilpin's discerning of prestige would better fit the notion of credibility posited in this book. However, my understanding of prestige differs from those by Hawtrey ("reputation for strength in war") and Gilpin ("reputation for power").[12] I find prestige to be not a just a reputation for strength or power, but a reputation for "true" or

"genuine" power as the latter is understood worldwide. This "genuine" power is an equivalent of primacy—a comparative superiority of the self over the majority of other actors in the levels and scope of international influence.

Admittedly, Hawtrey's and Gilpin's notions can lead to misinterpretations since almost every state may have a reputation obtained through various force displays. Yet, few have ensured a victory in a major conflict preconditioning formation of the current international system, and even a smaller number of victors became international law-laying powers. Therefore, it would be more precise to define prestige as a *reputation for primacy*. Achieving believability of supremacy image in world politics, *legitimation* of this image among the members of the international community is a necessary premise of primacy.

It is important here to make a distinction between the notions of prestige and credibility. Max Weber, for example, reasonably distinguished between cultural prestige and power prestige. The former is symbolic in nature and doesn't necessarily entail displays of force or maintenance of strong military capabilities. Defined by Weber as "social honor," it does not necessarily depend upon possession of strong military or even economic power.[13] Notably, hosting Olympic Games, international summits, or participating in important international settings like the G-7 or the G-20 would supposedly constitute sufficient grounds for a nation to enjoy international admiration.[14]

Martin Wight draws attention to another important quality of prestige—the necessity for politicians to assert it, which he dissects into their ability to assert it "wisely" or "unwisely," and argues that the "wise" use of prestige is the one which accomplishes political objectives without resorting to violence.[15] Extending classification of prestige to its functional application, Ronald Dore distinguishes between "instrumental prestige" and "normative prestige"; the former represents an inclination to use prestige as an instrument of power for the purposes of deterrence and coercion, while the latter perpetuates "moral leadership" deriving from one's social model's superiority.[16] We can add that the instrumental prestige can pride itself in containing physical violence, while the normative prestige is about reducing structural violence.

To be "credible," great nations should maintain their power images at levels equal to or exceeding expectations of their peers and pawns.[17] A nation's image "mirrored" in the minds of others, as E.H. Carr maintained, constitutes her prestige. The magnitude of national image in international

relations derives from an assumption that "in the struggle for the existence and power—which is, as it were the raw material of the social world—what others think about us is as important as what we actually are."[18]

Although, as it will be shown further, credibility is not identical to prestige, the latter, as defined by Hans Morgenthau, is close to the meaning of power credibility in the sense it is discerned in this study: "[i]ts purpose is to impress other nations with the power one's own nation actually possesses, or with the power it believes, or wants the other nations to believe it possesses."[19] In Morgenthau's opinion, the policy of prestige— "reputation for power"—presents "an indispensable element of a rational foreign policy" for it enables a prestige-seeking nation to affect other nations' calculus of power balance in a way that favors her most.[20]

Such a nation, purportedly, can accomplish her foreign policy objectives *peacefully*, without resorting to a risky and onerous application of crude force. Hence, the utility of enjoying prestige is in minimization of costs in terms of treasure while completely abrogating blood. However, accumulation of *reputation for power* (prestige) cannot substitute in itself the necessity to impress others with tangible components of national might. Furthermore, Morgenthau specifically warned against a gap between a reputation for power and actual power—an impression that a nation is stronger or weaker than it actually is.[21] This discrepancy may lead to dangerous miscalculations on the part of others in both cases: should a state seek to look substantially stronger than it actually is, it can inadvertently provoke others to initiate preventive military actions and/or form countervailing alliances. Should the self appear weaker than in reality, this can prompt the others' defiance.

The precepts of foreign and security calculus in the nuclear age, therefore, should significantly differ from the tenets of military strategy outlined in such classic works as Sun Tzu's *Art of War*; the latter fashioned bluffing and deceit, which the former would rather consider imprudent.[22]

To illustrate this point, let us look at China's military power from the standpoint of her immediate peers. Indeed, to what extent do perceptions of China's power by US and Russian strategy managers mirror the reality? Apparently, given the international clout of these powers as well as the undisputed importance of their bilateral relations for the prospects of global peace and security, any sort of strategic misconception in Washington or Moscow, be it over- or under-estimation of PRC hard power capabilities, might have drastic consequences not only for the parties involved but for the globe at large.

By all counts, American and Russian policy planners appear to be view-ing statistical accounts of the PRC's economic dynamics as a genuine evi-dence of her power capabilities. Distorted by alarmed perceptions about the strengths of Chinese military, these readings create ambiguous foun-dations for US and Russian strategic planning and foreign policies. As US strategists, for instance, believe that China is poised to become the next superpower, they attempt to adjust to this eventuality in a way that would better preserve America's status and ensure its long-term security inter-ests. Containing and engagement appear to constitute the most evident policy options, while some experts call for blending both in a policy of "congagement."[23]

This mixed approach, embodied in US pivot to Asia, is poised to bring America to the region, both materially and symbolically, on a much wider scale than ever before. Bringing America closer to China in their cross-cutting sphere of national interests is poised to change the geopolitical narrative of a United States separated and protected from the reach of contending powers by the stormy waters of the adjacent oceans. It is also likely to multiply the odds of physical encounters between their navies, thereby ominously enhanc-ing risks of a non-intended collision between them. The arrival of "alterna-tive right" policymakers in the White House in 2017 has further pushed the United States on a collision course with China. "We're going to war in the South China Sea in five to 10 years," predicted, for instance, Steve Bannon, Donald Trump's Chief Strategist at the time, in March 2016. Concerned with China's "arrogant expansionism," he appears to be certain that there is no other way to save America's face in the Asia-Pacific region except for demonstrating its supremacy in a direct military confrontation with Beijing: "There's no doubt about that. They're taking their sandbars and making basically stationary aircraft carriers and putting missiles on those. They come here to the United States in front of our face—and you understand how important face is—and say it's an ancient territorial sea."[24]

In the case of Russia, the perceived image of a 1.4 billion neighboring nation, longing for her vast resources and territory, eclipsing her economy and, at the same time, dwarfing Russia with her 140 million inhabitants, appears to be causing ambivalent emotions with the Russian power holders. Simultaneously, mesmerized and intimidated by China's growing might, Russian policymakers have, by all counts, made a strategic choice in priori-tizing China over Europe and the West at large, thereby placing Russia in a position of China's junior partner. The Russo-Chinese border demarcation agreements that entailed Russia's ceding a part of her territory disputed by

China is but just one example of the Kremlin's choice in favor of appeasement, which tends only to solidify Beijing's perception of its power superiority. As the result, Russia's weaker image, than the one that her actual power in the dyadic power balance with China might be, risks to create negative incentives on the part of Chinese strategists, who may overestimate their own power in case of a sudden crisis in their bilateral relations.

4   SUSTAINING SELF-RESPECT

To sustain their self-respect, state elites, therefore, need to look *credible* in the eyes of the significant others. "The striving for prestige," Max Weber emphasized, "pertains to all political structures." In practice, while prestige, in Weber's words, means "the glory of power over other communities," the "big political communities" (great powers) are "the natural exponents to such pretensions to prestige." The intrinsic logic of prestige-seeking powers makes them dangerous to other states that the former do not want to become strong enough to challenge their grand pretensions. Though not synonymous, the notions of prestige and credibility are closely connected: while prestige, as defined by Max Weber, is "social honor" based on power[25]; the latter's veracity is an imperative condition of being honored. In other words, not every power generates prestige, but only those that are perceived as credibly glorious and superior.

Furthering Talcott Parsons' analogy of power as a of a social medium akin to money, Karl Deutsch perceived prestige as a continuation of power by suggesting that the former to the latter is what "credit is to cash."[26] This metaphor, however, seems better fitting the notion of credibility because whereas prestige denotes a top ranking of recognized social power, credibility functions as the latter's transcendental mediator, without which neither attainment nor enjoyment of prestige is possible.

In distinguishing prestige from power by confining the latter to material capabilities, Robert Gilpin, for instance, has defined the former as perceptions of the latter by the vital others.[27] One needs, however, to clarify that such perceptions should represent the feelings of admiration, extraordinary respect, and unconditional recognition of one's superiority rather than mere reflections of its counterpart's impassive mind. As for Gilpin's idea that prestige is not identical to power, though not novel in IR studies, it seems quite useful in contrasting prestige with credibility for the latter, as was established above, presents *inter alia* a distinct dimension of power. In a pre-WWII work devoted to the study of prestige, Sir Harold Nicolson,

for instance, argued that although prestige, at least in its connotation by the British, represents "power based on reputation rather than reputation based on power," it would be wrong to equate prestige with power "since, although you cannot acquire prestige without power, yet you cannot retain prestige without reputation." For Nicolson, as well as for many liberal thinkers in Britain of his time, the notions of British reputation and prestige were based on her purported moral virtues, such as "tolerance, gentleness, and reason." These virtues gave grounds to her sense of moral superiority, and supplied her political class with a sufficient degree of confidence in her composite power and its credibility. The latter, Nicolson believed, was "based on the extent to which subject races and foreign countries are prepared to believe in our power without that power having either to be demonstrated or exercised."[28]

Describing prestige as "the halo round power," another scholarship on the issue defines it as "influence derived from power."[29] The authoritative political essayist in the Imperial Britain, Frederick Oliver, made an excellent grasp of this confusing property, which is close to my understanding of credibility. Suggesting that prestige, in the first approximation, may be a product of imagination, he nevertheless considered it "far from being mere bubble or vanity; for the nation that possesses great prestige is thereby enabled to have its way, and to bring things to pass which it could never hope to achieve by its own forces."[30]

While retaining prestige seems prudent for the aforementioned purposes, this is an intricate task. Consider that against the backdrop of the unstoppable power dynamics in the international system, the international status of big powers is continuously endangered. This is why, Weber explains, the perpetual competition between prestige aspirants presents a constant hazard to universal peace as they may wish to see application of brutal force as a necessary instrument to consolidate or restore their positions in the international hierarchy.[31]

No less perplexing than defining the notion of prestige in international politics appears, however, the task of determining the role it plays in foreign policy. E.H. Carr, for instance, considered fashioning prestige as "an indispensable element of a rational foreign policy."[32] Hans Morgenthau, conversely, argued in his seminal volume: "While in national societies prestige is frequently sought for its own sake, it is rarely the primary objective of foreign policy." In Morgenthau's opinion, prestige-seeking foreign policy was essentially futile to the purposes of power maximization, which he famously posited as the ultimate goal of states' international activity: "Prestige is at

most the pleasant by-product of foreign policies whose ultimate objectives are not the reputation for power but the substance of power."[33]

This thesis, however, looks ambiguous. First, since the substance of power is control, reputation for power inasmuch as it can contribute to influencing others, can be considered as a component of power, and, subsequently, constitutes a specific form of its substance. Second, the very idea of opposing two notions, "reputation for power" and "the substance of power," presents an artificial dichotomy as policymakers can integrate both in a prudent strategy. Most importantly, in the age of apocalyptic potency of nuclear weapons, there are no realistic ways for principal states to measure their ultimate power capabilities through a "trial by battle," thus leaving their strategists to assess hard power potentials of contenders by inference rather than by objective knowledge.[34]

Therefore, maximizing power credibility becomes increasingly discerned in every great power capital from Washington to Beijing and from Moscow to Paris to London as the core premise for retaining primacy and a grand strategic objective. Indeed, as Morgenthau himself recognized, "A policy of prestige (we should rather say, credibility –S.S.) attains its very triumph (and isn't reaching a triumph an ultimate objective of any policy? –S.S.) when it gives the nation pursuing it such a reputation for power as enable it to forego the actual employment of the instruments of power."[35]

5   PRESTIGE AND REPUTATION

Notably, in the ongoing discourse on prestige and reputation, dissimilar perceptions of credibility have led to a number of confusing generalizations in explicating relationships between the notions of reputation for power and reputation for resolve on the one hand, and credibility on the other. Robert Gilpin, for instance, has defined reputation for power as identical to prestige, which, in turn, he understood as the "credibility of a state's power" and its resolve to use it.[36]

Jonathan Mercer has posited reputation for resolve as a structural element of credibility, which, in his view, also includes two other major attributes—capability and interests.[37] However, in his opinion, reputation appears to have the smallest weight in constructing an image of a credible power. Addressing the validity of seeking reputation for resolve for security purposes, he, for instance, denies its utility as the means of credible deterrence. Unlike deterrence and game theorists who join statesmen in their belief that a state's reputation for action presents a vital property in affecting

behavior of other states, and therefore, in the words of Thomas Schelling "is worth fighting for," Mercer postulates this belief as erroneous.[38] In his view, projections on behavior of adversaries or allies are made not on the grounds of their past reputational records, but through assessments of their tangible capabilities and national interests at stake. Defining behavior in dispositional terms and policy in situational ones, he suggests that statesmen are wrong in trusting the cross-situational validity of the former.

From this standpoint, reputation for a certain type of behavior is a wrong indicator in making projections about one's conduct in a specific situation in the future. The problem with Mercer's analysis is that despite its analytical rigor and strength of the formal logic applied in support of its generalizations, its appeal to policymakers to ignore reputation as a major guideline of their policy is bound to fall into empty ears. I contend exactly the opposite—at least as long as the relative power of their nation decreases, statesmen, critique disregarding, will continue to streamline their policies in search of a greater reputational credibility.

In Gilpin's definition, "prestige involves the credibility of a state's power and its willingness to deter or compel other states in order to achieve its objectives."[39] The importance of credibility in safeguarding peace was noted by E.H. Carr: "if your strength is recognized, you can generally achieve your aims without having to use it."[40] From this perspective, by retaining the veracity of their power in the eyes of peers and other relevant players, the strongest among states do not only gratify their self-esteem as "indispensable" nations, but in reality enable the world to lower the risks of an all-out war.

As Gilpin asserted, an ultimate manifestation of national prestige is a victory in a hegemonic war.[41] Drawing on Gilpin's notion of prestige, one can conceive a core hallmark of great power credibility as a firm belief by other relevant actors in its ability to deter its peers from unleashing a hegemonic war as well as in its statecraft's resolve to wage such a war, should circumstances demand so. When such a resolve is compromised, so is a great power's credibility; as a result, its deterrence utility becomes devalued.

Nations can pay dearly in times of crisis should their leaders fail to grasp this imperative. The failure of British and French governments to stand firm by Czechoslovakia in 1938 exemplified their lack of understanding of the need to psychologically secure their power credibility in the face of the revisionist Germany. By failing to unequivocally demonstrate their resolve to fight, they, disturbingly, revealed a deficit of political will—a faculty which at the time of crisis is no less important than tangible capabilities,

and which their nemesis, unfortunately, was having in abundance. The subsequent price that their peoples, other European nations, and the world at large had to pay in blood and treasure for this negligence and vacillation was unprecedentedly high.

But what if decision makers in London and Paris had more firmness and sagacity? What if their political character as that of their successors—Winston Churchill and Charles de Gaulle—exuded indomitable spirit? Of course, we will never know whether this could indeed deter Hitler; yet, as Churchill suggested, "[b]etween submission and immediate war there was this third alternative. … It is quite true that such a policy in order to succeed demanded that Britain should declare straight out and a long time beforehand that she would, with others, join to defend Czechoslovakia against an unprovoked aggression."[42]

That Franco-British irresoluteness encouraged the Nazi leadership to proceed with its expansionist plans is recognized by many historians; even in 1936, when Germany was much weaker than France alone, Paris did not take any strong action to punish Germany for taking on the Rhineland, thereby missing the historic chance of finishing the Nazis once and for all. Even Adolf Hitler had to acknowledge the Third Reich's vulnerability: "The 48 hours after the march into the Rhineland were the most nerve-racking of my life. If the French had then marched into the Rhineland, we would have had to withdraw with our tails between our legs, for the military resources at our disposal would have been wholly inadequate for even a moderate resistance."[43] Since, in the nuclear age, such a resolve is not testable, great power statesmen have to devise ingenious means conceivably able to persuade the significant others in the credibility of their policy commitments.

6   Mechanisms of Looking Credible

Jervis was the first to fundamentally investigate the mechanism of "cheap signaling" or deception in the foreign policy of states. His study on images perpetuated by states in relations with others stemmed from the hypothesis that since states are interested in pursuit of their policies by the least costly means, which—in the final analysis—should avoid risks to their existence, they are prone to adroit manipulation of their images by the important others. In a monograph addressing the organizing logic of image-making in world politics, Jervis identified four main techniques used by statecraft to these ends. In line with his taxonomy, they fall into

two major categories—signals and indices. The difference between the two is in that signals are messages intended to directly communicate the self's intentions to the receiver. Signals do not, however, contain what Jervis calls "inherited credibility" for they are usually known as tools of explicit manipulation. Contrarily, indices are pieces of information that are not designed to be explicitly aimed at the receiver, and, can, therefore, be considered as "intrinsically credible." The most common examples of signals and indices illustrating the distinction between them are diplomatic notes addressed to the receiver and the self's secret information intercepted by the receiver's intelligence. The first method to promulgate the necessary image is to signal a commitment to a certain type of behavior, which, in reality, may serve as a disguise for a state's genuine intentions. Next, to make the opposite side believe in sincerity of such a commitment, the self could introduce changes in its indices so that they are not interpreted as "cheap signals." One way to do this is by organizing "leaks" of an admittedly secret information.[44]

Thirdly, the self can assign signals to new meanings, and fourthly, impact inferences made by the receivers with respect to the self's indices.[45] To the extent the foregoing techniques are not easily detected as purposeful deceit which can ultimately undermine the credibility of images of the self he wants to promote in relations with other international actors, they can be applied to the ends of upholding the veracity of his national power among them.

To retain images of superiority, declining powers seek to combine benign and bellicose attributes of their power credibility in their foreign and security policies. One way is to engage in conflicts with inconsequential states which are unlikely to present existential threats to their safety while being seemingly easy to defeat. To avert status losses on a larger scale, big nations employ or design security pretexts that enable them to use force to manifest their supremacy. For example, the incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin in 1964 were, reportedly, staged by the Johnson administration as a pretext to escalate US military involvement in the Vietnam War.[46]

This approach is not without risks as statesmen might underestimate the resilience of their weaker foes, and can be bogged down in protracted conflicts that their domestic audiences would not be eager to support. Above all, none of the great powers possess unlimited resources, and prolonged military fighting can exhaust their human, material, and financial assets. Thus, a miscalculation of the self's strengths, deriving from a desire to look credible, can be detrimental not only for reaching local military

goals, but can deplete its national capabilities and deteriorate its international power status even further.

This phenomenon is not new. In the last century, the wars motivated by the credibility concerns of the superpowers, waged, for instance, by Americans in Vietnam and the Soviets in Afghanistan, turned into protracted military conflicts that hurt their economies and damaged their international reputation. Moreover, in the case of the Soviet Union, its war in Afghanistan was among the major causes of its ultimate systemic collapse.[47] In this century, this pattern has been exemplified by US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; Russia's incursions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Syria; and France's and Britain's military intervention in Libya.

Decision-makers' concerns over credibility, therefore, tend to enhance when material capabilities are overstretched, and reputation for power becomes the only policy instrument whose crafty application can potentially make up for resource deficiency. In this context, credibility can be seen as a *value added to power*.

In the twenty-first century's strategic environment, the notion of credibility has outlived the frames of an abstract academic phraseology, and emerged as the gist of great powers' grand strategy, the need for which has become clearly illuminated with the advance of the second nuclear age. This need has been sharply highlighted by US-North Korean nuclear standoff in 2013, which manifested a growing propensity of a rapidly escalating military conflict between the representatives of the first and the second generations of nuclear states. The 2013 Korean crisis elucidated what Keir Lieber and Daryl Press defined as US strategic dilemma: "how to run a network of global alliances when nuclear weapons allow enemies to nullify the United States' superior military might."[48]

7   The Power-Credibility Nexus in the Nuclear Era and Information Age

The advance of nuclear era dramatically changed the patterns of global power dynamics. If in the pre-nuclear age an accelerated growth of absolute power in a single nation could comparatively smoothly convert in her relative power preponderance over peers, once proliferation of nuclear armory and missile technology emerged as a new reality, this plausibility became untenable. Although the number of nuclear-armed states has not increased as significantly as was foretold by some policymakers, the impact

of proliferation on international power dynamics and structure since the 1950s has been revolutionary. Perhaps, one of its most spectacular implications concerned the strongest among nations. Since the second half of the twentieth century, and evidently with advance of the second nuclear era, their relative power has been falling with every new round of proliferation. Additionally, structural shifts in the world economy in favor of emerging markets have made traditional great powers *continuously* subject to relative power diminution. This novelty has had multiple ramifications for different facets of their foreign and security policy, with the quest for a greater credibility of their force capabilities and international influence evolving as the major determinant of their post-WWII conduct, and bound to dominate their policy agenda in the twenty-first century.

Though a power credibility–seeking policy is not incongruent with the power expansion phase, it does not constitute the overarching motive of great power behavior as is the case at the downward stage. This is because at the stage of relative power expansion, policymakers are concerned with furthering hard power maximization, and tend to believe that preponderance in tangible capabilities obviates the need to prove their veracity by additional policy measures. Contrarily, at the stage of power decline, their concern is obverse—to boost the credibility of their vanishing capabilities. This is not to say that power holders are not attempting to increase coercive components of national power; the difference between their attempts at the first and second phases is that through the former their international prestige and influence grow proportionate to the increase of their power capabilities in a demonstrably obvious and natural fashion, while in the case of the latter they cannot be sustained without intangibles.

In the downward power phase, the general belief in superiority of their power capacities is subject to oscillation, which makes retaining the image of primacy through credibility-boosting measures the overarching task of national strategy. Given the foregoing hurdles in advancing hard power, enhancing soft power capability becomes the centerpiece of great power response to the credibility challenge. The old European great powers—France and Britain, who have entered the phase of relative decline earlier than their contemporary peers—have also emerged as pioneers in realization of this controversial strategy.

Another novel variable in affecting power stems from the remarkable growth of information technologies (IT) that bears upon the scope, structure, and density of social communication. Their subsequent impact on power results in emergence of a new phenomenon which I call *power vir-*

tualization. As the ubiquitous virtualization of life in the twenty-first century continues to affect every domain of human activity including politics, the universal spread of IT is revolutionizing the ways power images are being perceived and promoted. In the realm of international politics, the "de-materialization" of life has conspicuously modified the means and values of power. In the past, to enjoy the fruits of preponderance, like territorial acquisition, honor, or glory, nations used to resort to crude force risking depleting their economy and manpower.

With the advent of the IT-led globalization, the whole world becomes a single market place, which is poised to deflate the utility of territorial conquests and forceful coercion. Transactions through the world electronic web enable companies and individuals to freely move wealth between different countries, disregarding their international power ranks. The most competitive and business-friendly nations are not necessarily the most powerful ones by the existing standards: for example, Switzerland led the 2017 Global Competitiveness Index rankings, ahead of the United States (2nd), while Singapore (3rd), the Netherlands (4th), Hong Kong (6th), and Sweden (7th) were ahead of the United Kingdom (8th), let alone France, China, and Russia that occupied the 22nd, 27th, and 38th places, respectively.[49]

In the modern age, to experience pride and glory, people do not need going to war—the movie industry and video games are the sources of non-risky excitement; and, albeit in a surrogate form, PCs, iPhones, or iPads can arguably meet demands for various types of emotions. Additionally, in the new century, the productive forces have enshrined hedonism as the universal mainstream, making people generally unwilling to sacrifice their lives for big ideas, and dying for a cause is typically seen as an anomaly of standard human behavior in the modern material age.

In the meantime, with national power transcending its traditional quantitative and material forms, cannons, tanks, and battleships, as the measure of strength, are replaced by knowledge-intensive weapon systems, and manipulation of financial and commercial dependency emerges as no less efficient yet non-lethal and cheaper means of control and domination than military force. Consequently, prospects of being cut off the US market because of a crisis in bilateral relations can conceivably constitute a stronger (and more credible!) leverage for America in moderating China's behavior than Beijing's concerns over US military supremacy. Likewise, Western sanctions on Iran and Russia have been instrumental in restraining their ambitions, respectively, in the realm of nuclear armament and

regional expansionism. Most importantly, the means of universal destruction in the strongest powers make costs of an all-out war incommensurate with any political or economic gains their elites might be wishing to seek as their rewards.

The modern communication technologies enable to obviate this propensity by translating a state's hard power into soft power through processes of power virtualization. This is achieved through integrating what Robert Keohane and Joseph S. Nye define as "strategic information" (secretive in the past for it contained facts about a state's military capabilities and resources it possessed for waging a war) with the "free information." The latter is distributed "without financial compensation" for the major benefits its producer is seeking to gain result from "the receiver believing the information."[50]

This is achieved not only through communication of information officially published by state institutions, but also through the channels of communication between informed individuals and NGOs, which—if one applies Gramscian concept of hegemony—constitute another "half" of the modern state. By acting as voluntary transmitters of "free" strategic information, which is generated by the self and can be purposefully diverted from reality, these actors de facto function as agents of the self's power management through gaining influence in the cyberspace.

Moreover, as the cyberspace is 24/7 monitored by intelligence agencies, any information distributed there can, in principle, become their prey, and subsequently affect strategic calculus of their governments in ways originally *desired* by the information distributors.

One should note the difference in the meaning of credibility used in psychological warfare (PSYOP) for the purposes of propaganda and manipulation of mass, group, and individual opinions, and the one fashioned by responsible statesmen in their public and foreign policies. Propagandists purposefully frame and/or falsify information to present a trustworthy image they are attempting to craft in an addressee's mind.[51] Accountable statesmen, contrarily, seek to win the popular trust without altering the facts. However, as Ralph Keyes has argued, dishonesty, caused by "ethical decline" of the contemporary society, has become a pervasive socio-cultural syndrome (a phenomenon defined as "post-truth"),[52] blurring the line between facts and myths, and promulgating falsehood in the name of virtue. Additionally, the boom of social networking in the digital age through Internet media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram, has opened unprecedented possibilities for various political

groups in promoting their partisan agendas and targeting individuals with personified messages to influence their political preferences and choices. Applying big data, psychometrics, and personality-based advertising, *Cambridge Analytica*, a data modeling and psychographic profiling company, reportedly, contributed to the successes of "Brexit" and Trump campaigns in 2016—two unexpected events that are projected to have long-term transformative effects on world politics.[53] "We bring together 25 years' experience in behavioral change, pioneering data science, and cutting-edge technology," states *Cambridge Analytica*'s website, "[to] help you connect with every member of your audience on an individual level in ways that engage, inform and drive them to action."[54] The key difference between the old and new methods of news framing is that the latter, defined as "Behavioral Microtargeting,"[55] uses the old maxim of Julius Caesar that "Men willingly believe what they wish to be true,"[56] so that messages addressing specific personality types look most credible to the receivers because they skillfully accommodate their individual psychological traits and values.

The digital age brings novelties in the ways of interstate competition for credibility. The openness of the globalized cyberspace and the total dependency of the modern state's functionality on the information technologies have created unprecedented opportunities for technologically advanced nations to advance their influence worldwide not in the least at the expense of their adversaries' credibility. Russia's cyberwar with the United States is the most illustrative case in this regard. Notably, it is marked by the rise of state-sponsored cyberattacks aimed at getting access to confidential information stocked by foreign agencies. US government, for example, is particularly concerned by the rising activity of the most technologically advanced hackers' groups, such as Fancy Bear and Cozy Bear, reportedly connected to the Russian secret services. Should the hacked information contain compromising materials, it is further publicized through whistleblower sites, like WikiLeaks and DCLeaks.com, or otherwise used for the purposes of discrediting US and other Western political institutions, as was the case with the Democratic National Committee's server breach during the presidential campaign in 2016.[57] While some in US political establishment appeared to dismiss the gravity, if not the very fact of hacks, those in the intelligence community who understood the scope of damage that cyberattacks can inflict and have already inflicted on the United States defined them as lethal threats to the very foundations of American state and society. "A foreign government messing around in our elections is, I

think, an existential threat to our way of life," remarked, for example, former CIA acting director Michael Morell. "To me, and this is to me not an overstatement, this is the political equivalent of 9/11."[58] As Director of National Intelligence, Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, and Director of National Security Agency emphasized in their joint statement to the Senate Armed Services Committee on January 5, 2017, cyberoperations by foreign governments and non-governmental structures can have serious psychological effect on the targeted audiences by delivering "manipulative content" aimed at distorting their perceptions on vital events, individuals, topics, and institutions.[59]

It is worth noting that cyberinterference is a relatively cheap yet efficient way of pursuing political aims, and has an unprecedented potential to turn the table in an asymmetric power struggle. To win a war in a Clausewitzian sense and thereby secure one's political domination over an adversary, one necessitated a superior tangible force. To sideline an opponent in the information age, one needs to undermine its credibility—a mission which can be potentially accomplished by entities with inferior resources. To these ends, according to the US Department of Defense's perhaps most innovative division, Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA),[60] adversaries frequently manipulate information through social networks by falsifying narratives and events.[61] Such methods create an atmosphere of controversy and disorientation in the targeted audiences conducive to the political aims of the foreign governments and terrorist organizations perpetuating the global hybrid warfare. While the United States and European states seek to use modern information technologies to promote and endure democratic and liberal norms and values worldwide, the task of the illiberal regimes and anti-Western non-governmental structures is exactly the opposite—to undermine the popular belief in trustworthiness of the Western political institutions and governmental mechanisms as well as in the normative and legal advantages of the Western democracy over authoritarianism and totalitarianism. Moreover, as the numerous attempts by foreign hackers to intervene in the electoral campaigns in the United States, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Ukraine, and other nations have demonstrated, the object of their handlers' manipulative cybertactics is the population of the democratic or democratizing countries, or, to be more precise, their mindsets.

Power is a relative category. This is sometimes overlooked by policymakers who might take preponderance of their state in absolute capabilities for a reliable indicator of its continuous pre-eminence. In reality, an

actor with conspicuously weaker tangibles can enhance its power without any serious breakthroughs in its material assets or intangible properties relative to its superior adversary. This can result from the former's credibility diminution due to objective structural changes, policy miscalculations by its decision makers, malicious policy acts by its rivals, or any combination of those. Russian covert cyber (by intelligence departments and government-financed hackers) and overt media activity (e.g., by Russia Today [RT]/RT America TV broadcasting and social media video and messaging) on the eve of and during presidential campaign in the United States in 2016, estimated by US intelligence community as "unprecedented," can be considered as a striking manifestation of the enormous potential information technologies possess in the new quest for credibility. While actions in the cyberspace by Russia's intelligence and Kremlin-sponsored mass media were not aimed at augmenting the credibility of Russia as a "great power," they sought to undermine that of America, first by undercutting public faith in US political and electoral systems; second, by discrediting US politicians, namely Secretary Hillary Clinton, perceived as "enemies" in Moscow; third, by constructing a virtual image of the United States as an unreliable and corrupt power unfit for her status of the world leader. "In trying to influence the US election," US intelligence experts emphasized in their declassified report, "we assess the Kremlin sought to advance its longstanding desire to undermine the US-led liberal democratic order, the promotion of which Putin and other senior Russian leaders view as a threat to Russia and Putin's regime." The report suggested that cyberoperations and propaganda activities by Russian governmental agencies and government-sponsored actors aimed at changing US-led world order by influencing public opinion will continue in the future "because of their belief that these can accomplish Russian goals relatively easily without significant damage to Russian interests."[62]

As the foregoing example has demonstrated, a revisionist authoritarian power can use hacks to the far-going ends of undermining public trust in US electoral procedures, damage democracy as a political system, demoralize American society, and thereby attempt to break the entire international political order based on the universal trust in the legitimacy of US claims for exceptionalism, moral superiority, and rightness of the nation's global leadership. Not surprisingly, Russian influence campaigns directed at the US presidential election as well as electoral procedures and referenda in other foreign countries were met by a strong reaction from the US Congress. Most importantly, what seemed to be an indirect, almost invis-

ible, standoff between the United States and the Russian Federation has morphed in a new form of obtrusive international conflict which can be dubbed the *battle for credibility*. Its potential ramifications though might well go far beyond the digital space as US countermeasures seek to painfully target the pivotal economic and financial interests of the Russian power holders[63]; the chain reaction caused by the new round of cold clash between Washington and Moscow, while prompting both governments to look credibly resolute in the eyes of their domestic audiences and each other, risks to endanger even further the already precarious prospects of regional and international peace.

The influence operations conducted by the Kremlin-sponsored mass media and social networking websites in the recent years are no less active in Europe and Eurasia, where their mission has been to influence the outcomes of national elections in favor of Moscow-preferred candidates. For example, during the presidential campaign in France in 2017, Russia sought to undermine the electoral chances of Emmanuel Macron, a fervent proponent of a strong EU, while seeking to enhance those of Marine Le Pen, known for her isolationist, anti-EU standing. The campaign of smear and manipulation against Macron has not, however, brought the Kremlin the anticipated dividends; instead, Moscow received in his face, perhaps, the first political leader in the history of the post-Soviet Russia's relations with Western Europe who might have a personal grudge against the top Russian policymakers for they, as he implied in his public statement, sought to undermine his personal credibility in the eyes of the Frenchmen. "We must say to ourselves: in reality Russia Today and Sputnik did not behave like representatives of mass media and journalists but as sources of influence, propaganda and lies, no more and no less," stated Macron during the joint press conference with Putin during the latter's visit to Paris, adding: "When the press spreads libelous statements, they are no longer journalists, they are agents of influence."[64]

It is widely believed that even the most sophisticated methods to manipulate public opinion ("brainwashing" and indoctrination) can succeed with naïve and poorly informed audiences rather than with knowledgeable and critically minded individuals. This, however, as the modern political history shows, does not diminish their efficiency in value and norm formation in authoritarian and democratic countries alike. It is also commonly assumed that epistemic communities possess all the appropriate skills, resources, and means to gather, compare, process, and analyze information. This set of properties purportedly ensures their abilities to

detect falsifications and generate truth. However, the eventual "product" they might present to policymakers can divert from the reality for a variety of reasons, like incomplete or purposefully distorted information, as well as cognitive bias of professionals involved at different stages of information processing. The notion of *source credibility* applied in this inquiry is not of bluffing or strategic deceit; by credibility I mean an authority's qualification to sustain a reliable image of power necessary to preserve primacy and prestige, and, thereby, uphold an enjoyable level of self-esteem.

8   CREDIBILITY OF MESSAGES AND SOURCES

Perhaps, the most important characteristic of credibility is discrepancy in authenticity of information between its sources and recipients. While A's actions may bear the same message to B, C, and D, their perceptions of this message might not only be dissimilar, but also significantly different from A's intentions. If the meaning of the message on the other side of the wire diverts from the one originally intended, this can reasonably prompt one to ask: By what standards can we judge about message credibility?

Conceivably, message recipients will assess it by their own standards, and most probably in line with the "mirror image" concept. In other words, they will interpret A's signals in a way that (1) corresponds to their own belief and value systems and (2) explains A's conduct by placing themselves in A's shoes. What follows from this hypothesis is that a message would sound credible to recipients if their belief and value systems are similar to those of the message's source. Put differently, similarity of the source's and recipient's cultural settings can be considered as an important prerequisite of message authenticity.

However, this assumption does not mean that a player with an alien system of values would not be able to correctly read the others' messages. Note that messages are communicated in the international system which is constructed along certain normative lines. International norms do not appear from nowhere. While their formation is a long and complex process, which is not an object of this study, it is important to understand that global norms are products of originally domestic values cultivated by the most powerful world players, great powers, and are first of all conducive to pursuit of their international policy objectives.

It means that members of the international community have to abide by the rules prioritized by the strongest among them. To say otherwise, it

would be imprudent for the self to read the others' messages in a way that would significantly divert from their original meaning. If great power–induced *Zeitgeist* is permeated by such norms as force, capability, resolve, and other realist notions, messages that communicate these properties should better not be taken as signals of weakness, inability, and irresoluteness.

This said, one should not infer that even if read correctly, messages would invoke the others' behavior exactly in line with the sender's original intentions. Messages that imply compliance might, on the contrary, cause defiance for idiosyncratic reasons, while in making a reasonable judgment on source trustworthiness one can be unwittingly confused by information controversy, deficiency, and misinterpretation. These complexities compound strategic communication, and, as was shown by James Fearon, can, under extreme conditions, even provoke military conflicts.[65] To circumscribe ominous ramifications of misunderstanding in the nuclear age, a source state has, therefore, every incentive to make its strategic messages credible for the recipients.

There is, however, no cause for an immediate alarm. As long as addressees of their messages are subject to a phenomenon described by Charles Peirce as humans' susceptibility to finding comfort in beliefs, great power statesmen should have little to worry about. A great power's image of strength would hardly be compromised unless some truly drastic events occur that can cast doubts in its credence.[66] Hence, the task of strong states is to prevent any serious changes in the international system—the so-called status-quo powers are by default the greatest conservatives on a world scale. Note that the "golden age" of great power politics was opened by the 1815 Vienna accord known as the "concert" of Europe's largest monarchies interested in "freezing" the continental balance of power. However, as history teaches us, the structural forces evolving at system level are objectively stronger than the controlling capacity of political units. This discrepancy, however, does not turn governments into passive spectators of historical changes. On the contrary, the more the international dynamics accelerate to their disadvantage, the stronger are psychological and political incentives for statecraft to devise face-saving policies for domestic and foreign consumption.

In defining the meaning of credibility, one should distinguish between its two types; depending on the source, they present *passive* and *active* credibility. I define the first type of credibility as *passive* for it denotes *trustworthiness of capabilities*. Perception of the self's capabilities by the important others constitutes their reflection of the self's power potential that

may or may not be brought into action. The second type of credibility, *active*, unlike the first one, is a function of the self's influence skills, and presents its ability to control the others' perceptions in the desired way through policy actions. It can be further dissected into *positive* and *negative* credibility. The former is contingent upon the self's mastery to generate affinity and sympathy by the addresses, and is instrumental in promoting bilateral or multilateral cooperation, enduring allegiances, and forging alliances. The latter presents the self's skills in causing fear and anxiety among its foes, and is useful in generating compliance and submission.

Credibility is an indispensable condition of the self's potency to exude power. Called by Alan Henrikson "emanation of power," this ability allows to "radiate" influence without force application. By the very fact of being perceived as powerful, "one can threaten more adversaries than one can attack; one can promise more allies more assistance than one can in fact deliver."[67]

To enjoy security, which defensive realists have posited as the primary ends of state policy, one does not necessarily need to possess a superior level of actual power. For instance, pawns, protected by suzerains from a regional hegemon, may feel safer than their protectors with stronger power capabilities. What great powers are supposedly seeking are the higher than average degrees of *self-esteem*. While one can, of course, approach the notion of self-esteem from various perspectives, we will consider it through the lenses of social psychology that examines behavior prompted by pursuit of high self-respect. Drawing on the "feedback" approach conceptualized by Bednar, Wells, and Peterson, one can suggest that the pursuit of high self-regard by elites in great powers constitutes the primary means to inform them of fluctuations in their social value and induces them to devise ingenious mechanisms of correction.[68]

Given the social nature of self-esteem, which is a relative category attained through comparison with others, a great power needs to obtain recognition of her "credentials" by the maximum number of other actors and in the maximum scope of issue-areas. For the self's credentials to be universally recognized, they should have the highest levels of authenticity, or, in other words, emit undisputable credibility.

Like a respectable trade mark allows a company to sell its products at prices higher than those of its less trustworthy competitors, a larger degree of power credibility enables a strong political entity to control or resist others more efficiently in comparison with its peers. For instance, in case of a crisis fraught with application of crude force, more credible powers would have better chances to achieve a desired outcome peacefully than their less credible peers.

9   MEASURING CREDIBILITY'S VALUE

As a social-psychological category, credibility cannot be generally measured. However, in certain situations one can arguably quantify its functional utility. The simplest way to calculate it is to assess a difference between the costs of a war scenario and the one that allows for a war aversion. Consider the case of US-Pakistani imbroglio. In the aftermath of 9/11, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Armitage visited Islamabad with a secret mission of a paramount political importance. The task was to persuade the Taliban-friendly regime of General Pervez Musharraf to cooperate with the Americans in the "war on terror." The Armitage mission looked almost impossible: in Pakistan, with its sweeping anti-Americanism, joining the fight by the United States and NATO on radical Islamists in the blood-related Afghanistan was doomed to be seen as a shameful defection.

While the information about controversial diplomatic tactics purportedly used by Armitage was not officially acknowledged by Washington, from Musharraf's interview it follows that during a conversation with the head of Pakistani intelligence, the US envoy allegedly resorted to nuclear blackmailing. "Be prepared to be bombed," Armitage ostensibly threatened his interlocutor. "Be prepared to go back to the Stone Age."

Imagine that Pakistan would have defied the United States on the matter. Consider the emotional straining in the White House during one of the most dramatic moments in US history. Would have President Bush resorted to military force to avenge on his disloyal ally? We will never know, but given the fact of Islamabad's compliance, the Pakistanis did not exclude this possibility. "One has to think and take actions in the interest of the nation," explaining his government's acquiescence, Musharraf told American reporters, "and that's what I did."[69] By all counts, at the time America's threat to use force did not look like a bluff to Pakistani leadership.

This episode, perhaps, best highlights the meaning of credibility pursuit in contemporary international politics: the credibility of US power appeared to have saved America the costs of extending the war on terror to the whole territory of Pakistan, incidentally a nuclear-armed nation. This said, one should consider that the veracity of US military preponderance and resolve to use force to the ends of coercion failed to serve as a remedy for peace on American terms in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other places where intransigence and overconfidence of power holders overruled ratio-

nales for compliance. Yet, the evidence of the Pakistani and similar cases allows us to posit credibility as a precious attribute of power enabling to reach core policy objectives without application of force.

The ascendency of new contenders for international influence—India, Pakistan, Iran, North and South Korea, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, some of which openly aspire for nuclear weaponry as means of power equalization—presents an especially uncomfortable challenge for the United States and other traditional great powers. While the almost universal recognition of their primacy has so far enabled America and her peers to reap the fruits of retaining their bargaining leverages over weaker states, the ongoing relative decline of their power, in the last two decades exacerbated by the advent of the second nuclear age, has likely started taking toll on their composure.

And this is not without a reason. As history shows, tectonic shifts in power distribution among nations have inescapably been accompanied by devastating military conflicts, which in the last century were exemplified by the two all-out wars. To avoid confrontational tests of power with revisionist players, status-quo states need to maintain images of supremacy.

Foreign audiences, however, are not the only, and frequently not even the major, addressees of credibility policy; in many cases, domestic constituencies serve as its primary objects—a trait falling in the pattern of what Robert Putnam defined a "two-level game."[70] The core domestic audiences include powerful decision-making groups in political and business communities as well as wide masses of voters; citizens' support of their state's international conduct presents a considerable resource in legitimization of political power by the national government.

For a ruling political party, foreign policy is often instrumental in reaching domestic political goals, like strengthening its popular basis and weakening that of its political opponents. That the quest for credibility maximization is, for example, the primary driver of US presidential foreign policy has been manifestly revealed by the former US President Bill Clinton. "They hire you to win … to look around the corner and see down the road," he explained during a closed briefing devoted to US policy on Syria. "So you really have to in the end trust the American people, tell them what you're doing, and hope to God you can *sell* it" [emphasis added].[71]

An assertive foreign policy course can be seen especially advantageous at times of economic and social crises. Then, a government can hopefully mitigate a mass discontent by making up for the loss of popular trust at

home through foreign policy acts presenting the state as the ultimate protector of national interests, capable of standing up boldly to external challenges, and acting as a defender of the "right cause" worldwide. However, since veracity is an issue-specific property, it is unclear whether by "selling" their foreign policy to disenchanted masses at home governments can successfully compensate deficit in their domestic credibility.

Yet, statesmen's zeal to make their current policies look "perfectly" credible at home and abroad can come at a price, as policymakers subsequently risk losing focus on long-term national security interests. Citing, for instance, America's "obsession" with credibility during the Cold War, some scholars rightly suggest that her foreign and security policy's concentration on supporting anti-government forces in Nicaragua, Angola, and Afghanistan hampered her to timely and properly attend to her genuine security needs, for example, engaging the Soviets in conventional and strategic disarmament.[72]

Characteristically, after the end of the Cold War, the quest for credibility by the great powers has become the dominant common pattern of their behavior. This can be exemplified by their growing inclination to demonstrate resoluteness through application of force with respect to inconsequential states.

In 2008, Russia, for example, waged a "blitzkrieg" war against a tiny post-Soviet republic of Georgia. In 2011, the French and British air forces ensured the defeat of Libya's governmental troops in the latter's bloody contest with the anti-Qaddafi's rebels, and in 2013 France intervened in her former colony, Mali, this time on the side of the state's government. As for the United States, the bulk of its foreign activities in the first decade of the young century was focused on Afghanistan and Iraq, even though at the expense of attending to no less vital actors and issues in other parts of the world.

This type of behavior enables us to reveal a salient pattern in behavior of the contemporary great powers—the more they decline in terms of their *objective* power, and the more they feel vulnerable in terms of their international standing, the more treasure and political energy they tend to invest in making their *perceived* power look uncompromised. Given the natural difficulties in having first-hand knowledge of one's power capabilities, the usual method of judging upon the former is by inference.

10   JUDGING ABOUT CREDIBILITY

As it was demonstrated in Part I, the size of military expenditures and data on the number and structure of the armed forces conceivably continue to present a vital departure point for judging about one's national power

credibility. This information derived from both open and restricted sources has traditionally guided strategic and operational planning by national general staffs. Yet, an opponent's military capability cannot serve as a conclusive indicator of its power credibility in the absence of resoluteness to apply force, which, in its turn, is determined by interests at stake.[73]

While capability *per se* lacks power for change, its impact on international change is not indifferent. The general expectation of policymakers in *B* is that the growth of material capability in *A* would prompt its statesmen to alter their country's behavior in order to achieve a more prestigious status in the international system.[74] In a Pareto efficient system any betterment of one unit results in worsening of the other; in world politics, an expected conversion of *A*'s relative tangible preponderance into political influence and authority means diminution of the relative composite power of *B* and other status-quo powers. Unable to catch up with unfavorable shifts in the universal distribution of the relative material power, the status-quo powers would seek to maintain their top-dog ranks by *other* means. Traditionally, they included waging wars on belligerent ascending powers by coalitions of states (e.g., Coalitions of European states against Napoleonic France in 1792–1815; Anglo-Franco-Russian Triple Entente versus Germany-led Central Powers during WWI, and US-British-Soviet-led Allied powers against the Nazi Germany–centered coalition of the Axis powers during WWI). The advance of nuclear weapons and their proliferation made this remedy obsolete, hence fostering the political role of deterrence as the primary means of political-strategic containment. Another way of making up for the loss of material preponderance is through forging countervailing alliances (e.g., Euro-Atlantic alliance). The problem with alliances though is that their credibility in the real-world situations (versus a nuclear power) is untestable, thereby compounding the role of alliance patrons as they have to simultaneously sustain their impression capability with adversaries while managing their reassurance potency with pawns.

In a study of methods applied by state leaders to assess the credibility of military threats posed by an adversarial power, Daryl Press conceptualizes two basic approaches—one, called "Past Actions theory" (PAT), accentuates an adversary's reputational record, while the other, dubbed "Current Calculus theory" (CCT), focuses on examination of an adversary's current power capabilities and interests.[75] While Press appears to acknowledge some cognitive value of PAT, the thrust of his argument is that it is CCT that possesses superior explanatory power, and in this virtue statesmen are prone to use CCT rather than PAT to evaluate the credibility of their foes.

To support his thesis, he claims that there is no historical evidence fashioning an idea that statesmen derive judgments about the seriousness of threats by other party from the record of its previous conduct in crises. If the history of an adversary's foreign policy demonstrates a pattern of follow-ups on its commitments, this logic holds, it would act in a similar way in the future. In rejecting the validity of the past action hypothesis, Press postulates CCT that de-emphasizes the cognitive value of historical accounts.

In his view, for strategists making assumptions about an adversary's future actions, the weight of deliberations about previous conduct is almost always negligent. What really concerns statesmen, he asserts, are assumptions over current dyadic power balances and interests at stake. If the opponent's power is stronger than that of the self, and the former's stakes in the crisis are crucial for its national interests, its threats would undoubtedly warrant credibility.

Although one would hardly disagree with the study's critique of expediency to follow up—in the absence of existential interests at stake—for example, on every commitment in US foreign policy, CCT fails to provide a comprehensive picture of strategy-making processes, and its opposition to PAT presents a hasty generalization. Most importantly, CCT overemphasizes rationalist premises of credibility, while downplaying its empirical roots. This exaggeration of the method of a dry mechanical calculation to obtain, using the words of John Dewey, a "cognitive certainty" in "affairs of momentous value" presents a cognitive fallacy.[76] There is no reliable way for a politician to judge upon the credibility of the others in the absence of previous experience; there is no such thing as "absolute truth"—truth is always relative, and the only rational way to approach the true meaning of things is through a set of numerous experiments; hence considering an adversary's reputation for power and resolve presents a useful tool of reckoning its credibility without risking one's head in an outright power contest which may prove a terminal experiment.

In substantiating his concept, Press addresses several international crises of the past, and provides his interpretation of leaders' modes of reasoning, including Hitler's evaluation of French and British credibility in the 1930s, and Kennedy's assessment of Soviet credibility during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

With respect to the European pre-WWII crisis, Press contrasts the predictive efficiency of PAT versus CCT and argues that the latter performs better in predicting German assessments of the Western powers' credibil-

ity. The dissection of credibility variables in "past" (reputation) and "present" (capabilities), however, looks superfluous in general and in this specific case in particular. In reality, strategy decision-making is a much more complex and nuanced process than one can imagine by unconditionally subscribing to CCT. While dyadic power balances and national interests are certainly among the most important variables for a strategist to assess, they do not exhaust strategic calculus. Operational codes of adversarial leaders, domestic stability, national unity and moral support, electoral cycles and information, issue indivisibilities and commitments along with a variety of other factors ranging from projections of the opponent's behavior vis-à-vis the third parties to its entrenched pattern of conduct in foreign and security policy (past actions) are given thorough consideration.[77]

Most importantly, one of the major determinants in devising a response to crisis by policymakers is its possible impact on their *political credibility*. Notably, in the case of Hitler's European policy, his political views were formed long before his coming to power in 1933. As early as in the 1920s he formulated his infamous concept of *Lebensraum*, which became an intermediate goal in his lust for European conquests.

An old German nemesis, France, presented an apparent strategic impediment in realization of Hitler's expansionist plans, and forceful elimination of this impediment was naturally untenable before geostrategic conditions in Europe were ripe. Note that these conditions included not only shifts in Franco-German and German-British dyadic power balances in Germany's favor, but also comprehensive assessments of the geostrategic and political situation in Europe and the rest of the world.

Although it was not until the second half of 1939 that Germany's military power became the superior force in Europe, Hitler's earlier conduct demonstrated his derogatory opinion of his Western adversaries.

CCT, if applied to explicating French and British policy, would explain why their statesmen stayed confident on the credibility of their deterrence till (and even some time after) Hitler's invasion in Poland. However, their calculus turned out to be fatally wrong because they failed to project Hitler's *past actions* on his future behavior. Thus, the Calculus theory in retrospect lacks the claimed predicting power.

Had Hitler been guided by the Calculus concept that downgrades the validity of adversarial reputational record, he would have definitely concurred with his generals, who, like Ludwig Beck, Chief of the General Staff, confined their analysis to singularly assessing the proportion of tan-

gible capabilities between *Wehrmacht* and the opposing armies. According to Beck's analysis in May 1938, Germany's defeat in a war with the Western powers over Czechoslovakia was bound to be imminent because "Germany, whether alone or in alliance with Italy, is not in a position militarily to match with England or France."[78]

Contrarily, for Hitler, reputation—presence or absence of resolve—manifested a decisive component of power. For example, his calculus of France's power credibility included consideration of her *lingering irresoluteness* as her dominant foreign policy pattern. *Inaction*, an entrenched pattern of her pre-WWII conduct, deprived her composite power of the needed amount of strength, making her in the eyes of Hitler *credibly weak*, or, in his words, at least "manifestly weaker" than in 1914.[79]

In February 1933, for instance, Hitler, speaking about the Quai d'Orsei's possible reaction to his plans to defy military restrictions imposed on Germany by the Versailles, remarked: "it will show whether or not France has *statesmen*: if so she will not leave us time but will attack us" [emphasis added].[80] His disdain for Paris was later echoed by Goebbels; pointing to Daladier's foreign policy permissiveness in the 1930s as one of the core prerequisites to allow for emboldening of the Nazi Germany's military adventurism, he exclaimed: "We were allowed to pass through the risk zone without any restrictions and we were able to navigate all dangerous obstacles, and when we had finished, well armed, better than they, we started the war."[81]

Indeed, the record of Paris's timidity in the interwar period is impressive. Beginning the 1920s, it includes the easing of France's economic grips on Germany with concessions made under the Dawes Plan in 1924; acquiescence to German withdrawal from the Geneva Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations in 1933, and to Berlin's open abrogation in 1935 of the Part V of the Treaty of Versailles prohibiting German rearmament; inaction with respect to remilitarization of Rhineland in 1936 in violation of the Locarno Treaty (this effectively ended French geostrategic advantage over Germany); pathetic reaction to the *Anschluss* in March 1938; and, finally, participation in the appeasement accord of September 1938 in Munich that signified the betrayal of Czechoslovakia whom France undertook to protect by their mutual defense pact.

All these developments could not have been ignored by Hitler in contrast to what adherents to CCT might have presumed. Moreover, France's lasting discrediting conduct only played well into Hitler's grand scheme

that *downplayed the material pre-eminence of the adversaries,* and committed the Nazi Germany to perpetual territorial annexations.

The interpretation of Kennedy's assessment of Soviet credibility during the Cuban Missile Crisis presents no lesser evidence of CCT's misconception. US restraint in responding to the deployment of Soviet missiles in Castro's Cuba, it implies, was rooted on their fear of the concurrent Soviet power rather than on their assessments of Soviet foreign policy record in general, and taking Khrushchev's repeated saber rattling seriously in particular.

This appears to be inconclusive: since the USSR became a great military power, and especially with its acquisition of nuclear weapons in 1949, its military might has become a constant variable in Western strategic assessments. It would be, however, far-fetched to assume that the Soviets' past posture was taken away from US calculus: Khrushchev's credibility did not originate solely from the devastating might of the Soviet strategic or conventional power of which the Western powers were quite aware long ago, but rather from a *combination* of this power with the Soviets' record of hostility toward the West as well as the Soviet leader's purported "insanity." The Soviet Premier, in effect, forced the West to play the "Russian roulette" as they appeared to be taking his repeated threats seriously unaware of how many "blank cartridges" were loaded in his "gun."

Indeed, in 1956, Moscow compelled the West to back down in the Suez crisis; at that time Khrushchev initiated confidential letters to be sent by the then Soviet Premier Bulganin to British, French, and Israeli leaders. In these letters, the Kremlin threatened to attack Britain and France with nuclear missiles if they do not comply with the Soviet ultimatum to withdraw their troops from the United Arab Republic. Then, through a spectacular diplomatic and economic pressure on his NATO allies, President Eisenhower forced Paris and London to essentially comply with Moscow's demand. The major cause of this sudden overture was not the Soviet power credibility *per se*; rather it was Washington's doubt in its own deterrence credibility: should the Soviets have struck London, it would have invoked NATO's Article 5, and the United States would have had to attack Moscow, which in turn would have prompted the Soviets to retaliate on Washington.

To qualify for conclusiveness, the Current Calculus concept should work both ways, meaning it should be applicable to explaining Khrushchev's adventurist decision to station Russian nuclear weaponry close to America's

shores—a decision that by standards of any rational politician could prove overly risky for the Soviets.

If applying the Calculus theory, one would fail to explicate this reckless conduct as both an assessment of US military capabilities and evaluation of their security interests would warn against such an inconsiderate step. Indeed, by the early 1960s the Soviets could not be neither unaware of US strategic superiority nor ignorant as to American security and image interests at stake in Latin America. To directly confront a superior nuclear power, one should be either insane or confident that the nemesis would back down.

By all counts it appears that America's power did not look credible for the Soviet leader—but why? The only reasonable explanation for this phenomenon can be derived from Khrushchev's derogatory perception of US reputation for resolve when faced with an outward nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union. Moreover, Eisenhower's backing down in the face of Moscow's threats to bomb US NATO allies during the Suez crisis was exacerbated by Western inaction with respect to Soviet intervention in Hungary the same year.

President Kennedy's disaster in the Bay of Pigs in 1961 symbolized for the Soviets not the courage of the new US leader but rather its deficit as the latter did not dare to resort to an outright American intervention to topple Castro, conceivably out of fear to provoke the Soviets to reciprocate in Berlin. Kennedy himself thought that the fiasco in the Bay of Pigs made Khrushchev believe that "anybody who was stupid enough to get involved in that situation was immature, and anybody who didn't see it all the way through was timid and therefore could be bluffed."[82] Above all, Khrushchev's meeting with John Kennedy in June 1961 in Vienna consolidated the former's opinion that American leaders are too rational to engage in a face-to face conflict with the nuclear-armed Soviets. In other words, by the time such conflict indeed took place in October 1962, Khrushchev already formed a negative cognitive bias with respect to US credibility based on his assessment of their reputational record. One should also recall that this record included a timid reaction of the Kennedy administration to the construction of the Berlin Wall the Soviets initiated 14 months earlier.[83]

Khrushchev, the veteran of Soviet politics and one of the few survivors in the Stalinist Politburo, made an unfavorable impression of the new American president: Kennedy, in his view, was "not strong enough. Too

intelligent and too weak."[84] The summit's disastrous ramifications for US credibility were too evident to be downplayed and too unwise to be ignored by Washington; Kennedy privately confessed: "So he [Khrushchev] just beat the hell out of me. So I've got a terrible problem. If he thinks I'm inexperienced and have no guts, until we remove those ideas we won't get anywhere with him."[85]

In a nutshell, half a century ago, the reputation of the United States as of a power concerned with its security rather than credibility—despite the White House's tacit admission of their intrinsic link—was paving the way for the most daunting standoff in the human history.

Opposing current capabilities to reputational record looks counterproductive to grasping the integrative salience of a variety of credibility properties, but, most importantly, the role of looking credible in pursuing foreign policy at every viable juncture of domestic and international developments. Game theories also rebuff the minimalist approach to the value of reputational records of the information source for the addressee. The Sobel model of credibility-prompting behavior in uncertain environment, for instance, established that "If an agent is uncertain about the motives of someone upon whom he must depend, either to provide information or make decisions, then the extent to which he trusts the other will be based on the partner's earlier actions."[86] One may reasonably suggest that as trust constitutes a necessary psychological precondition of decision-making, trustworthiness of the self is bound to present an imperative prerequisite in influencing the conduct of others.

I hypothesize that great powers in decline tend to make up for their relative material diminution by policies aimed at bolstering their power credibility through demonstrating belligerent behavior and exhibiting their technological superiority in military power. However, in sustaining their power credibility, they face challenges posed not only by dissipation of sensitive nuclear technologies to the second-tier states but also by impediments limiting their leverage in strategically salient regions due to the greater deterrence credibility of rogue states in the view of the latter's negative reputation for tolerance. The efficiency of deterrence in states with inferior material capabilities, such as North Korea and Iran, therefore, proves to be higher than that of the great powers in the West, universally perceived as constrained by moral values and norms in ability to apply their purportedly superior force.

11   Anarchy and Veracity

While realists rightly contend that the international system is anarchical, and reasonably postulate that this qualification causes fragility of peace and stability, they fail to appropriately focus on explicating the underlying causes of anarchy.[87] The *TPC* makes up for this shortcoming. It explicates anarchy as an implication of deficiency in great power's credibility; a weaker self (a sovereign state) tends to disbelief a hegemon's capabilities and its sincerity to best accommodate, represent, and protect the self's interests. Although by crafting institutions great powers can mitigate their credibility deficiency and reduce opportunistic incentives by collaborators, except for security communities, multilateral institutions *per se* cannot completely overcome mutual mistrust of their participants and abrogate suspicions by outsiders.[88] Most importantly, they cannot eliminate anarchy from relationship among major powers and their coalitions. Since hierarchy in an anarchical system constitutes an organized, regulation-imposing structure as opposed to what Jack Hirshleifer defined as "amorphy," endurance of a stratified system in IR presents a viable option for sustaining global peace and security.[89] However, great powers cannot satisfactorily perform their law and order–sustaining functions in the absence of endorsement by others; they need a universal legitimization of their right to lead and influence. To reduce anarchy, decrease strategic uncertainty, and promote order in the world system, the claimants for the status of international authority should demonstrate distinct trustworthiness not only in terms of their tangible capabilities, but no less importantly of their intangible abilities.

While neorealists see anarchy as an intrinsic attribute of IR that predisposes rivalry and conflict, neoliberals, on the contrary, argue that anarchy does not necessarily exclude peace and stability. Both schools either disavow the interaction between reality and perception as mutually impacted phenomena, or, at best, view it as one-way deterministic type of relations, that is, *reality affects perception* causality. In contrast to them, constructivists, in their general predisposition to view reality as a product of social interpretation, posit anarchy as a socially created category.[90] They believe that as such it can be filled in with different meanings.

The critiques of this approach point out to its overly idealistic nature as it presumes omnipotence of rationality and ignores cognitive bias; constructivism fails, for example, to explicate why if order is better than anarchy or if anarchy is perceived detrimental to well-being and security,

the international system has so far been not constructed along the lines of common sense and universal harmony.[91] The utopian nature of this approach is evident: for its hypothesis to be realized human enlightenment should be (a) universal and (b) simultaneous.

Similar to realism and constructivism, the *TPC* proposes to look at anarchy as an innate characteristic of international system, but in contrast to them suggests explicating its genesis along both cognitive and emotional lines. It explains anarchy by the natural inclination of human-operated sovereign political units to find comfort in self-esteem, which they can nurture by defiance of the will imposed on them by foreign authorities. As promoters of order, the major world players are interested in suppressing anarchy, but have to consider its intricate nature, underpinned among all by sovereignty-premising international law. This trait is mitigated by the perpetuated search of trustworthiness on the part of powerful actors with respect to minor players, whom they cannot, as in the past, accommodate through imperial conquests or compel by coercion. Using Wendt's terminology, I suggest that major powers are keen to produce not only cultures of order but also *cultures of credibility*.

NOTES

1. See Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 105.
2. Philip B. Heymann, "The Problem of Coordination: Bargaining and Rules," *Harvard Law Review* 86, no.5 (March 1973):797–877.
3. Quoted in Keohane, 106 (Heymann, 822).
4. For example, a chapter on "Institutionalism and the Constraint of Reputation" addresses "U.S. reputation for multilateralism." While exploring the latter, the paper concerns itself with "America's general commitment to comply with international institutions," thereby focusing on the issue of (non)compliance rather than on reputation. See Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 148–170.
5. William Curti Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions During the Cold War*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 301.
6. Randall L. Schweller and William C. Wohlforth, "Power Test: Evaluating Realism in Response to the End of the Cold War," *Security Studies* 9, no.3 (Spring 2000):77.

7. Constructivists, such as Adler, argue "that the manner in which the material world shapes and is shaped by human action and interaction depends on dynamic normative and epistemic interpretations of the material world." Emanuel Adler, *Communitarian International Relations: The Epistemic Foundations of International Relations* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), 90. Also, see Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, *Making Sense, Making Worlds: Constructivism in Social Theory and International Relations* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2013); Samuel Barkin, *Realist Constructivism: Rethinking International Relations Theory* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Yosef Lapid, Friedrich Kratochwil, eds., *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996). Friedrich Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions on the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Friedrich Kratochwil, *The Puzzle of Politics: Inquiries into the Genesis and Transformation of International Relations* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, [England]; New York: Routledge, 2010); Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1996); John Gerard Ruggie, *Constructing the World Polity: Essays on International Institutionalization* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998); John Gerard Ruggie, "What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge," *International Organization* 52, no.4 (Autumn 1998):855–885; Maja Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Stefano Guzzini and Anna Leander, eds., *Constructivism and International Relations: Alexander Wendt and His Critics* (London: Routledge, 2006); Stefano Guzzini, *Power, Realism, and Constructivism* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013); Peter M. Haas, *Epistemic Communities, Constructivism, and International Environmental Politics* (London; New York: Routledge, 2016).
8. See Christopher J. Fettweis, *The Pathologies of Power: Pathology, Realism, and the Future* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
9. Shiping Tang, "Reputation, Cult of Reputation, and International Conflict," *Security Studies* 14, no.1 (January–March 2005):38.
10. See, for example, McGeorge Bundy, "The Unimpressive Record of Atomic Diplomacy," in *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics*, eds. Robert J. Art and Kenneth Neal Waltz, 89.

11. "We … sometimes think that you would also use atomic weapons because during the resistance against the French, Vice President Nixon proposed the use of atomic weapons," North Vietnam's special envoy in Paris, Le Duc Tho, confessed to his counterpart in secret DRV-US negotiations, Henry Kissinger, in December 1972. "If we do not achieve … [our] goal in our lifetime our children will continue the struggle. … We have been subjected to tens of millions of bombs and shells. The equal of … 600 atomic bombs. … The simple truth is that we will not submit and reconcile ourselves to being slaves." "Nixon White House Considered Nuclear Options Against North Vietnam, Declassified Documents Reveal Nuclear Weapons, the Vietnam War, and the 'Nuclear Taboo.'" William Burr and Jeffrey Kimball, eds., *National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book* No.195. Available at: http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB195/#note

12. Ralph G. Hawtrey, *Economic Aspects of Sovereignty* (London, Longmans, Green, 1952), 65; Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 31.

13. Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, v.1, 926.

14. See Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, "Status, Identity, and Rising Powers" Prepared for CIPSS/CEPSI Workshop on International Security and Political Economy, McGill University, October 25, 2010, 5–6.

15. Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, eds. Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad (New York; London: Continuum: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2002), 98.

16. Ronald P. Dore, "The Prestige Factor in International Affairs," *International Affairs* 51, no.2 (April 1975):190–207.

17. On the role of images in IR, see Robert Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970); Richard K. Herrmann, James F. Voss, Tonya Y. E Schooler, and Joseph Ciarrochi, "Images in International Relations: An Experimental Test of Cognitive Schemata," *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no.3 (September 1997):403–433; Alpo Rusi, "Image Research and Image Politics in International Relations—Transformation of Power Politics in the Television Age," *Cooperation and Conflict* 23, no.1 (March 1988):29–42; Noel Kaplowitz, "National Self-Images, Perception of Enemies, and Conflict Strategies: Psychopolitical Dimensions of International Relations," *Political Psychology* 11, no.1 (March 1990):39–82.

18. E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, reissued with a new introduction and additional material by Michael Cox (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave, 2001), 68.

19. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5th rev. ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 78.
20. Ibid., 86–87.
21. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*.
22. Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, transl. Samuel B. Griffith; foreword by B.H. Liddell Hart (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).
23. See, for instance, Zalmay Khalilzad, *Congage China* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1999). Available at: http://ww.rand.org/pubs/issue_papers/IP187.
24. Quoted in Benjamin Haas, "Steve Bannon: 'We're Going to War in the South China Sea … No Doubt,'" *The Guardian*, February 2, 2017. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/feb/02/steve-bannon-donald-trump-war-south-china-sea-no-doubt
25. Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, v.1, 926.
26. Karl W. Deutsch, "Power and Communication in International Society" in *Conflict in Society*, eds. Anthony de Reuck and Julie Knight (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1966), 311.
27. Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 31.
28. Harold G. Nicolson, *The Meaning of Prestige* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1937), 9, 30, 20.
29. Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, 97.
30. Quoted in Ibid.
31. See Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, transl. and eds. Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1948), 160.
32. E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, 75.
33. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 85.
34. The term "trial by battle" was coined by British economist Ralph Hawtrey. See Ralph G. Hawtrey, *Economic Aspects of Sovereignty* (London: Longmans, Green, 1952).
35. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 87.
36. See Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 31.
37. See Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996).
38. Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (Yale University Press, 2008), 124.
39. Gilpin, 31.
40. Quoted in Gilpin, 31.
41. See Gilpin, 33.
42. Winston Churchill, "The Munich Agreement," House of Commons, October 5, 1938. Available at: http://www.winstonchurchill.org/learn/speeches/speeches-of-winston-churchill/101-the-munich-agreement

43. Quoted in William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 293.

44. This can be exemplified, for instance, by an allegedly "accidental" demonstration of a new Russian "superweapon's" blueprint by the Kremlin-controlled TV—a nuclear-loaded torpedo that purportedly could cause 500-meter high waves capable to wipe out a large portion of US territory and subject it to a long period of nuclear contamination during which no life would be possible. "Russia reveals giant nuclear torpedo in state TV 'leak,'" BBC, November 12, 2015. Available at: www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34797252.

45. See Jervis, 254.

46. See Edwin E. Moïse, *Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Eric Alterman, *When Presidents Lie: A History of Official Deception and Its Consequences* (New York: Viking, 2005).

47. Rafael Reuveny and Aseem Prakash, "The Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union," *Review of International Studies* 25, no.4 (October 1999):693–708.

48. Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, "The Next Korean War," *Foreign Affairs*, April 1, 2013. Available at: http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139091/keir-a-lieber-and-daryl-g-press/the-next-korean-war?cid=nlc-this_week_on_foreignaffairs_co-040413-the_next_korean_war_4-040413

49. See World Economic Forum, The Global Competitiveness Index dataset 2007–2017.

50. For the pertinent definitions of information types, see Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Power and Interdependence in the Information Age," *Foreign Affairs* 77, no.5 (September/October 1998):84–85.

51. See Stanley B. Cunnigham, *The Idea of Propaganda: A Reconstruction* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002).

52. Ralph Keyes, *The Post-Truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 10, 13.

53. See Von Hannes Grassegger und Mikael Krogerus, "Ich habe nur gezeigt, dass es die Bombe gibt," *Das Magazin* 48, no.3 (Dezember 2016). Available at: https://www.dasmagazin.ch/2016/12/03/ich-habe-nur-gezeigt-dass-es-die-bombe-gibt/ It is not possible though to assess the genuine effectiveness of big data analytics in political campaigns.

54. https://cambridgeanalytica.org/about

55. See ibid.

56. Quoted in Samuel Johnson, *Samuel Johnson: Selected Writings. A Tercentenary Celebration*, edited by Peter Martin (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 63.

57. See James Marson, Sam Schechner, and Alan Cullison, "Russian Hackers Evolve to Serve the Kremlin," *The Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 20, 2016.

58. Quoted in Politico Staff, "Morell Calls Russia's Meddling in U.S. Elections 'Political Equivalent of 9/11,'" *Politico*, December 12, 2016. Available at: http://www.politico.com/story/2016/12/michael-morell-russia-us-elections-232495

59. See Honorable James R. Clapper, Director of National Intelligence, Honorable Marcel Lettre, Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence, Admiral Michael S. Rogers, USN Commander, U.S. Cyber Command, Director, National Security Agency, "Joint Statement for the Record to the Senate Armed Services Committee Foreign Cyber Threats to the United States," unclassified, January 5, 2017. Symptomatically, the scope of the ensuing cyberwar against the West is not limited to US targets; the governments and public opinion in Germany and other European nations have also become objects of what Western intelligence agencies, such as Germany's Federal Intelligence Service Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND), describe as Moscow-directed cyberinterference and psychological manipulation. Among the methods used to the ends of discrediting domestic and foreign policies of the European governments and their multilateral organizations, such as the EU and NATO, are fake news distributed through Kremlin-sponsored mass media outlets and online trolling. As noted, for instance, in a report prepared by "PsyOps" (Psychologische Operationen) group of analysts from BND and the Federal Office for Protection of the Constitution in Berlin in January 2017, false information addressing European audiences is deliberately aimed at instigating conflicts in the Western society and splitting the Transatlantic alliance. See "Spaltung des Westens: BND wirft Russland gezielte Stimmungsmache," *Spiegel Online*, 14. January 2017. Available at: http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/russland-deutsche-geheimdienste-werfen-moskau-gezielte-stimmungsmache-vor-a-1129853.html

60. DARPA's core tasks are to prevent re-emergence of cases when the United States were caught by "strategic surprise," and to ensure US technological primacy in domains critically important for national security by elaborating a wide range of strategic innovations. Given the rising significance of cyberspace and information security for US core interests, DARPA has launched two primary initiatives: Plan X (cyber technology) and Quantitative Crisis Response (QCR) program (assessment of information threats). See Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), "Defense Innovation and Research: Statement by Dr. Steven Walker Acting Director, Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), Submitted to the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Defense, May 3, 2017." Available at: https://www.darpa.mil/about-us/testimony

61. See Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), "Social Media in Strategic Communication (SMISC) (Archived)." Available at: https://www.darpa.mil/program/social-media-in-strategic-communication

62. "Background to "Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections": The Analytic Process and Cyber Incident Attribution," January 6, 2017.

63. See, for instance, the text of H.R.3364 – "Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act," 115th Congress (2017–2018).

64. "Conférence de presse conjointe avec M. Vladimir Poutine," le 29 Mai 2017. Available at: http://www.elysee.fr/videos/conference-de-presse-conjointe-avec-m-vladimir-poutine/Author's translation

65. James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49, no.3 (June 1995):379–414.

66. "Doubt," maintained Peirce, "is an uneasy and dissatisfied state from which we struggle to free ourselves and pass into the state of belief; while the latter is a calm and satisfactory state which we do not wish to avoid, or to change to a belief in anything else. On the contrary, we cling tenaciously, not merely to believing, but to believing just what we do believe." Charles S. Peirce, "Illustrations of the Logic of Science: First Paper. The Fixation of Belief," *Popular Science Monthly* 12 (November 1877):5.

67. Alan K. Henrikson, "The Emanation of Power," *International Security* 6, no.1 (Summer 1981):158.

68. As referred to in Mark R. Leary, "Making Sense of Self-Esteem," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 8, no.1 (February 1999):32–35.

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81. Ibid., 38.

82. "Kennedy Decision in Vietnam Noted: Reston Lays War Step-Up to Talk with Khrushchev," *The New York Times*, January 18, 1966, 4.

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Conceptualizing Power Credibility

1   The Rosenau Theorem

In crafting a new theory of international politics by positing great powers as *credibility maximizers*, I attempt to solve what can be called *the Rosenau Theorem*. The latter defines what James Rosenau articulated as the need for an IR concept able to synthesize historical ("vertical") inquiry with environmental ("horizontal") probe by "diagonal" analysis. The difficulty in crafting a conclusive diagonal theory stems from the indefinite nature of the generalized environmental context, which presents "self-sustaining processes that arise out of the interdependencies of the various objects, actors, and situations, quite apart from any connections these may have with the environed society."[1]

Acting as an independent and objective variable, generalized context, therefore, differs from specific environmental situations in that the latter, while also acting as stimuli in foreign policy behavior, at the same time, unlike the former, *depend* upon society's conduct. Referring to an organizational theory of "ideal types" of environment, Rosenau emphasized the cognitive utility of a "turbulent field environment" that, in his view, most comprehensively reflects characteristics of the contemporary international environment.

In the virtue of its entropic nature, the dominant feature of the turbulent environment is uncertainty. The behavioral response to uncertainty, the theory holds, is convergence of organizational units (societies). In the

case of modern societies, it can unfold, for example, in the form of multi-lateral institutions.[2]

Drawing on this approach, I attempt to construct a concept with a greater explanatory power to discern the international currents. I define the ensuing environment as a synergy of what Ferdinand Tönnies called *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society).[3] Each type of environment determines a certain mode of interactive (international) societal behavior.

The first environmental type presents a relationship among family or residential group members. Perpetuated by kinship and affinity, it enjoys a high level of trust among them. Highly hierarchical in nature, this type of social organization presumes, however, elaboration of adroit mechanisms to legitimize status inequality of its members. This is achieved through adoption of rituals, symbols, and language enabling even individuals of outside descent to inherit the privileged ranks and power status in localized communities. Characteristically, development of the means to ensure veracity of the ruler's authority in such cases can be exemplified by the pre-Hispanic Maya who practiced marriage alliances between nobilities from anthropologically different lineages. Such alliances contributed to constructing images of legitimate authority as rooted in the pertinent ancestry.[4]

The second type of organization, *Gesellschaft*, close to that of a city, constitutes a complex system of functional ties among the "citizens." To regulate them, it necessitates a set of rules which are *enforced* by legal authorities. To be recognized as such, they need legitimacy and credibility. In inter-city and inter-village relations, both types of organization require a commonly acknowledged system of rules. It can be grounded on recognition of a central authority, underpinning a *Gemeinschaft*-like type of order, which at the international level can be better matched by an empire. Alternatively, in the realm of world politics, the *Gesellschaft* model represents a consensus-based international system rested upon international law and protected by a concert of the strongest status-quo nations against revisionist dissents.

Noteworthy, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* are not mutually exclusive types of social organization. Moreover, their notions were used interchangeably by Tönnies, whose scholarship, greatly impacted by English rational philosophy, appeared at times confused with its own definitions, and, as Niall Bond has persuasively demonstrated in his intelligent study on Tönnies, Hobbes, and Locke, even took paradoxical overtures.[5] Commenting on Tönnies' essays on Hobbes, Bond, for instance, notes that

Here, '*Gemeinschaft*' refers to pre-liberal monarchical absolutism, instituted to restrain human egoism; '*Gesellschaft*' to post-absolutist liberal constitutionalism, which accepts that mankind can be elevated to the status of

free citizenry. To those accustomed to hearing that Tönnies' notion of '*Gesellschaft*' corresponds to Hobbes' view of society, it may be surprising to note that in Tonnies' *Notes on the Philosophy of Hobbes*, not '*Gesellschaft*,' but '*Gemeinschaft*' was the Hobbesian concept.[6]

Consider that both systems necessitate the credibility of their governing elements to sustain functionality and avoid disorder. However, while in *Gemeinschaft* authority is imposed on men, in *Gesellschaft* men choose authority. There is a dichotomy in the previous and emerging types of world order—one that arose out of victory and forceful imposition of authority over others, and another that demands legitimate proof of the right to lead, and, therefore, depends upon the credibility of the claimants.

For conceptual purposes, it would be useful to discern the first type as being closer to vertical-originated type of "hard," Hobbesian-type behavior. The second type induces horizontal-driven behavioral styles that prescribe "soft," Lockean-type conduct. As each type of environmental generalization constrains the other in terms of its *modus operandi*, their co-existence results in a blended mode of behavior, which I call *virtual toughness.* This hybrid type of behavior, epitomizing the marriage between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, emerges as a major venue to apply the policy aimed at *maximization of the self's power credibility.*

The following thesis is of major importance in our discourse: in the ensuing era of global social homogenization, the simultaneous co-existence and competition between the normative attributes of credibility perpetuated by different value systems in the major liberal and illiberal states is poised to determine the nature of the evolving world order.

In an alternative approach to *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, the first type of social organization can be viewed as an initial stage in social evolution with a relatively low demand for credibility affirmation. The power of *paterfamilias* stems from the absolutist status of his position in the family hierarchy; the power of a monarch is unlikely to be disputed by his subordinates. In a *Gesellschaft*-type structured society with a complex system of competitive social relationships among individuals, credibility is a major condition of their social status and material reward. Likewise, a *Gesellschaft*-based anarchic international system, underpinned by the authority of great powers and contingent upon the nature of their dynamic interactions with each other and the rest of the world, necessitates a continuous proof of their credibility. An intricate social norm, power credibility rests upon a set of variables associated with trustworthiness of power attributes.[7]

2   The *Theory of Power Credibility* and the Patterns of Great Power Conduct

The foregoing observations allow us to construct the *Theory of Power Credibility (TPC)* as a theoretical explanation of great power behavioral pattern at a certain stage in her power cycle, and establish their causal nexus. The concept re-evaluates the two major realist explanations of great power behavior—offensive and defensive realism (OR and DR respectively)—and integrates them with the power cycle theories. At first sight, the OR and DR look as contending explications of the major drivers determining great power behavior. While OR claims that they are power maximizers and seek hegemony, DR argues that they are most of all concerned by their security, and act, respectively, as security maximizers. I contend that both schools are correct. What missed attention of their proponents though is that they are describing comportments attributive to *different stages* in great power cycle.

The stage of power growth/maximization is reflected by an upward part of the curve, and at its peak is culminated by the state's victory in a major war. The phase of power decline is embodied by a slope line, and it is at this stage that policymakers, realizing their state's vulnerability, focus on maximizing its security. The logic of the downswing trajectory in relative power is that it prompts two different behavioral patterns that are inverse to the reduction of relative power: at the upper slope of the curve, the structural changes prod policymakers to concentrate on security maximization, whereas at some point on the lower line of the curve, which I call the beginning of a *credibility stage*, powerholders become increasingly preoccupied with maximization of their power veracity. There is, however, a certain difficulty in determining the beginning of the last phase. Although comportment at the downward stage presents different types of behavior, the distinction between the A and B phases may be subtle (Table 9.1).

The curve point marking a major power's behavioral transformation from security to credibility maximization reflects deep structural pressures embodied by a game-changing event or a series of events. The shift in great power conduct emerges at the continuous downswing movement of her relative capability curve, and, unlike the second inflection point in Doran's concept,[8] does not indicate a change in the curve's direction. Note that modification of state conduct is not a mechanical development but a complex social, intellectual, and cultural process which is triggered by the ruling elite's awareness of their state's fading actual power, subsequent

Table 9.1   Conceptualization of Power Cycle-Comportment Causality

Stages of Power Cycle	Types of Comportment	Theoretical Explanation
Upward	Power maximization	Offensive Realism
Downward A	Security maximization	Defensive Realism
Downward B	Credibility maximization	Theory of Power Credibility

Notes: Downward A—as its relative power decline ensues, the self becomes alarmed by challenges to its physical safety.

Downward B—as the decline progresses, the self becomes increasingly concerned with the credibility of its power image in the eyes of the important others.

Source: Created by the author.

resentment, fear of ramifications for its prestige and international ranking, and cognition of the need to correct or at least alleviate this trend by bolstering the state's perceived power. Furthermore, the practical application of this mode can be slowed down or even obstructed by various structural circumstances that can be seen by decision makers as unsurmountable barriers in pursuit of policies aimed at gaining the maximum credibility premium on its power. One example can be what one might see as the pressing need to eliminate North Korea's nuclear and missile threats to the United States and its Asian allies by a decisive resort to force, yet despite President Trump's bellicose statements, the geostrategic location of and the level of militarization in North Korea makes a potential US military strike on it fraught with enormous risks of unacceptable costs for US allies—South Korea and Japan—so that the combination of these variables has ensued as a strong structural impediment to maximizing US credibility as of a "superpower" in the Eastern Hemisphere in the long term.

Among the game-changing events that, for example, prompted the foreign policy transitions to credibility-seeking strategies by Washington and Moscow, one should indicate those that publicly exposed the vulnerability of their nationally and globally entrenched images of strength and self-confidence. Shocking events like the launch of the Soviet "Sputnik" in 1957, disaster at the Bay of Pigs in 1961, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and failure in the Vietnam War have not only undermined confidence of US elite, but have also shaken America's image of universal preponderance. Likewise, powerholders in the Soviet Russia—since the passing of the USSR's relative power peak by the end of the 1970s—experienced a similar debilitating condition as the result of the unsuccessful invasion in Afghanistan, collapse of the communist bloc in the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), and eventual demise of the Soviet

state in 1991. Less dramatic, yet no less alarming, the developments in other great powers (though at the earlier stages of their power cycles) demanded a common paradigmatic shift from their traditional policy of power and security maximizations through costly endeavors to a new behavioral pattern aimed at image consolidation to be accomplished by impressive yet much cheaper policy undertakings.

The length and intensity of the ebbs and flows shaping the configuration of a national power curve are subject to the impact of numerous exogenous and endogenous variables—social, political, economic, technological, and environmental—and their combinations. Their unpredictable currents can accelerate or slow down power shifts, while respectively compressing or extending different segments of the upswing, peak, and downswing phases of the power wave.

The task of the present scholarship, therefore, is to understand and explicate patterns of social practices—in the case of great power comportment—through the stages of power cycle: power expansion–driven, security concerns–motivated, and credibility reassertion–stipulated.

While the morphing of the first phase of decline to the second varies among major powers depending upon the specific timeline of their individual power cycles, all the principal powers except China have found themselves in a growingly distressing mode since the late 1960s. The United States, failing in Vietnam, plunged into a deep moral and political crisis. European economies, shocked by the Arab oil embargo, began losing the battle with America and Japan for technological and market preponderance. And the Soviets became increasingly alarmed by the instability in the communist bloc instigated by the Prague spring, deeply troubled by border clashes with China, and unpleasantly surprised by Sino-American rapprochement.

With multiplication of forces generating anarchy and chaos, the realignment in the system of international relations continues to evolve at an unprecedented speed. As the result, the magnitude of control over the structure of the international system the great powers had purportedly enjoyed has been drastically shrinking. The most frequently cited factor accounting for great power fading is the relative rise of other states. However, there is a platitude of other factors that in the last decades have exacerbated universal doubts as to the ability of great power governments to efficiently pursue their socio-political, organizational, and security functions at the global level. The void of their power is exemplified, for instance, by the rise of radical militant groups such as al-Qaeda and Islamic State of

Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The transnational terrorist threats add up to the list of other non-traditional security challenges including proliferation of WMD, climate change, depletion of natural resources, irregular migration and refugee flows, and ecologically unsustainable growth of world population.

As the result of these and other poorly controllable factors, and, above all, of their synergy, the Hobbesian image of Leviathan's omnipotence has become increasingly shaken. Moreover, doubts about the very vitality of states in the era of globalization put the value of existence of the large groups of national bureaucracy into question, thus transferring theoretical issues of *state decay* in the new century into existential ones.[9] With their authority and power under question, governments have concentrated their efforts in finding new ways to demonstrate their social value. The unfolding trend of our time is that the national resources at hand even in the supposedly strongest among states growingly mismatch the objectively growing needs in promoting common good at the national and global levels. Facing this eventuality, statesmen are keener than ever to apply cost-efficient means of public policy to exhibit their credibility and secure public trust in validity and efficiency of state institutions, for example, by adroitly manipulating opportunities in thwarting off what one may define as *common evil*.

The last century has illuminated a remarkable realignment of primary objectives in great power policy which can be framed into three consecutive stages—from indiscriminate expansion of their power to maximization of their national security guarantees to sustaining their power credibility.

2.1   Stage I: Power Maximization

The first stage accounts for the pre-WWI period of imperial policies characterized by the quest for territorial acquisition and international hegemony. The stability of the Eurocentric international system based on the almost century-long "concert of great powers" became undermined by tectonic shifts in the continental balance of power. It is vital here to recall the most significant among them. The first group of power transformations in the pre-WWI Europe resulted from a series of military defeats by the Ottoman Empire which paved the way for liberation and national independence of some of her colonies like Serbia and Bulgaria, yet facilitated occupation and ultimate annexation of her other provinces like Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary. Prussia-led unification of Germany and the consequential preponderance of her relative economic and military capabilities over her immediate peers including Britain and France presented another poten-

tially explosive European novelty. The relative decline of France and Britain, in its turn, projected on their diminished abilities to uphold their vast colonial possessions. Last, but not the least, the European geostrategic environment became even more perplexed with Russia's ascendance as Austria-Hungary's immediate competitor for influence in the Balkans and as a challenger to German ambitions in Europe.

The turbulent power dynamics in Europe by the first decade of the last century did not look distinctly promising for sustaining international peace; the concerted international order in the Old Continent became swiftly eroded by great power struggle for domination, growing anarchy, and pervasive mistrust. The major European players, however, likely viewed the ensuing transition as a window of opportunity for them to restore or maximize their hegemonic power rather than as a systemic source of grave security threats to the continental peace. The swelling lust for imperial domination was objectively setting the loose and shaky foundation of the European system on fire. With sparks from blazers of animosity and zeal for supremacy across the Old Continent in the early twentieth century, one does not need to have a big imagination to suggest that if not for the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, it would most certainly suffice for any other international calamity in Europe to ensue to pour oil on flames of the endured bilateral rivalries. Under these structural conditions an all-out European war was imminent.

The interwar period featured the rapid empowerment of Germany and the Soviet Russia as the British and French statesmen attempted to consolidate post-WWI peace in Europe by promotion of liberal institutionalism. Embodied by the League of Nations, the latter turned out to be an insufficient remedy to overcome the pattern of hegemonic struggle which only extended its scope to the Pacific. After the defeat of the Axis powers, an alliance between the victor-states proved to be short-lived, and the repeat of the hegemonic war paradigm seemed almost inevitable. However, the advent of nuclear weapons presented a systemic barrier for, perhaps, otherwise plausible WWIII.

2.2   Stage II: Security Maximization

The decades following the end of WWII manifested the transformation of great power striving for hegemony into a new strategic paradigm. With the advent of the nuclear age, great powers' lust for power collided with the imperatives of survival, and with their governments' cognition of its

suicidal nature, in the first nuclear age sublimated into a zeal for impenetrable security. The exponential rise of nuclear weapon stockpiles and the unceasing modernization of conventional armory soon became seen as the ultimate conditions of national safety. Unable to efficiently penetrate into each other's spheres of geopolitical influence without risking to cause an all-out disaster, the great powers posited bolstering their strategic deterrent as an overarching national interest. The new trend proceeded to evolve as the United States and the Soviet Union, wary of testing their strengths in a direct military clash (conceptualized in a doctrine of Mutual Assured Destruction, or MAD), began to actively engage in proxy wars against each other.

These wars, irrelevant as they were for the superpowers' existential security, were seen as instruments to strengthen their power credibility in the eyes of each other. However, the first serious existential clash between the nuclear superpowers, the Cuban Missile Crisis, proved that security maximization through the arms race, which I call a *quantitative bias*, cannot *per se* grant the sense of national safety. The subsequent security regimes including codification of nuclear testing and reduction of strategic atomic weapons became paralleled by efforts to achieve a qualitative technological lead.

2.3   Stage III: Credibility Maximization

After the demise of the Soviet Union the pattern of security maximization has been substituted with a different policy agenda. At the time when no visible military existential threat to their security appeared to be emerging on the strategic horizon, the great powers have begun facing status issues. Questions as to their rightness in occupying privileged ranks in the world hierarchy as the veto-empowered members of the influential UN Security Council and growing reservations concerning legitimacy of their nuclear exceptionalism have added to doubts as to their resolve to risk their own security in protecting allies as well as to endurance of their ability to restrain anarchy and provide global leadership.

Caused by unfavorable structural shifts in the global power distribution and the following cognition of their ramifications for their grandeur, *credibility maximization*, thus, began to evolve as the core objective of the post–Cold War great power policy. In the age of strategic uncertainty, it is from the perspective of their credibility perception by the important others that statesmen in the great powers elaborate and pursue their foreign and security policies; everything—the tone of political declarations, reaction to inconsequential international disputes, commitments to obli-

gations, forms and frequency of force displays, economic sustainability, financial solvency, the size and structure of military expenditures, and the direction of and progress in technological advancement—appears to matter in promoting a credible power image. Unlike during the Cold War with the arms race as the dominant feature of the great power contest, the current stage of their relationship is marked by credibility competition. In this virtue, the evolving era of international relations can be defined as the *Credibility War*.

Of course, as the tracks of every consequential epoch can be found in the preceding stages, concerns over credibility were more or less present at the earlier stages of principal states' power cycles, and can be tracked down in their past policies. Thus, on the eve of WWI, both Russia and Germany have passed through the stages of dysfunctional crisis learning that prompted them to demonstrate resolve at a later juncture. Kaiser Wilhelm's famous *diesmal falle ich nicht um* ('I will not chicken out this time') adage can serve as an illustration of his obsession with Berlin's credibility after a series of humiliating retreats during the Moroccan crises of the 1900s.[10]

Likewise, deliberations of his Russian cousin, Nicholas II, were not at a small degree shaped by the fear of backing down in the face of threats to the brother-Serbs by Austria-Hungary after Russia had been forced to comply with Berlin's and Vienna's demands to legally accept annexation of Bosnia by the latter.

Roughly half a century later, considerations of power credibility appeared to have shaped decisions of the Truman and Kennedy administrations to engage US military in Korea and Vietnam. Yet, the existence of credibility-seeking motives in actions of some great powers at the earlier stages of their power cycles should not overshadow prevalence of other incentives in their behavior. For example, in the beginning of the last century, the ascending powers, Germany and Russia, were primarily driven by fervor for hegemonic power, and their concerns over security and credibility presented secondary, albeit vital, determinants of their strategic behavior. At the same time, the descending great powers, Britain, France, and Austria-Hungary, were contrarily above all concerned with their national security and power credibility. During the Cold War, decision makers in Washington, Moscow, London, Paris, and Beijing were definitely apprehensive of their international power and prestige. The fear of nuclear annihilation, however, was underlying their top concerns, and precipitated the need to focus their policy efforts on providing for existential security of their nations primarily through strengthening their second-strike capabilities.

3   THE *TPC'S* ESSENCE

The essence of the *TPC* is in that, at a stage of decline, great powers are tending to subordinate their policies to the needs of sustaining their international status by manifestation of their power credibility. As power cycles of the major states are not synchronized, their turn for credibility policies occurs when some of their peers in the upper phases of the power curve are seeking to expand their power, while the others, in the beginning of downturn, are keen to maximize their security. For example, given the incongruence of power cycles in Britain, France, and the United States, the Europeans entered their credibility manifestation phase on the eve of WWII, while the Americans became gradually engrossed in the credibility policy with the outburst of the Korean War.

Currently, all Western great powers plus Russia are in a relative power slump, and their subordination to the credibility-seeking imperative constitutes the major common determinant of their foreign and security policies that, against all odds, still continue in many respects to shape the system of international relations.

The credibility theory enables not only to explain the declining powers' behavior, but allows for predicting its dominant pattern. Since statesmen in descending powers are seeking to maximize the credibility of their powers' images in the eyes of the others, one can suggest that their actions may signal exaggerated ambitions. This can pose problems for both sides of international interaction as one party (the source) may *overplay* while another (the addressee) may *overreact*; ramifications of these propensities may be detrimental to security of both actors and lead to negative trade-offs for each side.

Additionally, while descendants would seek to impress the significant others, their relative capabilities will continue to constitute objective constraints in pursuit of credibly strong images. Therefore, to look persuasively credible, states would need to consolidate their power through its legitimization at national (e.g., mobilization of popular support in the form of anti- Japanese demonstrations in China during the peak of her territorial dispute with Japan in the East China Sea in 2012), and international levels (e.g. the United States appealing to the United Nations on the eve of American invasion in Iraq in 2003), while striving to increase their tangible capabilities.[11] There are no substantial grounds to doubt that manifestations of resoluteness in pursuit of publicized interests will remain critically important attributes in displays of the great powers' credibility in the decades to come.

The evolvement of credibility engagement looks as follows. Initially, as the productive forces of a strong state outgrow its territorial borders, other nations increase their dependency on its market and economic performance. With time, its economic and organizational preponderance translates into political influence and geostrategic primacy. At this stage, no one doubts its power credibility—it speaks for itself. As economic expansion of big nations prompts redistribution of power capabilities from the center to periphery, triggering production and ingenuity forces in weaker nations, new centers of industrial advancement and wealth begin to emerge. Although the imminent relative exhaustion of tangible capabilities and demographic slowdown begin taking toll on power growth, diminution of its international credibility is still not evident, and statesmen can largely ignore the voices of alarmists. However, the mighty structural forces continue to inexorably reduce the relative power of big nations which, to their frustration, sooner or later are bound to face the growing discrepancy between their objective power and its desired images.

At this point, officials become more receptive to concerns of epistemic communities, and initial strategies aimed at arresting the loss of credibility are elaborated. Lastly, unable to sustain their composite relative power at a pace sufficient to make up for capability-credibility gap, the major states resort to policies aimed at propelling the critical elements of reputation for power. To amplify their power credibility to its decline-preexistent levels, they seek to exploit in full their remnant competitive advantages over other nations. In addition to their traditionally superior technological and military faculties, social communication, intelligence, and diplomacy emerge as their top priorities. In practical terms, pursuit of power credibility–seeking strategy accentuates: (a) upholding competitive edge in military capabilities to maintain the image of hard power primacy; (b) exploiting privileged diplomatic standing in multilateral institutions and forums to sustain a high bargaining leverage over the significant others; (c) waging pretentious wars with *a priori* weaker political entities to uphold universal perceptions of strategic resolve and impress powerful peer contenders; (d) using mass media and social networks to sustain brand images of national power; (e) affecting foreign policies and domestic politics of other nations by covert operations.

On balance, these practices enable big nations to temporarily retain their power images credibility. In some cases, they may even assist great powers to "freeze" their status quo beyond the ascending phase of their power cycle.

Thus, the proposed theory derives from a conjecture that establishes a correlation between an independent variable, power capabilities, and dependent variable, state behavior, in the fashion contrary to one proposed by neoclassical realism. The latter purports that the level of state ambitions is directly proportionate to its material capabilities: should the capabilities increase, ambitions rise; once they decrease, ambitions fall. The concept put forward in this volume rejects this generalization as erred at least in its second part, and suggests instead that ambitions of a state whose leaders are accustomed to its primacist role in world politics are bound to rise as its material capabilities relatively fall. It is necessary here to make an important caveat by drawing attention to the empirical fact that the rise in material capabilities has not necessarily translated into the utmost form of political ambition in the pursuit of self-interest such as changing the world order by force. The United States, for example, despite its impressive rise in economic power through its gilded age, had the weakest inclination for military adventurism among the so-called imperialist states in the first decades of the twentieth century.[12]

While identifying capabilities or power as the independent variable and credibility as the dependent variable is instrumental in explicating the pattern of state behavior, to grasp the effect of credibility on power one should consider the former as an independent variable, and the latter as a dependent one. It would allow then to track changes in the international system resulting from actors' urge for credibility. It would then become clear that with dissipation of power due to globalization, the desire to look credible becomes an organizing logic of policy at sub-system levels. If considered as a cause of international change, what can be its inferred effects on the system? Given that credibility-seeking is not necessarily a property of human rationality and can be equally motivated by emotions, it can bring what Edward Lorenz described as sensitive touches to the system.[13] Such touches are bound to produce complex and visibly destabilizing effects on the system. Because effects of policy efforts to boost their power images can be controversial, actors are bound to perpetuate their credibility-seeking policy with unusual zeal throughout the phase of their objective power diminution. The strength of their influence on the phenomenon of power would depend on a variety of factors including their creativity, attractiveness to the important others as well as the degree of compatibility between the promoted elements of soft power and the universal values and norms. Thus, much would depend on the level and scope the credibility instruments are institutionalized and perceived as legitimate

by the important others. An ability to shape the nature of the world Zeitgeist is certainly correlated with actors' material capabilities but does not entirely depend on them. Cultural and social appeal of the states as well as their ability to propagate their advantages is poised to play a no less significant role than such attributes of material capabilities as economic magnitude and military might.

While describing theories as "a set of laws pertaining to a particular behavior or a phenomenon,"[14] Kenneth Waltz contended that the pattern of relationship between a (an independent variable) and b (a dependent variable) has to be repetitive so that once found in the past, it would suggest enough grounds to expect its repetition in the future with high probability. The aforementioned behavioral pattern of major states is based on the study of the recurring modes of state conduct at the downward phase of their power cycle, and enables to assert the high probability of its repetition in the future. However, the proposed *TPC* in Waltz's terms would be classified "reductionist" rather than systemic for on par with findings purported by political science it employs those suggested by non-political disciplines like psychology and neuroscience to account for a political phenomenon. Its reductionist nature also stems from application of two non-systemic levels of analysis, namely unit and individual levels along with systemic level, whereas the latter alone would, as Waltz believed, suffice to construe the laws governing international politics.

4   CHALLENGES TO CREDIBILITY

But how does manipulation of power credibility affect international security? What happens if a power credibility "bubble" pops? What policy means should be prioritized to arrest the decline of power veracity? These issues present serious challenges for every major power government. The US government, for instance, fashions the foregoing practices, by investing hundreds of billions of dollars "[to] maintain," in the words of the American President, "the best military the world has ever known," and continuing to "invest in new [hard power] capabilities" on the premises that the maintenance of US power primacy constitutes an indispensable underpinning of international stability.[15] For the United States to refute this approach would mean to voluntarily abate its quest for leadership and let other powers fill in the void, supposedly, to the detriment of US interests.

The logic underlying this outlook, however, looks inconclusive. First, there is no evidence suggesting that other nations seek to perform constabulary and leadership functions on the scale similar to America's. Although China whose GDP (purchasing power parity), for example, surpassed that of the United States, is commonly perceived as US immediate contender for global leadership, there are no serious indications that the Chinese policymakers see pragmatic utility in assuming the pertinent tasks. Rather than viewing it as a privilege, they tend to regard it as a product of malicious invocations by China's foreign adversaries, a kind of a new imperialist plot aimed at harming the Chinese economy and state by burdening them with the costly and wearing missions.

Secondly, even if China were eventually willing to succeed America in taking on the burdens of global leadership, it would hardly be in US interests to relinquish its functions or share them with China. While such a propensity would bear negatively on the Americans' self-esteem, they can hardly trust that an illiberal political regime in Beijing would want to maintain the world order in line with the norms and values of Western liberal democracy.

In which way should America react to her ongoing relative decline, given that the scope and density of the emerging global challenges are beyond her ability to deliver? Should she voluntarily abandon her primacist claims as isolationists suggest? From their viewpoint, sustaining primacy would be non-feasible for the United States; hence, it should be considered inexpedient. However, one can rightfully look at the issue differently: while abolishing primacism *might* be expedient, there are strong doubts that it *would* be feasible. This is because seeking primacy is not only a product of policy but an intrinsic function of the American culture, institutions, and economy.

Although international experts, like those from the World Intellectual Property Organization, have exposed a relative waning of US positions in science and technology (S&T), the level of ingenuity in the United States is projected to stay unbeatable for many decades ahead.[16] Despite serious structural issues, aggravated by the financial crisis of 2008, US economic model, a recent scholarship persuasively argues, still has a strong potential to generate growth and innovation.[17]

The international system is permeated with myriads of socially constructed images, and those of power are mirroring both material properties and ideational ethos. The latter, though, are reflections of the increasing contention among the Kantian, Lockean, and Hobbesian worldviews of

the national elites and the respective models they adopt to substantiate them. The degrees of the credible implementation of those are, however, dissimilar. As long as the strongest states continue to be the major exporters of images pertaining to *Realpolitik* rather than *Moralpolitik*, it seems unlikely that the world's Hobbesian Zeitgeist would sink to oblivion.

In the words of Joseph Nye, in the information age "[p]olitics has become a contest of competitive credibility," and today a winner is the one who gains the utmost reliability.[18] The images of power credibility are supposedly sustainable through repetitive information flows that enable inducers to affect the significant others in compliance with the Asch Paradigm.[19]

The common wisdom suggests that for the self to make the others see it in a preferable way, its image should look attractive. Parsimoniously, credibility can be defined as *social strength* which makes the others believe that the self is strong, good-willing, reliable, and decisive. The contemporary behaviorist approach to studying power credibility in IR owes much to John French's and Bertram Raven's pioneering scholarship on the bases of power in the then-ensuing field of social psychology. As a vantage point, they defined power as the difference between the maximum of force an inducer (A) can apply to bring an inducee (B) in conformity of opinion with A, on the one hand, and the maximum of force B can accumulate in resistance to A's pressure, on the other. Should A's compelling ability reach its maximum to no avail, the only way to extract compliance is to decrease B's resistance.

French and Raven established and examined five power foundations: "*attraction power* based on B's liking for A, *expert power* based on B's perception that A has superior knowledge and information, *reward power* based on A's ability to mediate rewards for B, *coercive power* based on A's ability to mediate punishments for B, and *legitimate power* based on B's belief that A has a right to prescribe his behavior or opinions."[20] They further reckoned that in the case of legitimate power, the conformity of B would depend on conformity of the others in B's group in recognizing A's authority, while in the case of coercive power it will depend on B's individual perception of A's ability to inflict punishment on B.[21]

We can, therefore, surmise that in the first case, A's power credibility depends upon *the fact* of its recognition by *many*, while in the second case it depends upon B's individual *perception*. Furthermore, as it was experimentally demonstrated, the very fact of A occupying a leading position in the structure results in A's legitimation by the others.[22] What follows from these observations, if applied to the P5 states, is that the very fact of their

special positions in the UN system of global governance alone makes them legitimate and credible international leaders. However, for a great power to extract compliance from defectors, she needs to make them believe in her punitive ability. Even though coercion does not reduce legitimacy, as was shown by French and Raven, it still represents a potentially costlier way of exercising influence in comparison with an agreeable conformity.[23] Therefore, it would make sense for great powers to decrease opponents' resistance by inducing positive incentives for compliance. We will explore the credibility attributes further.

Even if one confines the notion of credibility to *expert power*, as suggested by French, it would be still reasonable to conceive it as a platform for other attributes of social power, such as reward, legitimacy, and coercion.[24]

5   Prerequisites of Conformity

As shown by Raven, avoiding group rejection is a strong incentive for individual conformity with group opinion.[25] Projecting this generalization to the system of international relations, one can assume that group influence can serve as an alternative method to unilateral pressure in bringing a deviant state into compliance. Both approaches can be exemplified by Washington's combined practices of dealing with the "rogue states," such as North Korea and Iran, singularly and through multilateral groups of negotiators (the six-party talks with North Korea, and the P5+1 group negotiations with Iran). We can surmise then that the wider the international homogeneity on a certain international issue involving an individual great power and a deviant state, the stronger the former's credibility as perceived by the latter.

Since the last three power bases in the French and Raven model are "position-based" (in the case of states, rank- or status-based) while the first two are, as Mitchell Nesler and his co-workers defined, "individual-based," an ideally credible state is, therefore, one that is *perceived* by the others as simultaneously having reward, coercive and legitimate attributes of power, while being competent and resolute in applying them to meet its commitments.[26] It is often the case that images of power differ from reality: if the self suddenly became able to see the world in objective and precise fashion, it would, perhaps, be quite surprised to realize that its perceptions of the others' power capabilities frequently mismatch their physical capacities. But since the social world we live in is in many ways a product of human imagination, passions, and biases, political actors claiming superiority can quite

successfully perpetuate their images of primacy by "rightly" communicating them to the significant others. Indeed, as Richard Lebow has underscored, "[f]or purposes of status and of balancing, the *perceptions of power* appear to be more important than actual power or capabilities" [emphasis added].[27] But it is not only for these purposes that the concerned self seeks to elaborate efficient means to dissuade the important others' doubts in authenticity of its skills and strengths.

Diminution of the self's power credibility, as history shows, can have serious ramifications for its security and integrity. It can, for example, embolden aggressors, trigger centrifugal trends in alliances, and in case of empires—as Martin Wight, for instance, has persuasively argued in his essay on the causes of the British Commonwealth collapse—even prompt their dissolution. Referring to Edmund Burke, who emphasized "equal protection" of colonies as a premise of empire sustainability, Wight pinpoints that WWII elucidated Britain's inability to ensure equal protection for her dominions to which her metropolitan status was committing her rulers. The discrepancy between Britain's perceived supremacy and the lack of sufficient resources to meet London's extended security obligations was bound to bear negatively on the country's standing and security in the long run. With her power image seriously compromised in the dependent nations, Britain was unlikely to be perceived as credibly strong by her adversaries. Therefore, her inability to preserve the command of loyalties in the Commonwealth tarnished her reputation for international preponderance.[28]

Learning from the lessons of *Pax Britannica*, American, European, Chinese, and Russian policy managers have every incentive to secure their international primacy by nurturing their alliance systems and displaying reliability for their respective members. But in pursuing this policy they have to inescapably deal with the issues that every empire in the world history had had to be dealing with (so far unsuccessfully)—the problems of limited resources and the risks of overstretching.

To pass a test on veracity of her power, a great power must, therefore, meet two primary conditions. First, as was noted above, her government should fulfill its obligations. Second, she needs to correspond to her purported image. The first condition presumes "walking the talk"—consistency in following up on commitments. The second one entails a match between her image and others' expectations; a claimant for a role of a knight should not only have a horse and a sword, but also behave in an especially courageous and honorable way distinguishing knighthood from other classes.

Talcott Parsons emphasized the role of congruence between mutual expectations of communicating agents in achieving "optimization of gratification."[29] Past experiences in dealing with reliable partners allow for predictability of their behavior, hence enabling the self to efficiently plan its policy. The functions of policy are to influence perceptions of the significant others and control their behavior. By retaining credibility, one can perform these functions with a relatively lesser amount of resources, or, using Deutsch's terminology, achieve a condition of a self-enhancing system able to maintain resilience (in our case—great power primacy) under a changing environment.[30]

To these ends, policymakers in *A* can resort to explicit communication or implicit signaling to *B*. The task of *A* is deliver the desired message to *B* uncorrupted. Note that authentic message reproduction in *B* depends upon compatibility between *A*'s and *B*'s cognition and value systems. As established by neuroscience, human brain contains mirror neurons enabling people to adequately perceive emotions of others. However, social experience, value systems, and operational codes of decision makers in *A* and *B* are not necessarily identical. Messages that *A* designs to cause *B*'s compliance may, instead, incite its resistance. The cognitive bias of *B*, presents, therefore, a major problem in communication. As the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann argued in substantiating his "risk theory," even the most comprehensive and seemingly persuasive information cannot make an opinionated party change its views.[31] What this assumption appears to overlook though is that a messenger, at least hypothetically, is able to form the addressee's views beyond the framework of a single message by impacting the worldview of national elites in a propitious manner.

It would not, therefore, be an exaggeration to suggest that the major condition for *A*'s credibility for *B* is *B*'s affinity with *A*. For example, historians and political scientists have long been puzzled by the mystery of Stalin's invariably dismissive reaction to warnings about Germany's imminent invasion of the Soviet Union. Note that the exact date of the Wehrmacht strike, June 22, 1941, was communicated to Stalin well in advance from different sources. And yet, neither Churchill's forewarnings, nor numerous memorandums by the Soviet intelligence, nor testimonies by German defectors, nor assessments by the Red Army military command, nor, finally, the suspicious concentration of the German divisions near the Soviet border in spring 1941—nobody and nothing could make him believe that invasion was a decided matter.

The reason was not only in Stalin's deeply entrenched hostility toward Britain and paranoid suspicion toward his own entourage. Perhaps, most important was the other extreme of Stalin's psychological bias—his limitless, albeit hidden, affinity toward Hitler. In May 1941, Hitler addressed Stalin with a letter in which gave his "word of honor" that Berlin's intentions toward the Soviets are of benevolent nature, and that the massive relocation of German troops to the east is needed for protecting them from the reach of British strategic aviation.[32] The message—in content and tone so strikingly contradicting to the alarming information received by Stalin from 87 (!) autonomous sources that it would have looked totally incredible to anyone else aware of the facts—looked *perfectly credible* to the Soviet dictator, most likely because his infernal psyche perceived Hitler as his soul mate.

6   Cognitive Bias

The *TPC* introduced in this book stipulates that policymakers in a declining great power are prone to engage in risky endeavors to the end of sustaining their nation's privileged status quo to countervail downgrading systemic pressures. This pattern of behavior stems from cognitive bias in choice selection posited by prospect theory: people are prone to "risk aversion in choices involving sure gains and to risk seeking in choices involving sure losses."[33] The *TPC* posits that in international system transitions, which may last long enough to constitute defined historical periods, upholding a strong image of power presents the most natural way for a state attempting to arrest a rapid decline of its status.

The *TPC* is close to realism in that it accentuates the role of states in international system. Yet, it is inconsistent with its offensive and defensive streams that overemphasize the role of hegemonic incentives in the new age. Contrarily to offensive realism that postulates the hegemony-seeking as an omnipresent policy imperative, the power credibility theory argues that the arrival of nuclear weapons has caused a fundamental restriction on major states' behavior. Useless for the purposes of *ultima ratio regum*, yet instrumental as power equalizers, nuclear weapons have emerged as structural impediments in achieving hegemony by any aspiring nation. This does not mean that states have abandoned the goals of primacy; what it does mean is that their striving for actual primacy has been replaced with a search for a trustworthy *image of primacy*.

Another important distinction in explaining policy incentives is that while the concepts of hegemony-seeking draw on expected utility theory, the *TPC* fits the genuine behavioral patterns grasped by prospect theory. Given the dynamic changes in the great power equilibrium due to differentiated growth dynamics, their elites' will for hegemony is supplanted with their desire for power credibility. Challenged by revisionist powers in terms of international leverage, statesmen in a status-quo power, steered by psychological needs to uphold self-esteem, are bound to make preferences in favor of their state's international rank preservation. This preference presumes the need to retain the *image of primacy* with domestic and targeted foreign audiences rather than seek an economically unsustainable and politically utopian goal of global hegemony as expected utility theory would likely suggest.

NOTES

1. James N. Rosenau, *The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy* (New York: Nichols Pub. Co., 1980), 323.
2. Ibid., 332–333.
3. Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community & Society. (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft)* transl. and ed. Charles P. Loomis (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1964).
4. See Susan D. Gillespie, "Rethinking Ancient Maya Social Organization: Replacing 'Lineage' with 'House,'" *American Anthropologist* 102, no.3 (September 2000): 467–484.
5. See Niall Bond, "Rational Natural Law and German Sociology: Hobbes, Locke and Tonnies," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 19, no.6 (December 2011):1175–1200.
6. Ibid., 1189.
7. As posited by John French and Bertram Raven, those include reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, and expert power foundations. See John R. P. French, Jr., and Bertram Raven, "The Bases of Social Power" in *Studies in Social Power*, ed. D. Cartwright (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Institute for Social Research, 1959). Also, see Bertram H. Raven, "The Bases of Power: Origins and Recent Developments," *Journal of Social Issues* 49, no.4 (Winter 1993):227–251.
8. See Charles F. Doran, "Confronting the Principles of the Power Cycle: Changing Systems Structure, Expectations, and War."
9. On the issues of state "erosion" see, for instance, Mathew Horsman and Andrew Marshall, *After the Nation-State: Citizens, Tribalism and the New World Disorder* (London: HarperCollins, 1995); Susan Strange, *The Retreat*

of the State: The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). On nation-state's vitality, see T.V. Paul, G. John Ikenberry, and John A. Hall, eds., *The Nation-State in Question* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003).

10. Gilpin, 31.
11. The latter can be exemplified by breakthroughs in space technologies (the Soviet Sputnik); nuclear technologies (India, Pakistan, North Korea, and Iran); Soviet and Chinese industrial modernizations, increases of military expenditures in the United States, and so on.
12. See, for example, Waltz's reference to the Schumpeter thesis on US least war-prone model of imperialism at the time. Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 27–28.
13. See Edward N. Lorenz, *The Essence of Chaos* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993).
14. Ibid., 2.
15. Quoted from "Remarks by the President in the State of the Union Address," U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C., The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, February 12, 2013. Available at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/12/remarks-president-state-union-address
16. In 1993–2009, US share in global R&D fell from 36.8 percent to 33.4 percent, while at the same time that of China increased from 2.2 percent to 12.8 percent. See "World Intellectual Property Report: The Changing Face of Innovation," World Intellectual Property Organization, 2011, 35.
17. This can be achieved, among other measures, by stimulating creation of big high-tech companies in the realm of IT, decreasing corporate tax, and encouraging immigration of high-skilled labor, suggest economists from one of the largest US foundations for education and entrepreneurship, the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. See Robert E. Litan and Carl J. Schramm, *Better Capitalism: Renewing the Entrepreneurial Strength* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2012).
18. Joseph S. Nye Jr., *The Future of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), 104.
19. Also known as the Asch conformity experiments, the Asch Paradigm established that an individual's beliefs are susceptible to majority influences. See Irvin Rock, ed., *The Legacy of Solomon Asch: Essays in Cognition and Social Psychology* (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1990). On conformity also see an earlier study: Richard E. Petty, Thomas M. Ostrom, and Timothy C. Brock, eds., *Cognitive Responses in Persuasion* (Hillsdale: Erlbaum, 1981).
20. John R. P. French, Jr., "A Formal Theory of Social Power," *Psychological Review* 63, no.3 (1956):183–184.
21. Bertram H. Raven and John R. P. French, Jr., "Legitimate Power, Coercive Power, and Observability in Social Influence," *Sociometry* 21, no.2 (June 1958):83–97.

22. Bertram H. Raven and John R. P. French, Jr., "Group Support, Legitimate Power, and Social Influence," *Journal of Personality* 26, no.3 (September 1958):408–409.

23. Bertram H. Raven and John R. P. French, Jr., "Legitimate Power, Coercive Power, and Observability in Social Influence," 96.

24. On the notion of expert power as credibility, see John R. P. French, Jr., "A Formal Theory of Social Power," 184.

25. Bertram H. Raven, "Social Influence on Opinions and the Communication of Related Content," *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 58, no.1 (January 1959):119–128.

26. Mitchell S. Nesler, Herman Aguinis, Brian M. Quigley, and James T. Tedeschi, "The Effect of Credibility on Perceived Power," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 23, no.17 (September 1993):1407.

27. Richard N. Lebow, *Why Nations Fight: Past and Future Motives for War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 101. A similar idea was earlier expressed by Matthew Crenson on the example of US ability to influence formation of environmental agenda not so much through policy actions as through emanating its reputation for power. See Matthew A. Crenson, *The Unpolitics of Air Pollution: A Study of Non-Decision Making in the Cities*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971).

28. Martin Wight, with a foreword by Kenneth Robinson, "Is the Commonwealth a non-Hobbesian Institution?" *The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 16, no.2 (July 1978):119–135.

29. See Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (London: Routledge, 1991).

30. Karl Deutsch, *The Nerves of Government: Models of Political Communication and Control* (New York: Free Press, 1966).

31. See Niklas Luhmann, *Risk: A Sociological Theory* (Berlin; New York: de Gruyter, 1993), 155.

32. See David E. Murphy, *What Stalin Knew: The Enigma of Barbarossa* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 258.

33. Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, "Prospect Theory and Analysis of Decision Under Risk," *Econometrica* 47, no.2 (March 1979):263.

Six Attributes of Credibility

I posit that power credibility incorporates six major attributes: abilities to attract, educate, reward, punish, protect, and patronize. One can consider these qualities in terms of their utility to the ends of maximizing the credibility of social power. In the *Hobbesian perspective*, the most important among them is an ability to punish, for a demonstrable capability and resolve for retribution is seen here as the primary factor to contain violence and disorder. In the *Lockean perspective*, it is an ability to protect that derives from Locke's vision of the natural law that determines the self's obligation to preserve life, peace, freedoms, and property, and necessitates a convincing aptitude to be up to this obligation. In the *Kantian perspective*, the most salient component of credibility is an ability to educate insofar as it enables to promote reliable conditions for an association of states and serves the ideals of perpetual peace.

Realists seem to believe that a convincing capacity to punish can cause conformity *without* the need to apply force in each crisis. The logic behind this proposition is that the former enables to properly shape expectations of the others with respect to the self's behavior in future crises,[1] and thus contributes to peace and security. This might not always be the case. As Sheila Zipf has, for instance, observed, "[i]nfluence by means of punishment produces a greater resistance force than influence by means of reward."[2] This observation appears to conceive remuneration as a more efficient instrument of credible power than retribution.

However, neither punishment nor reward modes are likely to be efficient in relations between a pair of mighty states that have power parity.[3] While a great power may look credibly intimidating to her weaker foes and attractive to her pawns, her peers may stay largely unimpressed.

Nevertheless, as the balance of power is subject to change, looking credible in the eyes of a declining peer can become easier. Respectively, to be perceived by others more credible than its peers, the self should display all the six properties on a larger scale. By scale I mean the geographic scope, and intensity of displays. Given the limited amount of resources available for such displays, the task of policymakers is, therefore, to skillfully select objects and timing for manifestation of credibility in each individual case.

1   Attractiveness

An ability to nurture affinity presents an indispensable attribute of *positive credibility*. As established by the self-validation hypothesis in experimental social psychology, inducers can further increase their credibility by persuasion, if an inducee has favorable impressions about them.[4] If at the earlier stages of international relations, the competition for existence was the primary determinant of state *modus vivendi*, with the arrival of totalitarian doctrines—fascism and communism—the existential paradigm changed by extending objectives of war to victories in ideological battles. With the defeat of fascism in WWII, and the significant weakening of communism appeal with the demise of the Soviet bloc four decades later, the systemic competition, though significantly modified in form, has not, however, been eliminated in principle.

What Samuel Huntington prophesized as a clash of civilizations to replace the inter-system ideological standoff has taken the shape of vigorous cultural rivalries not only between apparently remote civilizational brands but also within the same types of civilization, for example, in the West (US-European divide), and the world of Islam (the schism between the Sunnis and Shias). In the West, it is manifested in competition between US social-economic model and that of Europe, as well as between American "Hollywood," English-language-dominated mass consumerist culture, on the one hand, and non-Anglo-Saxon selectivity traditions like France's that has fervently led the European cultural resistance to US norm and value expansion, on the other. Notably, for the European civilization the United States is not the only rival. As the number of immigrants from North Africa, Middle East, Pakistan, and Turkey in Europe increases,

and the policy of multiculturalism becomes increasingly challenged by outbursts of violent religious radicalism, the EU states are called upon by their citizens to maximize their civilizational appeal in the battle for hearts and minds of the new generations of European Muslims. At the same time, in the Middle East and North Africa—from Libya to Egypt, to Syria to Iraq—the Arab uprisings have among all illuminated not only the profound social-economic but also deep cultural and sectarian divergences within the seemingly homogeneous populations.

As the race for social-economic attractiveness composes the essence of the new integrationist project across the Atlantic, similar processes are unfolding across the Pacific. There, the ensuing battle between two models of development—one, free market-driven, known as "the Washington Consensus," and the other, government-directed, coined "the Beijing Consensus"—is taking the form of economic and strategic contest bound to shape future geopolitical allegiances in the Asia-Pacific region. Not only smaller countries, like those of the ASEAN, but also strong nations, such as Japan, are poised to serve the objects of the unfolding competition between the American and the Chinese economic policy templates.

The new conflict of ideas is different from the Cold War between the West and the East that were more or less efficiently separated from penetration of each other's ideologies by the Iron Curtain. With the revolutionary advancement of information technologies, national borders become virtually non-existent. As the invisible bridges connecting the world allow ideas to flow freely, ideological censorship even in the most illiberal regimes turns out to be barely feasible.

With the projected economic progress in the developing world in the next decades, the growth of the middle class in the culturally different societies is poised to modify the nature and forms of international cooperation and competition. Unlike the preceding global conflicts, the ensuing clash is taking a virtual rather than a material form. It is not in the mortal battlefields between the armies of the great powers and the rest of the world that the future of the world civilization is likely to be determined, but, instead, on the screens of hundreds of millions of electronic gadgets in the five continents.

Respectively, as power credibility of the "old guard" is going to be judged upon the universal attractiveness of their political, social, economic, and cultural models, it may be suggested that those of them that are better suited for matching the demands of the Maslow pyramid have better chances to retain images of their composite primacy.

Since one's power attractiveness depends upon a consistent supply of positive information, the focus of the new power struggle has shifted to public relations (PR). Notably, the work of PR companies with international audiences has extended beyond their traditional task of enduring a certain nation's positive image, as they become increasingly keen to deconstruct those of her competitors.[5]

According to global public opinion surveys conducted by Pew Research Center in the recent years, in part reflecting the efficiency of governments in framing national images worldwide, the levels of attractiveness emanated by the world's major powers varied significantly among nations. The United States, for example, was most favored in the developed world, and first of all in Italy, Sweden, and Japan (in the range of 70 percent), as well as France and Britain (60 percent). America looked less attractive, however, in India and China, where 56 percent and 50 percent, respectively, were holding a positive opinion about the United States.[6] America's likeability was considerably lower though in Russia (15 percent) and among the Muslim nations—29 percent in Turkey (2015), 22 percent in Pakistan (2015), and just 10 percent in Egypt (2014).

The EU, for example, was, on balance, rather favorably perceived by its Continental citizens—for example, by 54 percent of the French and 65 percent of the Germans, and the median of 52 percent. On average, 70 percent of the EU respondents believed that the Union promotes peace, 51 percent saw it as a world power, and 47 perceived it as a promoter of prosperity.[7] However, the EU's global image as of a leading economic power significantly lagged behind those of the United States and China: only 2 percent of the Americans and Indians, 5 percent in France and Italy, 6 percent in Japan, 9 percent in the United Kingdom, 10 percent in China, and 25 percent in Germany believed in Europe's economic superiority.[8]

The favorable views on China varied from 11 percent in Japan to 28 percent in Germany, 31 percent in India, 32 percent in Italy, 33 percent in France, 37 percent in the United States and Britain to 79 and 82 percent in Russia and Pakistan, respectively. Ironically, although in the median world's public opinion, China has already surpassed the United States as the world's leading economic power, the Chinese are rather skeptical as to their perceived global preponderance: only 29 percent tend to agree, while 45 percent acknowledge the US superiority. No less importantly, the majority of the Chinese admire not only US technological and scientific accomplishments but also American ideas about democracy. Interestingly, the popularity of US ideas about democracy in China contrasts with their low attractiveness in the Middle East, and, perhaps surprisingly, in the EU.[9]

As for Russia, she, notably, was perceived much less sympathetically than her peers in many countries: by 18 percent in the United Kingdom, 22 percent in the United States, 27 percent in Germany, 30 percent in France, yet by 51 percent in China. Her ratings were even poorer among the Pakistanis—12 percent, the Turks—15 percent, and the Egyptians—31 percent.[10]

However, even though the mankind still looks too far from overcoming its profound cultural and political divisions, the United States, despite its controversial image, appears, on balance, to be more appealing to the international community than its peers. Although the world public opinion may often disapprove of the sweeping spread of US cultural influence, and at times can vehemently disagree with Washington's foreign policy approaches to the pressing international issues, America—given her conspicuously higher image approval ratings with the younger generations across the globe—has a substantial, and by many counts, unparalleled, potential in retaining mostly positive perceptions of her credentials.

2   ABILITY TO EDUCATE

From the *TPC*'s standpoint, the recognized ability to disseminate first-class knowledge constitutes a vital attribute of a credible national power. As a property of power credibility, the ability to educate rests upon the universally acknowledged competence in elaboration of ideas and skills, as well as methods to comprehend and advance them. While universities have initially emerged as the major centers of knowledge production and accumulation, they—along with research centers and labs at governmental agencies and private corporations, business schools and publishing houses, and mass and social media—perform as the primary agencies of knowledge dissemination in the contemporary world.

At the international level, the spread of knowledge by the most advanced societies to the rest, since the ancient times, has constituted one of the major drivers in the development of human civilization, while serving as one of the most adroit means of their soft power. Despite the relative decline of their home nations' tangible power (addressed in the first part of this book), the Western epistemic and business communities remain the world's most trusted sources of multifaceted knowledge and generators of the best mechanisms in spurring economic productivity and technological innovation, respectively. Additionally, Western governments and corporations are globally seen as promoters of the best practices of organization and efficiency.

Although the epistemic communities in nation-states inform policy-makers, the former are not entirely free in their activities as they depend upon policies elaborated by governments, and have to operate in the given cultural-political and social-economic settings. As intellectuals, entrepreneurs, and innovators of high caliber are citizens of certain states, their international reputation benefits images of their countries. Above all, they perform as effective instruments of states' authority and influence.

In the modern history, the dissipation of knowledge from the core to the periphery has underpinned the processes of what can be defined as the *global enlightenment*. While France and Britain performed as the major catalysts of these processes in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the United States, since the end of WWII, has emerged as a new world leader in the realm of knowledge production and distribution. Such centers of excellence in teaching, learning, and research as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and other Ivy League universities in the United States have become global brands. Together with other knowledge-manifesting US brands they perform as the internationally acknowledged symbols of US primacy in science and education.

Having gained a credible image as the global leader in the knowledge economy, the United States, for example in 2015, attracted as many foreigners as the United Kingdom, France, and Germany combined.[11] Despite the decline in foreign student enrollments in 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 academic years caused by safety issues, tougher competition from other English-speaking countries, and stricter visa regulations introduced by the Trump administration, the United States continued to be the primary destination of international student mobility. Moreover, in the last decade, the number of foreign students in American colleges and universities has annually exceeded the ones in such major centers of education as Australia, Canada, Russia, Japan, and China, several times.[12]

According to the 2018 world university rankings by Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), the United States, for example, is leading in mathematics, economics and econometrics, engineering and technology, electrical and electronic engineering, physics and astronomy, and materials science, while sharing the top positions with the United Kingdom's Oxford and Cambridge in life sciences and medicine, natural science, and law.[13] With the exception of United Kingdom's management schools, which rank above those in the United States in terms of quality, in all other major components of higher education and training, including quality of math and science education, Internet access in schools, and availability of research and training services, US peers, global ratings indicate, have a long way to go to approach American standards.[14]

However, as suggested by alternative international measurements, the efficiency of the US system of higher education may be overrated. While the top US universities are globally perceived as the best in the world, numeric proficiency and problem-solving skills of US adults with degrees, for instance, on average do not look particularly impressive in comparison with other OECD nationals.[15]

How can then one explain the discrepancies between the foregoing facts and the image of US superiority in the realm of education? It can be surmised that the latter is largely based on the endured reputation of America's systemic advantages over other national economic, technological, and managerial models. In the last decades, this reputation has been supported by impressive achievements of the United States in a range of knowledge-intensive industries including computer hardware, IT, Internet, software and services, software and programming, Internet and catalog retail, computer services and social media, and entertainment industry. Suffice it to say that US companies, such as Apple, Google, Microsoft, Facebook, Amazon, and Disney, occupy the leading positions in the Forbes list of "World's Most Valuable Brands."[16]

The laying down of America's image as the world's primary know-how hub, universal knowledge depositary, and global educator dates to the years following the end of WWII. The upsurge of cultural and scientific exchanges between America and other nations in the postwar era has become conducive to promoting an image of US R&D and educational systems' preponderance. This process was, above all, facilitated by the global spread of the English language as the dominant means of international communication. Additionally, beginning with the Marshall Plan, the United States has emerged as a global business mentor. The West European agricultural and industrial sectors became the first training grounds to probe the American model of increasing labor productivity and management efficiency overseas. As American technical assistance was widely believed to have contributed to a rapid reconstruction of Europe along the lines of the US economic model, the latter gained a high reputation worldwide. Moreover, the United States played the key role in shaping the postwar international monetary and trading systems, while its science and engineering pioneered technological innovations in the entire globe. The auspicious combination of these factors made the US exceptionally well positioned to further its image of primacy in the realms of economic sophistication and technological advance.

While other powerful nations, such as China and Russia, can compete with America in individual areas, in the realms of science and technology US power is almost universally seen as the most credible and its preponderance undisputable. More than two-thirds of respondents in the EU, China, Japan, and Brazil, as well as Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Tunisia, for example, admire American scientific and technological accomplishments and appear to recognize US superiority in the knowledge-intensive economy.[17]

Unable, at least so far, to match the level of American creativity and expertise in generating knowledge in innovative technologies, another claimant for global knowledge pre-eminence, the EU, is positioning itself as the West's leading educating power in relations with the Global South. Drawing on the latter's increasing demand for the best practices of good governance and institutions of regional integration, the EU is keen to foster its credibility by furthering its technical assistance and policy advice. Together with Europe's unparalleled expertise in promoting "green economy," these unorthodox hallmarks of European tutoring power constitute a taxonomically distinct type of credibility based on competence in institutionalization and sustainability.

3   ABILITY TO REWARD

As an attribute of power credibility in IR, an ability to reward can take the form of trade preferences, technology transfer, and direct financial assistance. The idea that a stronger nation can enhance her power leverage vis-à-vis a weaker and dependent foreign state by shaping bilateral economic transactions is not novel, though, in academic literature. As posited by Albert Hirschman in his seminal work on commerce-politics nexus, trade has two principal effects on national power. First, by importing goods, a nation can increase its military power ("supply effect"). Second, by linking a weaker nation to its economy through establishing both her export and import dependency on its market and production, a stronger state can manipulate the dependent's policies by threatening to interrupt the critically important trade flows.[18]

What interests us in the context of our study is the role that commerce can play in crafting an image of great power's reliability in helping her partners to sustain their economic growth and financial solvency.

The Soviet Union, for example, maintained its rewarding capability by subsidizing oil supplies to its COMECON partners at prices significantly lower than those in the world market until the global oil shock in 1985.

Through purposefully upholding terms of trade unfavorable for the Soviet economy, the Kremlin, as was shown by Michael Marrese and Jan Vanous, succeeded in obtaining what they call "unconventional gains from trade," including loyalty by its satellites and mitigation of the negative political effects of its domination in the Communist bloc.[19]

In 1988, due to the Soviet peak oil, the USSR, however, lost its capability to subsidize its pawns in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). As Moscow forced them to pay in hard currency for their imports of Soviet oil at prices higher than the world ones, it ran out of its capacity to reward allegiance by the CEE elites, and, respectively, retain its influence on them.[20] Quite naturally, this deficiency only exacerbated the loss of Soviet power credibility in CEE that had begun with the USSR's continuous economic slowdown in the last decade before its eventual collapse.[21]

As for contemporary Russia, her policy managers also attempted to employ her endowment with natural resources, especially in fossil fuels, like natural gas and oil, to endure her great power status and sustain her political influence in Eurasia. These tasks were mainly facilitated by the growing needs of the neighboring European and Asian economies in huge volumes of energy imports in the first decade of the 2000s.

Moscow's rewarding capability in this case can be measured as the level of political recognition and benevolence that the EU and China were bestowing on Russia in exchange for her reliability as a source of energy supplies. This can be exemplified by the relative timidity of the EU's reaction with respect to Moscow's incursions in Georgia and Ukraine, as well as the violations of human rights in the Russian Federation. Likewise, Russia gains a "peace dividend" from enhancing her economic cooperation with China. Given China's overall power preponderance over Russia, it is widely believed in Moscow that by granting the Chinese an access to Russia's vast resource base in Siberia and the Far East it is hedging against the perceived geopolitical risks of China's resource deficit.

The EU has been manifestly instrumental in promoting its rewarding capability through a series of preferential non-reciprocal trade accords known as the Yaoundé and Lomé Conventions and the Cotonou Agreement, with a large group of developing and the least developed countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific (ACP).[22] Additionally, the EU and its member-states collectively champion the world's official development assistance (ODA) by accounting for more than half of the total financial flows to the global aid recipients.[23] Together with trade concessions, these arrangements enable Europe to promote her image of a global progressive power.

Debt forgiveness and military assistance constitute the major rewarding tools in US policy. Believed to be specifically conducive to US national security objectives, they help to foster allegiance by American allies and partners. For example, in 1990, the United States forgave $7 billion of Egyptian debt to reward Cairo for reconciliation with Israel and for leading the coalition of Arab states during the first Gulf War. US programs of foreign military financing (FMF) annually provide substantial funds to Israel, Egypt, and Pakistan, which enable them to obtain US military equipment and training services. In FY2011, for instance, FMF to Israel accounted for almost $3 billion, while Egypt and Pakistan received $1.3 billion and $0.3 billion respectively.[24]

Above all, since the start of the Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan in 2001, the United States annually paid about $1 billion to Pakistan through the Coalition Support Fund (CSF) to compensate Islamabad for providing supply routes to the coalition forces and deployment of a 100,000-men contingent along the Pakistani-Afghani border in assisting NATO to combat the Islamist insurgents.[25] Although the availability of the Coalition Support Fund (CSF) resources has reportedly never been critical to Pakistani economy, one cannot say that Islamabad was insensitive to US benevolence ensuring their regular inflow, not in the least because the payments have assisted the Pakistani authorities in financing the nation's budget deficits. Under the Bush Jr. and Obama administrations, this aid was considered *a priori* instrumental in sustaining US political influence over Islamabad, while safeguarding the purported allegiance by the Pakistani government to the United States despite the strong anti-American sentiments among the majority of the Pakistanis. Under the Trump administration, however, the United States took a tougher stance on the policy of rewarding by making CSF payments conditional to verifiable demonstrations of Pakistan's commitment to fighting the militants.

4   Punishment

Apparently, no power can legitimately claim authority in the absence of a demonstrable ability to punish non-compliance. As in domestic politics, one's punishment does not present the end goal, but rather constitutes the means to extract certain social gains. Notably, power credibility is judged upon persuasiveness of one's ability to meet their commitments by force rather than upon the moral value of these commitments. As Robert Keohane, for example, showed in his analysis of reputation, even if a government reneges on its commitments, the genuine hallmark of its interna-

tional credibility is its proven record of resolve to use force. We can call this phenomenon *punishment credibility*.[26]

An enabler of a nation's reputation for primacy in coercive power, punishment credibility not only mirrors her government's determination to apply violence, but also reflects its skills in devising a persuasive strategy in which a threat to cause damage to opponent's vital interests constitutes an essential bargaining component. Under certain circumstances, and distinctly in dealing with overconfident adversaries, the most rational strategy is the one that gives an opponent an impression of the self's irrationality. Elaborated by Thomas Schelling during the Cold War, the "rationality of irrationality" hypothesis served the purposes of conceptualizing the theory of "non-zero-sum" conflict.

Assuming that "conflict behavior is a bargaining process," the theory was preoccupied with finding ways to obviate the actual application of force by resorting to a *credible threat* to use it.[27] Also known as the "madman theory," this type of behavior was tested in October 1969 by Richard Nixon with respect to the Soviet Union and North Vietnam. Nixon, in his turn, had modeled it on President Eisenhower's brinksmanship approach to ending the war in Korea.

By the time, America was bogged down in the war with Moscow-backed North Vietnam and Vietcong, and President Nixon was seeking to bring an honorable end to the exhausting military conflict. Should Hanoi fail to comply with US terms at the peace negotiations in Paris, the United States would, per Nixon's plan, signal its resolve to the Soviets to resort to a heavy conventional or even nuclear bombing of North Vietnam.[28] Encouraged by his Security Adviser Henry Kissinger, Nixon began seriously considering the idea of an unprecedented massive strike on the Communist Vietnam's industrial and logistics infrastructure.

According to "Conceptual Plan of Military Operations," the attacks were intended "to demonstrate U.S. resolve to achieve basic U.S. objectives in Southeast Asia,"[29] and coerce the North Vietnamese into compliance. Warning the President that the strikes will be "brutal," Kissinger accentuated the critical need for the United States to display credibility of its power in a decisive and uncompromising way: "*Once embarked on this course, we should not allow ourselves to be deterred by vague, conciliatory gestures by Hanoi*," the Memorandum underscored. "It must achieve its objectives, or we shall have demonstrated to the world our weakness rather than strength" [underlined in the original].[30]

The strike, planned under the codename *Duck Hook*, was supposed to annihilate North Vietnam's military and economic faculties, and thereby

signal Nixon's determination to use all means available at his disposal to ensure US victory in the Vietnam War.[31] To make it a credible threat, he first needed to craft persuasive ways to signal it to his foes in Moscow and Hanoi. "I call it the Madman Theory, Bob," Nixon told Harry "Bob" Haldeman, his administration's Chief of Staff. "I want the North Vietnamese to believe that I've reached the point that I might do anything to stop the war. We'll just slip the word to them that 'for God's sake, you know Nixon is obsessed about Communism. We can't restrain him when he is angry—and he has his hand on the nuclear button—and Ho Chi Minh himself will be in Paris in two days begging for peace."[32]

While Nixon was obviously seeking to boost US power credibility in the eyes of both the Soviets and the North Vietnamese against the backdrop of the continuous relative decline of American power in Indochina and beyond, just placing US forces on high alert looked too ambiguous to be taken seriously by the adversaries, and—in the absence of the follow-up measures to exercise increasing pressure on Moscow and Hanoi—ultimately failed to force them into compliance.

As Thomas Schelling asserted, the punitive capability is based on one's ability to hurt, and is proportionate to the degree of fear instilled in the adversary's mind. He underlined that a mere application of raw force is not able to make an opponent act in exact compliance with the self's objectives; and strategists' genuine task is not in actually applying the destructive potential they possess, but in using it *virtually* as a lever in inducing conformity. What marks skillful strategists, hence, is their ability to choose an object that their opponent values most, and, by threatening to hurt it, make the latter subordinate to their will, so that the true object of induction is adversarial imagination rather than precious possessions and rational thinking.[33] A genuine strategist is, therefore, a psychologist and diplomat in the first place, and only in the second place a military expert.

As a credibility property, punishment is grounded on *A's* reputation for belligerence as well as on *A's* capability to make *B* believe that the costs of engaging in a military conflict with *A* would exceed benefits of *B's* defection.[34] This capability is based on *B's* assessment of *A's* military might, power projection capabilities, interests at stake, leadership bellicosity, political determination and material capabilities to wage a protracted war with *B*, as well as political stability, national unity, and moral in *A*. While the impression material instruments of punishment produce on adversaries is believed to be of primary concern for the self, neglect of its intangibles' veracity can take a negative toll on its deterrence capacity. If a superior foe fails to demonstrate national unity on the issue of war, and lacks moral

determination to wage a protracted military conflict (as was the case of the United States in Vietnam) or is politically unstable, it inadvertently emboldens a weaker enemy to gain from the former's credibility deficit.

A's reputation for resolve and its record of determination in not backing down during crisis not only in relations with *B* but also with the third parties is of special value in promoting *A's* composite credibility. As established by cognitive balance theorists, statesmen assess an opponent's behavior in relations with other players not only in times of war but also during periods of peace. In imagining *A's* probable conduct with respect to *B*, the latter looks at *A's* record of relations with two groups of states: (1) those with power characteristics and foreign policies similar to *B's*, and/or (2) hostile toward *A*.[35]

Punitive actions do not necessarily invoke crude force. If a crisis allows for the use of non-military forms of punishment, like diplomatic or economic sanctions, they should be given a try. However, if non-violent means to induce compliance prove to be inefficient, application of force may become the policy's next stage.

The 1982 Falkland crisis in relations between Argentina and Britain exemplifies a classic mode of great power's behavior in case her credibility is at stake. Faced with the first international crisis testing her resolve as a national leader, Margaret Thatcher applied a combination of diplomatic and military tools to exert pressure on Buenos Aires, while using the standoff as an opportunity for Britain to demonstrate her power credibility to the entire international community. Responding to concerns by the war-wary Labour opposition over possible ramifications of her resoluteness, she argued: "Diplomatic efforts are more likely to succeed if they are backed by military strength. … We are also being urged in some quarters to avoid armed confrontation at all costs and to seek conciliation. …If the argument of no force at any price were to be adopted at this stage it would serve only to perpetuate the occupation of those very territories which have themselves been seized by force."

The Iron Lady's message to the world was plain and clear: no one should doubt the credibility of Britain's commitment to punish an aggressor. "The eyes of the world are now focused on the Falkland Islands. Others are watching anxiously to see whether brute force or the rule of law will triumph. Wherever naked aggression occurs it must be overcome. The cost now, however high, must be set against the cost we would one day have to pay if this principle went by default."[36]

That an unlawful action by an adversary should not stay without painful repercussions is a core political tenet of great powers' policy. At the same

time, by claiming the right to punish other international players at its discretion, a state takes on a function of a supreme moral authority. The function is of monumental universal salience for it is not "just" about deciding who and what is "right" or "wrong" in a certain collision and at a certain juncture; by punishing a defiant for non-compliance, the "nation-judge" forms the international order in line with her domestic norms and values. Note that repudiation does not necessarily cause improvement of international relations. On the contrary, as some scholars, such as Anthony Lang, rightly observe, obsession with punitive actions tends to further infuse violence and injustice in the international system.[37] This is why a moral framing of enforcement is imperative in making repudiation a legitimate component of power credibility; consider that no state in the world history applied force against another without providing moral grounds to justify her actions before others. I will elaborate on the legitimacy of various policy means, including force, in protecting national interests in the final parts of the book.

According to Louis Gray and his co-workers, punishment presents an aversive stimulation whose efficacy is contingent on three properties: severity, certainty, and celerity.[38] Intuitively, to constitute an efficient deterrent, punishment should be perceived by the inducee at the maximum levels of all three characteristics concomitantly. Considered independently of the celerity variable, consistency in the levels of certainty and severity is a must in producing expected outcomes: the higher the certainty and severity of punishment, the lower the chances of a deviant behavior. However, as a comprehensive analysis of all the three properties demonstrates, low celerity of low certainty-low severity punishment presents a stronger deterrent than an immediate repudiation with the same level of certainty and severity.[39]

Thus, the credibility of punishment increases proportionately to the level of anxiety that a defiant feels by imagining even a relatively low level of retribution. This point can be illustrated by the cases of US and British nuclear deterrence strategies. The US three-legged strategic deterrence is grounded in the high celerity–high certainty–high severity punishment that can be perceived as a reliable deterrent. Contrarily, the one-legged British nuclear deterrent is confined to a "minimum" number of submarine-based warheads, de-targeted and de-alerted, with a "notice to fire" extended to several days, presuming, therefore, low celerity-low certainty-unknown severity punishment.[40] Supposedly, from the rational standpoint, Britain's punitive power possesses significantly lower credibility than America's. However, if the apprehension factor is considered,

adversarial perception of UK retaliation credibility would hardly be substantially lower than with respect to that of the United States. This factor enables Britain to confidently maintain her punitive potency even with the relatively small nuclear capability, while securing the cost efficiency of her strategic deterrent.

5   PROTECTION

Punishment is closely connected with protection. In the most general sense, protection as a social attribute has derived from the need to repel one's infringement on tangible and ideational properties of the self: life, family, territory, and material wealth as well as culture, language, values, beliefs, rights, and liberties are all in the need of protection from encroachment and aggression. Hobbes was, perhaps, the first among political thinkers who managed to perfectly grasp the essence of power credibility-protection nexus. "Reputation of power is Power," he contended in summarizing the attributes of instrumental power, "because it draweth with it the adherence of those that need protection."[41]

According to the Charter of the United Nations, as the permanent members of its Security Council, the United States, China, Russia, France, and Britain hold a "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security" (Article 24). While performance of the P5 in this regard is controversial, and at times even contradicting, their obligation to act "without prejudice" to the ends of enduring global tranquility, in the absence of more efficient institutional mechanisms to ensure compliance they are poised to enjoy the prestige associated with their status of global securitizers.

For a strong power, the ability to protect means to ensure not only her own security, but also to provide for the security of her allies. Protection is a multifaceted property of credibility, for it encompasses an ability to sustain state's sovereignty and independence, specifically in the realm of foreign policy, as well as its deterrence and extended deterrence reliability. Thus, France *ceteris paribus* holds more credibility for the former than, for example, Great Britain, because of her higher degree of autonomy from the United States in international politics.

Military alliances act as protection agencies able to extend deterrence capabilities and honor their security commitments. The latter qualification serves an important benchmark for states to judge about reliability of their potential partners. As Mark Crescenzi and his colleagues have found, rep-

utation of nations for honoring their alliance obligations informs decisions of others concerning alliance formation. For a declining power, formation of an alliance presents an opportunity to consolidate her international influence and authority, while saving the costs of her security obligations by distributing them among partners.[42] The findings of such authors as Charles Doran concerning the driving forces behind formation of alliances, in effect, coincide with the power cycle premises of the *Theory of Power Credibility* in that they essentially postulate that the proclivity to form alliances increases at the stage of decline in relative power.[43] Paradoxically, the striving for allies and manifestation of protection capacities by a great power is an expression of her relative weakness rather than strength.[44]

Note that in the post–Cold War era great powers have turned to supplementing their roles of alliance backers by propagating their prominence as humanitarian guarantors, while the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and Protection of Civilians have become increasingly important mechanisms to substantiate their pertinent images.[45]

6   PATRONAGE

The sixth attribute in our list of credibility properties, patronage, typically presents a system of non-commercial sponsorship by stronger actors in exchange for allegiance, respect, and compliance by weaker players. Also known as a "vassal-suzerain relationship," international patronage is based on a complex system of reciprocity derived from hierarchical power stratification and rooted in moral obligations rather than in norms prescribed by international law. The "non-legalized" nature of international patronage resembles the private style of interaction between patrons and their clients at national and sub-national levels.[46]

What Ronald Weissman identified as characteristics of patronage with respect to interpersonal relationship in Renaissance Italy can be extended to the relations between modern great powers and their pawns.[47] First, patronage presumes an asymmetric balance of power between patrons and their clients. This kind of relations should be distinguished from other asymmetrical types of international interaction, like the one between a metropolitan power and her foreign dominion. While this type of relationship fosters a unilateral extraction of payoffs by the metropolis, the one between the patron and its client prompts an unequal distribution of commercial payoffs between the strong and weak nations. However, despite their unequal nature, patron-client relations are

characterized by mutual sympathy—a trait that, among others, clearly distinguishes them from mere dependency.[48]

Second, these are lasting relations, based on positive experience of mutual trust and record of obligations. Third, patronage is not similar to protection, and entails mediation and political brokerage on behalf of clients, and, most importantly, enables them to use the web of their patrons' diplomatic networks (e.g., the UN Security Council). Fourth, one can add to this list that, unlike those of his clients', patrons' benefits are rather implicit. Patrons are able, for example, to derive political dividends from their images of trustworthy and reliable international partners—a property known as credibility of commitments. Fifth, although patronage may seek extraction of commercial benefits from clients in exchange for security assistance, as was, for instance, the case of de Gaulle's France with respect to Israel, this, typically, does not constitute the primary incentive for a great power in seeking to maintain her credibility in the eyes of a dependent nation.[49]

Mostly symbolic in nature, implications of patronage for a great power are not as daunting as those of entangling security alliances; however, they can be counterproductive to the very objective of enduring credibility that the policy of patronage seeks to promote. The flip side of clientelism is mainly in the risk of obsession with upholding reputation for guardianship that can endanger the patron's relations with other states. The problem is in that by assuming an obligation to favor a certain state, a patronizing power risks neglecting interests of her peers, or a larger group of states whose benevolence may objectively present much more significant political security or economic utilities for the patron than those by its client. Russia's and China's patronage over Syria and Iran are the cases in point.

By diplomatically backing the repressive Assad regime in Syria, Russia, for example, worsened her relations with the Arab countries that supported the opposition forces. Similarly, by standing by Iran in the Security Council over the issue of international sanctions, Moscow and Beijing jeopardized their relations with the United States and Europe whose policy of coercion could not have been efficient enough without the Russian and Chinese participation.

Another problem with patronage derives from the rapid changes in the structure of international relations so that unequal power dynamics can transform a patron-client interaction from asymmetrical to a more balanced type of cooperation, thereby deflating the value of submission for clients. For example, in the aftermath of WWII and through the years of

the Cold War, the United States-Western Europe relations represented an almost classic case of patron-client association that transcended the framework of their military alliance. While America took an obligation to protect Europe from the Soviets, the Europeans felt obliged to open their markets for US corporations, support the United States in the United Nations, and participate in US technological projects, like the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), on unequal terms.[50]

However, with time it has become increasingly onerous for Washington to maintain the asymmetrical character of the Transatlantic relations. The progressive consolidation of the European power bloc, the EU, allowed for a more symmetrical distribution of power across the Atlantic. This trend was facilitated, among all, by America's relative power decline, as well as by her geostrategic refocusing from Europe to Asia. One can see the signs of European "emancipation" in the EU's striving for an autonomous foreign policy and a distinct defense identity in its efforts to perpetuate the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and European defense integration, and pursue an independent approach on some critical international issues, like the US-initiated military interventions in the third countries (e.g., in Iraq in 2003), and the global climate change.[51]

7   Looking Credible, Being Credible

But what does it mean for a state to look credible? An established definition of credibility in IR scholarship confines it to devotion to commitments. However, the veracity of the self's image is not only a function of the self, but also a product of social cognition on the part of the others.[52]

Empirical observations do not support the hypothesis that a state's power is perceived as credible by the others only if it has an impeccable record of keeping its word in every domain. This view appears to be missing the essence of power credibility as of a unique property contingent upon opinionated interpretations; the self can renege on some of its promises, which one can perceive as the loss of its reliability, while its power can still look credible for the rest.

Indeed, as capabilities and situations are subject to change, not every commitment declared in the past can and should be automatically honored. Most importantly, in respecting or reneging on one's promises, different policy acts do not have similar impact on forming its power reputation. Much depends on the norms and value systems prevailing at a specific stage of international development. If, for example, in the time of

a drastic climate change the global *Zeitgeist* would prioritize "green" power over military strength, then—given Europe's larger input in the universal fight against global warming—the EU would likely be considered a more influential power than the United States. Likewise, when and if the criteria of national power shift from destructive and coercive capabilities to those of creativity and good governance, the most influential actors will be those that are at the top of the soft power rankings discussed in the first part of this book.

Consistency in backing up threats and fulfilling promises manifests the core determinant of credibility in social communication. Elaborating on this premise, Mitchell Nesler and his co-authors postulate existence of "a direct relationship between credibility and perceived power."[53] Their findings can be projected on perceptions of power in international relations. Since perceived power is a socially constructed property, it can be manipulated by the self as well as by the others to their own advantage. An image of one's power can, thus, be distorted as its strength and resolve can be overvalued or underestimated. Bluff and deceit can create in the eyes of the targeted party an image that, in the self's opinion, best serves its tactical and strategic ends.

In sustaining one's credibility, the "see it with your own eyes" approach yields high efficiency. The purpose of this policy is to dissuade the other party's complacency and contempt that can lead to overestimation of its power and trigger policy choices endangering the self's security interests. Joint military games with the significant others as well as official visits of foreign delegations to the self's selected military facilities can be instrumental in this regard.

The efficiency of image manipulation for the purposes of increasing power credibility is not limitless though. As it was experimentally demonstrated, credibility is an important modifier of discrepancies between the perceived and objective power. According to Nesler and his co-authors, "[c]redibility is maximally effective when objective power is low." However, the high level of source credibility cannot completely make up for its objective power deficit. Consequently, high levels of the source's objective power make one perceive it as powerful disregarding of its level of credibility "simply because of the great amount of power he or she already possesses from the other power bases."[54]

Since power credibility is about one's strength and its believability by others, would it be reasonable to surmise that the latter cannot significantly divert from the former? Consider, for example, the case of US pol-

icy in the Middle East in the 1970s. Bogged down in the prolonged war in Indochina, America could not allow herself to engage militarily to prevent the Soviets from changing the regional balance of power in their favor. Preserving the US clout in that geostrategically consequential region presented an exceptionally perplexing matter for the White House; identifying proper diplomatic tools to make US signals and words believable in Moscow was not the only problem. In the absence of domestic support for any further military engagement against the backdrop of US debacles in Vietnam and Cambodia, the deficit of President Nixon's credibility at home posed a no less compounding issue.[55]

Characteristically, definitions of credibility in the contemporary IR scholarship tend to overemphasize the significance of hard power. Daryl Press, for example, defines credibility as "the perceived likelihood that [a state] will carry out its threats and fulfill its promises."[56] Paul D'Anieri conceives it as "the extent to which an actor making a threat has both the *will* and *capability* to carry out the threat if concessions are not forthcoming." While further elaborating on this thesis, he argues that "[m]ilitary capabilities can provide benefits … even if they are never employed in the battlefield. In general, states with larger military capabilities are likely to be in a better bargaining position."[57] Military power, however, is not the sole property of credibility.

In pursuing state's foreign policy objectives, its credibility enables to obviate a costly use of force by utilizing mechanisms described by Klaus Knorr with respect to conversion of *putative* (I call it *perceived*) power into *actualized* power. The first type of power, identified by Knorr, is a military capability, but in my interpretation, it is a broader notion, and along with military force also includes economic and financial faculties, which can be utilized for the purposes of coercion. The bottom line is that the more credible a wielder's power image, the more efficient the morphing of perceived power into actualized power.

The very anticipation by a targeted nation that a stronger opponent would resort to coercive action is proportionate to the level of the latter's power perceived by the former's government. Notably, as Knorr underscores, the conversion happens not because of acquiescence to direct threats, but in the virtue of inference, which "leads the strong state to enjoy the fruits of power without deliberately wielding it. In many instances, the powerful state may not even be aware of its power having become actualized."[58]

As one can see, power credibility is an overarching property in IR, since perceptions of the self's strengths by the significant others bear on their critical policy decisions regarding the self's security. Consider the cases of Libya and Syria. On the face of it, the causes and scope of civil wars in both states were mostly identical. Both autocracies were using indiscriminate military force to suppress popular uprisings that led to mass civilian casualties and humanitarian catastrophes. Assumingly, their brutalities should have prompted similar international responses. However, despite apparent similarities between the nature and ramifications of both crises, the external reaction to them turned out to be strikingly different. In the case of Libya, in compliance with the principle of R2P, the international response took the form of military intervention. Contrarily, the comparable situation in Syria has not caused a similar reaction.

The most common explanation of this phenomenon refers to different positions taken in each case by the permanent members of the UN Security Council. Indeed, while with respect to Tripoli the mechanism of R2P was sanctioned by their conferring votes, it didn't happen in the case of Damascus. However, the disagreement among the great powers on Syria could hardly account for inconsistency in the Western policy. Remember that the fundamental normative discord among the P5 did not stop the United States from intervening in Serbia and Iraq, and although Russia and China have repeatedly blocked UN resolutions that could have potentially legitimized Western intervention in Syria, the United States and its NATO allies could ultimately bypass the Security Council as they did in the past.

Thus, the great power dissonance was not the real cause of US restraint in the Syria case. The overarching reasons behind different approaches to the Libya and Syria issues derived from dissimilarities in perceptions of their military capabilities by the West. For NATO, the Libyan defense system presented a relatively easy target. It was known that Tripoli's military power was not sufficient to inflict serious damage to NATO air force. In contrast to Libya, the Assad forces, armed with relatively advanced Russian anti-aircraft systems, were likely able to make a hypothetical NATO operation an excessively costly enterprise.

Another important feature of credibility is its *relativity*. This is because the relevant others assess not only the self's absolute capabilities, but also consider their efficiency in relation with that of their own faculties. Hence, one's capabilities may *seem* superior or inferior to others depending upon shifts in their power balance. Since capability is not a *static* category, so is

not its credibility, and this drives us to an important conclusion regarding the self's ability to look "credible." This ability is not entirely in the hands of policymakers—whatever efforts they may take to boost their country's capabilities, in the end much will depend upon the disposition of systemic factors with respect to political will.

The genius of statesmen is, therefore, in the ability to distinguish between circumstances that can be changed by policy means and those *ultra vires*,[59] best approached by the policy of adjustment. History shows that in the absence of political will to utilize its power capabilities, a state would fail to look credible in the eyes of its allies and opponents. A strong and decisive action, therefore, is an imperative attribute of a credible power. Thus, credibility is not only about having power, but also about employing it as a *dynamic* faculty. This proposition, in a way, rebuffs conjectures that past credibility is *not* a serious determinant in calculations of opponents regarding the self's credibility.

The foregoing suppositions postulate that statesmen prefer making their judgments about an opponent's credibility based not on the latter's previous policy record, but rather on appraisals of their current power capabilities.[60] Such dilemmatic assumptions look, however, misleading not in the least because they tend to misperceive the notion of power, which they appear to confine to tangible assets while ignoring its non-material components. Indeed, any judgment statesmen make about the other's credibility would be imperfect should they fail to assess past examples of its resolve or indecision to act. Of course, for such a judgment to be prudent, one should base it on recent examples of the opponent's behavior in response to situations perceived as worth of being responded to with the threat or use of force.

8   Controversies of Credibility-Centered Policy

For major states, upholding a certain level of bellicosity presents a viable means of sustaining power credibility. However, as possession of nuclear weapons by the principal states abrogates war as the means to reveal their power in the last instance and construct international hierarchy explicitly in line with their true strengths, it becomes imperative to signal the credibility of their power by other policy means.

Even signals of "limited" bellicosity can infringe on a great power's image as other states tend to exaggerate these signals. For example, China's assertiveness in the South China Sea, notably with respect to the Philippines, fostered rumors of an impending war between the two nations. These

rumors alleged that the PRC's Guangzhou military region together with the Chinese Navy deployed in the South China Sea entered a state of full combat readiness as the Sino-Philippine dispute over the Scarborough Shoal, a reef located 500 miles from China and about 100 miles from the Philippines, reached its climax in May 2012.

Similarly, Russia's incursions in Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014) triggered speculations regarding Moscow's further annexation plans regarding other republics of the former Soviet Union.

Likewise, the US military intervention in Iraq in 2003 caused fears in the Arab world and, most importantly, among the authoritarian regimes beyond the Middle East, including North Korea, China, and Russia, that the world had entered the phase of perpetual American interventions. While strengthening the great powers' intimidating images—conducive, as their statesmen are prone to believe, to their primacy, security, and prestige—these actions, on balance, have detrimental effects for world politics. Often, they result in universal anxiety which is counterproductive to building such positive valence as trust—an indispensable condition of healthy and peaceful international relations. "A great power which attempts to exert pressure on the policy of other countries, outside of its own sphere of interest, is taking risks," warned Bismarck's old dictum. "It is following policy of power, not one of interest; it is working for prestige."[61]

NOTES

1. States usually do not expect deviations in one's established pattern of behavior in contingencies. See Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 43.
2. Sheila G. Zipf, "Resistance and Conformity under Reward and Punishment," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 61, no.1 (July 1960):108–109.
3. See Richard Rosecrance, "Reward, Punishment, and Interdependence," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 25, no.1 (March 1981):31–46.
4. See Zakary L. Tormala, Pablo Briñol, and Richard E. Petty, "When Credibility Attacks: The Reverse Impact of Source Credibility on Persuasion," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 42, no.5 (September 2006):684–691.
5. See, for instance, Ben D. Mor, "Credibility Talk in Public Diplomacy," *Review of International Studies* 38, no.2 (April 2012):393–422.
6. Pew Research Center 2016.
7. Data for 2014.

8. 2016.
9. See Pew Research Center, "Global Opinion of Obama Slips, International Policies Faulted," Pew Global Attitudes Project, June 13, 2012.
10. Pew Research Center 2015.
11. Author calculations based on data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), available at: http://uis.unesco.org/indicator/edu-mobility-in-total#slideoutmenu
12. Ibid.
13. See "QS World University Rankings 2018," available at:https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2018
14. See World Economic Forum, "The Global Competitiveness Index dataset 2007–2017."
15. See, for example, "Survey of Adult Skills," conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) within the framework of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), available at: http://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/
16. See Forbes, "The World's Most Valuable Brands," available at:https://www.forbes.com/powerful-brands/list/#tab:rank%EF%BB%BF
17. Pew Research Center 2015.
18. See Albert O. Hirschman, *National Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA; London, England: University of California Press, 1980).
19. According to different estimates, in 1974–1984, Soviet oil subsidies for six European COMECON countries—Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Romania—amounted to $40–72 billion, with East Germany and Czechoslovakia being the major beneficiaries. (See Marie Lavigne, *International Political Economy and Socialism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 245–247.)
20. By the end of 1980s, the Soviets, reportedly, cited aggravation of their economic conditions as the cause of their inability to maintain previous commercial favors to their CEE partners. (See Randall W. Stone, *Satellites and Commissars: Strategy and Conflict in the Politics of Soviet-bloc Trade* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002], 231.)
21. On the peak oil's impact on the Soviet and CEE economic and political collapse, see Douglas B. Reynolds, "Peak Oil and the Fall of the Soviet Union: Lessons on the 20th Anniversary of the Collapse," *The Oil Drum*, May 27, 2011. Available at: www.theoildrum.com/node/7878
22. The agreements, for instance, freed from quotas and tariffs 99 percent of industrial goods exported to the EU by 39 poorest nations of the ACP. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/acp/overview/lome-convention/lomeitoiv_en.htm
23. Calculated on the basis of data from "Annual Report 2013 to the European Council on EU Development Aid Targets: Council Conclusions 3241st

Foreign Affairs Council meeting," Council of the European Union, Brussels, May 28, 2013.

24. See "Congressional Budget Justification," v. 2, Foreign Operations, Fiscal Year 2013, 496.

25. For details, see Susan B. Epstein, Alan K. Kronstadt, "Pakistan: U.S. Foreign Assistance," Congressional Research Service, June 7, 2011.

26. See Robert Keohane, *Power and Governance in a Partially Globalized World* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 125.

27. On the salience of belligerent reputation in sustaining deterrence credibility, also see Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960).

28. See Scott D. Sagan and Jeremi Suri, "The Madman Nuclear Alert: Secrecy, Signaling, and Safety in October 1969," *International Security* 27, no.4 (Spring 2003):150–183.

29. Attachment A: "Conceptual Plan of Military Operations," 1. Available at: http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB195/

30. "Memorandum for the President from Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Contingency Military Operations Against North Vietnam, 2 October 1969, Top Secret-Sensitive Eyes Only," 2. Available at: http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB195/

31. For details see, for instance, Jeffrey P. Kimball, *Nixon's Vietnam War* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1998).

32. Harry R. Haldeman and Joseph DiMona, *The Ends of Power* (New York: Times Books, 1978), 83.

33. See Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

34. Ibid.

35. See, for instance, Mark Crescenzi, "Reputation and International Conflict," *American Journal of Political Science* 51, no.2 (April 2007):382–396.

36. Margaret Thatcher, "Margaret Thatcher HC S: [Falkland Islands] Public Statement," House of Commons Speech, House of Commons, Hansard HC [21/1146-50] April 14, 1982.

37. Anthony F. Lang, Jr., *Punishment, Justice and International Relations: Ethics and Order After the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 19.

38. Louis N. Gray, Alfred C. Miranne, III, David A. Ward, and Ben Menke, "A Game Theoretic Analysis of the Components of Punishment," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 45, no.4 (December 1982):206.

39. See Ibid., 209–211.

40. "We deliberately maintain ambiguity about precisely when, how and at what scale we would contemplate use of our nuclear deterrent," states UK nuclear doctrine. "The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent," December 2006, 18.

41. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*—Hobbes' Leviathan: reprinted from the edition of 1651; with an essay by the late W.G. Pogson Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), 66.

42. See Mark J.C. Crescenzi, Jacob D. Kathman, Katja B. Kleinberg, and Reed M. Wood, "Reliability, Reputation, and Alliance Formation," *International Studies Quarterly* 56, no.2 (June 2012):259–274.

43. See Charles F. Doran, *The Politics of Assimilation: Hegemony and its Aftermath* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971); Charles Doran, "Systemic Disequilibrium, Foreign Policy Role, and the Power Cycle: Challenges for Research Design," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 33, no.3 (September 1989):371–401.

44. Detailed supportive arguments in favor of a similar thesis can be found in Daniel Chiu, "International Alliances in the Power Cycle Theory of State Behavior," *International Political Science Review* 24, no.1 (January 2003):123–136. Also, see William Lahneman, "Changing Power Cycles and Foreign Policy Role-power Realignments: Asia, Europe, and North America," *International Political Science Review* 24, no.1 (January 2003):97–111.

45. Angus Francis, Vesselin Popovski, and Charles Sampford, eds., *Norms of Protection: Responsibility to Protect, Protection of Civilians and their Interaction* (Tokyo; New York: United Nations University Press, 2012).

46. For a critical examination of the clientelism concept as applied to the study of political systems at different levels of analysis, see Robert R. Kaufman, "The Patron-Client Concept and Macro-Politics: Prospects and Problems," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16, no.3 (June 1974):284–308.

47. Ronald Weissman, "Taking Patronage Seriously: Mediterranean Values and Renaissance Society" in *Patronage, Art, and Society in Renaissance Italy*, eds. F. W. Kent and Patricia Simons (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 25–26.

48. On an analysis of distinctions between patronage and dependency, see Christopher P. Carney, "International Patron-Client Relationships: A Conceptual Framework," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 24, no.2 (June 1989):42–55.

49. This is why the classic patron-client relations were defining French-Israeli interactions during the Fourth Republic rather than in its aftermath. An opposite opinion is outlined in: Gadi Heimann, "From Friendship to Patronage: France–Israel Relations, 1958–1967," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 21, no.2 (June 2010):240–258.

50. On the extraction of technological gains by the United States from patronage over Europe through collaboration on the SDI program, see Mario Pianta, *New Technologies Across the Atlantic: US Leadership or European Autonomy?* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester-Wheatsheaf, 1988).

51. For insightful accounts of European defense identity-building, see Frédéric Mérand, *European Defence Policy: Beyond the Nation State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Michael Merlingen and Rasa Ostrauskaitė, *European Security and Defence Policy: An Implementation Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2008). Per M. Norheim-Martinsen, *The European Union and Military Force: Governance and Strategy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Xymena Kurowska and Fabian Breuer, eds., *Explaining the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy: Theory in Action* (Houndmills, Basingstoke Hampshire; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Andras Istvan Türke, *La Politique Européenne de Sécurité et de Défense: Quel Bilan après 10 Ans? Quelles Nouvelles Orientations?* (Paris: Harmattan, 2012); Jean-Barthélémy Maris, *La Structuration du Marché Européen de L'armement*, préface de Marc Blanquet (Paris: Harmattan, 2012); Catherine Grandperrier, *Le Nouveau Concept de l'OTAN et la Défense de l'Europe* (Paris: Harmattan, 2011). For investigation of causes and processes underlying transformation of U.S.-Europe relations, see Stephen J. Flanagan et al., *A Diminishing Transatlantic Partnership?: The Impact of the Financial Crisis on European Defense and Foreign Assistance Capabilities,* A report of the CSIS Kissinger Chair, Europe Program, and Defense-Industrial Initiatives Group (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2011); Caroline Fehl, *Living with a Reluctant Hegemon: Explaining European Responses to US Unilateralism* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Finn Laursen, ed., *The EU, Security and Transatlantic Relations* (Brussels; New York: Lang, 2012).

52. On the role of beliefs in trust formation see, for instance, Rino Falcone, Giovanni Pezzulo, and Cristiano Castelfranchi, "A Fuzzy Approach to a Belief-Based Trust Computation," in *Trust, Reputation, and Security: Theories and Practice,* eds. Rino Falcone, K. Suzanne Barber, Larry Korba, Munindar P. Singh (AAMAS 2002 International Workshop, Bologna, Italy, July 15, 2002, Selected and Invited Papers: Springer, 2003), 73–86.

53. Nesler et al., "The Effect of Credibility on Perceived Power," 1409.

54. Mitchell S. Nesler, Herman Aguinis, Brian M. Quigley, and James T. Tedeschi, "The Effect of Credibility on Perceived Power," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 23, no.17 (September 1993):1407–1425.

55. See Max Frankel, "Administration's Credibility: Doubts Inside and Out," *The New York Times*, May 26, 1970, 2.

56. Daryl G. Press, "The Credibility of Power: Assessing Threats during the "Appeasement" Crises of the 1930s," *International Security* 29, no.3 (Winter 2004/05):136.

57. Paul D'Anieri, *International Relations: Power and Purpose in Global Affairs* (Boston: Wadsworth, 2010), 160.

58. Klaus M. Knorr, *The Power of Nations: The Political Economy of International Relations* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 10.
59. "Beyond the Powers or Legal Authority" (Latin).
60. See Daryl G. Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats.*
61. Quoted in Munroe Smith, "Military Strategy Versus Diplomacy," *Political Science Quarterly* 30, no.1 (March 1915):53.

CHAPTER 11

Conclusion

By drawing on a set of theoretical perspectives in the field of IR along with the findings by various social and behavioral sciences, this study sought to construct a theory of international politics that could be applicable for predicting state behavior.[1] It suggests that structural changes in the international system, and, in particular, shifts they cause in the global distribution of power, are bound to shape certain types of state conduct. Facing the objective systemic changes from without, auspicious for some and at the same time harmful for others, decision makers attempt to elaborate ingenious policies. Depending on the nature of the respective changes, these policies seek either to further their nations' ascendance by making the most of favorable shifts or try to arrest their nations' decline by opposing disadvantageous trends.

The foregoing chapters conceptualize that specific phases of national power cycles are likely to determine appropriate modes of state behavior. This research demonstrates, for example, that downslope phases in nation-states' lifespans are poised to endanger their credibility. Unlike the pre-WWI periods of power transitions that faced the descendance of a single hegemonic power, the current decline encompasses the majority of the contemporary great powers. The general weakening of the great powers is coupled with the rise of global security challenges ranging from the proliferation of WMD and their delivery systems to terrorism, to cyber warfare, and to climate change and global warming. The inadequate capacities of the principal nations to deal with these challenges promptly and efficiently risk to further undermine their trustworthiness at home and abroad. This

propensity inevitably prompts their leaders to seek innovative ways to retain their respective home states' traditional images of strength, competence, and resoluteness. However, one should not forget that the depth and breadth of the challenges and threats they are facing against the backdrop of the rapidity of the ongoing structural shifts, make the process of decision-making susceptible to, perhaps, unprecedented psychological pressures. As a result, the risks of miscalculation and impulsive decisions on the part of policymakers—the decisions that might have disastrous implications for international peace and security—tend to dangerously multiply.

This study holds that by discerning great power conduct as a joint product of state power and elite's political will, one can reach a better understanding of the foregoing phenomenon. Importantly, the *TPC* conceives political will as a blended corollary of the policymakers' ideas, experience, beliefs, character, and feelings rather than an individual outcome of their cognitive or emotional motivations. From this synthesized standpoint, it is possible to explain why the relatively declining states whose foreign policy elites find their ontological security in danger are prone to overcompensating behavior—the behavior, which one may find at odds with the commonly established canons of "rationality."

Thus, states do not act just as commonly perceived instruments of pure reason in politics but are also bound to perform as transmitters of policymakers' emotions and passions. Indeed, emotional preferences and cognitive biases have not infrequently determined policy priorities in choosing allies and adversaries in the inter-state relations. Sometimes, as history shows, whole nations find themselves hostages of their leaders' prejudices, ambitions, and fears.

Elites in great powers are naturally better positioned than their counterparts in weaker states to maximize their self-esteem by honor and admiration on the world stage. "A high estimate of one's self, the sense of rare worth or excellence, is a source of distinct pleasure and exhilaration," wrote American sociologist Edward Alsworth Ross as early as in 1897. "It is bound up with the feeling of power, a poignant consciousness of self, a vivid feeling of being alive and of triumphing, which elates and rejoices."[2] It would hardly be an exaggeration to surmise that the natural emotional (psychological) predisposition of elites is to count on an indefinite continuation of such a triumph, and any visible or inferred diminution, let alone arrest, of the flow of pertinent positive emotions would provoke their confusion and resentment. In this regard, at least, elites in great pow-

ers conspicuously differ from those privileged strata in other societies, whom Providence has not blessed with a similar degree of recognition by foreign nations. Hence, it would be only rational, from the standpoint of compensatory approach, for the elites in the descending great powers to focus their policies on maximizing the international credibility of their home states as the means to ensure the positive valence of their power.[3]

On their part, consumers of credibility induction—both at home and abroad—are also subjected to the impact of a blend of cognition and emotions in making their judgments. In other words, inducees are poised to view one's credibility through the lens of a judgmental approach, where the factor of affection appears to be playing a substantial role. Most importantly, under these conditions it is not so much credibility of the message that determines judgments as credibility of the source.[4]

Driven by ideas and ideals that can easily turn into dogmas, states/elites can behave counterproductively to the rationales of self-preservation. As Brent Steele has rightly observed, "states pursue social actions to serve self-identity needs, even when these actions compromise their physical existence."[5] At the stage of decline, according to the *TPC*, promoting credibility for a great power presents not only the preferred *means* of strengthening her security, but the overarching *end of her foreign and security policy.*

However, the prioritization of power credibility in foreign and security policies in the short run can result in contentious implications for great powers in the long term. On the one hand, it can, indeed, create a desirable image of strength and resolve conducive to retaining confidence among allies, while providing the self with rewarding trade-offs in political and economic domains. Furthermore, by looking credibly strong and resolute the self can instill fear and cause policy restraint or compliance among adversaries, hence, conceivably, enhancing the degree of its safety.

On the other hand, since credibility is subject to inference, approaches overemphasizing the purported need for perpetual credibility can produce undesirable effects for the self's long-term security interests. States, as was noted above, can misinterpret limited intimidating actions, which the self aims at while signaling its credibility to the significant others, and this can ominously generate their hostility toward the self. Additionally, by displaying overconfidence, the self can inadvertently prompt its allies to act in provocative and risky ways with respect to opponents. Emboldened by patrons, pawns can inadvertently drag them into deadly conflicts (e.g., in 1914, the standoff between Austria-Hungary and Serbia, respectively Germany's and Russia's allies, led to the outbreak of WWI).

Credible images nurtured by the self among its allies can also prompt them to pay less attention to their own defense, which they trust their security patrons would unfailingly continue to provide for them. The asymmetric distribution of defense expenditures in NATO between the United States and its European allies is, perhaps, the classic example to elucidate this pattern. Adversaries of an overly "credible" great power, on their part, could also react undesirably. In line with the traditional patterns of policy response to a security dilemma posed by a credibility-seeking contender, they can, for instance, react by their own countermeasures, thereby deflating the value of the self's power credibility (e.g., US anti-missile defense program prompted Russia's nuclear modernization). Additionally, they can form countervailing partnerships (e.g., the ensuing military-strategic cooperation among India, Vietnam, and Japan, aimed at balancing China), thereby increasing the costs for their opponent to retain its credibility. Most importantly, the zeal to look indisputably credible to certain states and on certain issues can overshadow the vital security interests of great powers on other directions and impede them to elaborate perceptive and coherent grand strategies (e.g., by being mired in Afghanistan since 2001 the United States could not properly attend to the risks posed by China's and Russia's resurgence).

It has been long suggested that stronger tangible capabilities warrant higher power credibility. Since war has been traditionally considered the ultimate test of power supremacy, the material parameters of power—military might, population, territory, and resources—have been traditionally viewed as the determinants of an armed victory. Nonetheless, as history demonstrates, it is not rare that countries with relatively stronger material capabilities fail to reach their objectives with respect to weaker adversaries. What makes up for feebler capabilities in an asymmetric warfare? Why in one out of every four conflicts in the last 200 years was victory on the side of a weaker power rather than a stronger one?[6]

As established by a recent scholarship, this phenomenon can be explained by some nations' higher resolve to bear war costs, the latter trait defined as "cost tolerance."[7]

"When powerful states underestimate the costs of a campaign to attain coercive political objectives, they risk being pushed beyond their cost tolerance threshold and forced to withdraw their forces before they attain their war aims," Patricia Sullivan expounds. "As a result, the probability that a strong state will prevail over a weak target declines as the need for target compliance increases."[8] The odds of making psychological resil-

ience a decisive advantage increase with a war's length, enabling a weaker opponent to wage a war of attrition, and thereby forcing a powerful adversary to back down (the United States vs. North Vietnam, the Soviet war in Afghanistan, France's wars in Indochina and Algeria).[9]

It would be reasonable, therefore, to suggest that visible manifestations of such a resolve by a nation that can be found in her recent history can be considered as salient qualifications of her power credibility. Interestingly, the assessments of other nations' morale and resolve to fight played an important role in the Nazi Germany's strategic estimates in 1937–1939. Characteristically, while the "old school" German generals were primarily concerned with the material capabilities of their adversaries, Hitler prioritized analysis of the latter's willingness to suffer and ability to sustain losses in battlefield.

To stay in the "saddle" of greatness by retaining her international influence and authority, a pertinent nation, in addition to her exclusive and demonstrable hard power strengths, should be also able to exemplify the credibility of her primacist image. At the stage of their relative material decline, the need to manifest their soft power qualifications becomes for such powers an overarching imperative. The shift to virtualization of social relations, including the international domain, adds up a new qualitative dimension to the foregoing trend. To look credible in the eyes of domestic and foreign audiences, a great power's image and policies should display a synergy of such attributes as competence, trustworthiness, and resoluteness along with demonstrable abilities to attract, educate, reward, protect, punish, and patronize.

The *Theory of Power Credibility*, therefore, opens a fresh perspective to explain the driving motives of great power conduct at the stage of decline. As their elites' aspiration for retaining social primacy at the global level persists notwithstanding the relative diminution of their countries' material capabilities, the inclination of their elites to avert the expected losses of pertinent privileges and status in the international system is poised to grow. From Washington to Paris as well as from Moscow to London this trend is highlighted in the policies aimed at sustaining the images of strength, reliability, and capacity to lead.

Although China, on the surface, appears to find herself at a different stage of power cycle, she—for the reasons outlined atop, and, above all due to the graying of her population and environmental pressures bound to slow down her economic growth—seems to have begun experiencing problems similar to those of her declining peers. Most importantly, if

national power is seen as a sum of confidences along the lines suggested in this book, China presents a peculiar case of a giant adolescent seeking to assure adults of her maturity by adding up assertive rhetoric to masculinity. These attempts, however, unveil the deficiency of strategic confidence, which the Communist rulers in Beijing, facing the risk of losing their nation-wide legitimacy, attempt to make up by playing the nationalist card. The problem of power credibility in illiberal political regimes, like China and Russia, stems, among all, from their relative downhill slope at home disregarding their absolute grasp on power. The *TPC*'s approach allows discerning the teleology of their external power overhauls as governments' attempts to look credible in the eyes of their populations in general, and their domestic clientele, that is, the state bureaucracy, especially in the military and security apparatus.

As for the Western great powers—the United States, Britain, and France—while their liberal democratic systems have so far enabled their governments to avoid political dangers of their relative economic and social degeneration at home, they have not been immune to the risks of those bearing negatively on their international power and influence. This propensity can also be conceived as an implicit, yet powerful, trigger of global anarchy. Due to the unveiled structural impediments in the use of force by the United States and its NATO allies, their abilities to shape world politics in the desired directions are increasingly shrinking. Under these conditions, maximization of the West's soft power capacity looks as the only rational option available for their policymakers to exercise international influence.

In sum, despite their obvious political, economic, and cultural differences, as long as the most powerful nations in the contemporary world are finding themselves in the declining stage of their power lifespan, they are bound to exhibit a similar pattern of behavior. One can expect them to proceed in their policies of boosting credibility of their composite power and redistributing their international efforts from the costly "hard" to the more economical "soft" policy activities.

The focus of these activities is to be growingly concentrated on accumulation of positive credibility properties—knowledge, appeal, and generosity—in contrast to retribution. As the responsibility of physical protection of their citizens and allies, though complicated by the relatively diminishing state capabilities to maintain it, remains, nevertheless, the primary function of states in looking credible, it may find itself at odds with other vital properties in the need of protection—civil rights, liberties, and indi-

vidual freedoms. This dichotomy, a new security dilemma in its own right, is likely to present the most controversial implication of the credibility maximization paradigm, and risks morphing into the major domain of structural conflicts in the future, thereby jeopardizing the key underpinning of state, its legitimacy.

It is possible to predict that with the ongoing shifts in power distribution in the international system, the relatively weakening major states will be poised to multiply their efforts to offset diminution of their power credibility, which will lead to an even greater volatility and unpredictability of the system. Fraught with greater risks of military confrontations involving the great powers in decline, above all commonly seeking to maximize their credibility in world politics, the ensuing interval in the downward stage of their power cycles presents, perhaps, the most dangerous structural phase in the international system to impact their international conduct in comparison with the preceding periods in their lifespans that dictated the policies aimed, consecutively, at their power and security maximizations. Understanding the nature of patterns in great power behavior, could, hopefully, assist policymakers in the pertinent states to cognize the needs to exercise wisdom, caution, and restraint in reacting to structural changes that they might perceive as infringing on their nations' habitual images of superior strength and recognized authority.

NOTES

1. On the applicability of international politics theories for predicting state behavior see, for example, Colin Elman, "Horses for Courses: Why Not Neorealist Theories of Foreign Policy?" *Security Studies* 6, no.1 (September 1996):7–53; Kenneth N. Waltz, "International Politics is Not Foreign Policy," *Security Studies* 6, no.1 (September 1996):54–57; Colin Elman, "Cause, Effect, and Consistency: A Response to Kenneth Waltz," *Security Studies* 6, no.1 (September 1996):58–61.

2. Edward Alsworth Ross, "Social Control. VI. Ideals," *American Journal of Sociology* 2, no.4 (January 1897):550.

3. For a detailed examination of the interface between the rational and emotional see, for instance, Jon Elster, "Rationality and the Emotions," *The Economic Journal* 106, no.438 (September 1996):1386–1397.

4. Onno Maathuis, John Rodenburg, and Dirk Sikkel, "Credibility, Emotion or Reason?" *Corporate Reputation Review* 6, no.4 (Winter 2004):333–345; Carl I. Hovland and Walter Weiss, "The Influence of Source Credibility on Communication Effectiveness," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 15, no.4 (Winter 1951–1952):635–650.

5. Brent J. Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self-Identity and the IR State* (New York: Rutledge, 2008), 2.

6. See Ivan Arreguín-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3.

7. See Patricia L. Sullivan, "War Aims and War Outcomes: Why Powerful States Lose Limited Wars," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51, no.3 (June 2007):496–524.

8. Ibid., 507.

9. See Thomas G. Mahnken, "Why the Weak Win: Stronger Powers, Weaker Powers and the Logic of Strategy" in *Strategic Logic and Political Rationality: Essays in Honor of Michael I. Handel,* eds. Michael I. Handel, Bradford A. Lee, and Karl-Friedrich Walling (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003), 56–69.

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[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.