PRINCETON UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS

Shadowing the Hegemon?

Great Power Norms, Socialization, and the Military Trajectories of Rising Powers

Chapter 1: Introduction (Excerpt)

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Abstract

This study develops and tests a theory to explain variation in the military trajectories of rising powers in the modern era, an important phenomenon overlooked in the existing international relations literature. I analyze English-, Japanese-, and Chinese-language sources to identify the causal mechanisms that have shaped leaders' military policy choices at more than two-dozen critical 'strategic decision points' during periods of rapid industrialization and economic growth. My case studies are Meiji Japan, Germany, and the United States during the pre-1914 period; late 20th-century Japan and Germany; and contemporary China.

My findings challenge widely-held assumptions in related literatures about the primacy of structural imperatives, security concerns, and material interests in shaping military policy choices under international anarchy. I demonstrate empirically that the international normative context into which a rising power emerges also has independent and significant effects on the manner in which its leaders pursue status as a 'great power.' This 'status-seeking' driver effectively functions as a powerful mechanism driving rising powers' socialization to perceived contemporaneous norms of role-appropriate 'great power' policies—with consequences for better or worse for the likelihood of subsequent interstate conflict, even hegemonic war.

How leaders respond to perceived contemporaneous 'great power' norms, however, is contingent on rising power 'type'; itself based on widely-held national identity within the state concerning the desirability of attaining international social status as a 'military great power.' Those 'status-seeking' rising powers in which national identity provides leaders with strong domestic political incentives to exploit surging nationalism and pursue this status often mimic the military policy profile of higher-ranked states in order to achieve social recognition as a member of 'the great power club.' This status-seeking driven mimicry often occurs even when the normatively-associated policies are disconnected from, or even contrary to, pressing national security and/or material interests. Conversely, leaders in 'status-avoiding' rising powers with widely-held national identities that have negative associations with the pursuit of status as a 'military great power' have powerful domestic political incentives to eschew normatively-associated military policies. Paradoxically, these leaders often choose to do so despite recognizing these policies as being otherwise beneficial for security, material, and other interests.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction (Abridged, draft excerpt)

"The likely emergence of China and India as new major global players—similar to the rise of Germany in the 19th century and the United States in the early 20th century—will transform the geopolitical landscape, with impacts potentially as dramatic as those of the previous two centuries."[1]
--U.S. National Intelligence Council, 2004

"Properly understood and properly handled great power transitions can be smooth. Misconstrued and mismanaged, they can have cataclysmic consequences."[2]
--Fareed Zakaria

"Accurate recognition of the rising power's true nature on the part of the established states is a crucial step in the process of system management."[3]
-- Randall Schweller

1. Introduction

What explains variation in the military trajectories of rising powers in the modern era? Specifically, during periods of rapid industrialization and economic growth, what determines the extent to and manner in which leaders in a rising power decide to translate the state's rapidly growing 'latent' material capabilities into developing military power and employing it overseas?

The historical record demonstrates that rising powers often implement major changes to military policies as their latent power grows and economic interests expand globally. These shifts, or 'inflection points,' in a rising power's military trajectory can be of tremendous consequence for peace and stability in the international system. In important cases they have even directly or indirectly fomented great power conflict. How might early-20th century history have played out differently if leaders in Wilhelmine Germany had not chosen to seek out 'a place in the sun' by competing with Great Britain through the pursuit of colonies overseas and the procurement of Dreadnoughts? Both of these military policy shifts were major departures from past practice with far-reaching consequences—directly contributing to the Anglo-German antagonism that erupted

[1] *Mapping the Global Future* (Washington, D.C: U.S. National Intelligence Council, December 2004), 47.
[2] Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1998), 12.
[3] Randall L. Schweller, "Managing the Rise of Great Powers: History and Theory," in *Engaging China: The Management of an Emerging Power*, ed. Alastair I. Johnston and Robert S. Ross (New York: Routledge, 1999), 25.

with catastrophic consequences in 1914. And what if the leaders of Meiji-era Japan had not sent their fledgling navy to engage in 'gunboat diplomacy' against Korea in 1876, an opening salvo in a three-decade conflict that would ultimately lead to wars with China and Russia, Japan's acquisition of Taiwan and Korea as colonies, and its military expansion onto the Asian continent? The military trajectory that began with these initial, unprecedented policy shifts also eventually contributed heavily to Japan's tensions with the United States in the inter-war period. These two basic counterfactual exercises make it clear how deeply major shifts in rising powers' military policies have shaped modern world history, and how devastating the consequences for regional and global peace and stability can be.

But an equally instructive, though rarely conducted, counterfactual exercise would be to imagine how different history in the latter half of the 20th century might have been if Japan's leaders had made very different choices about developing and employing military power during that country's post-war decades of 'miracle' economic growth and industrial expansion. Japan's record-breaking rise during this period made its economy the world's third-largest by the late 1960s.[4] And within a little more than a decade, Japan's surging GDP surpassed even that of the Soviet military superpower. What if late 20th-century leaders had chosen to translate Japan's surging latent material capabilities in the manner that many contemporary observers believed was inevitable:[5] into developing military power 'commensurate with its economic standing' and projecting that power overseas to safeguard and expand its vast maritime territory and rapidly proliferating global economic and political interests? More concretely, what if Japan's leaders had acquired nuclear weapons; developed fully independent self-defense and force projection capabilities (e.g., a blue-water navy, aircraft carriers, amphibious assault, and offensive-strike missiles) to assert its numerous claims to disputed territories on its periphery and to protect its economic interests overseas (with or without maintaining a security treaty with Washington);

[4] If one does not identify the Soviet Union's economy as a *national* economy, then by the late 1960s Japan's already had the world's second-largest national economy.

[5] For example, in just one four-year period (1967-1970) toward the end of a decade of double-digit annual GDP growth, observers as varied as Richard Nixon, Zhou Enlai, and Herman Kahn all essentially predicted that because of its economic and industrial growth, Japan's emergence as a military great power was "inevitable." Richard M. Nixon, "Asia after Viet Nam," *Foreign Affairs* 46, no. 1 (October 1, 1967): 120; Zhou quoted in Thomas J. Christensen, *Worse Than a Monolith: Alliance Politics and Problems of Coercive Diplomacy in Asia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 213. U.S. military strategist and game theorist Herman Kahn predicted that Japan would develop into a military superpower and undergo a "transition in [its role] in world affairs not unlike the change brought about in European and world affairs in the 1870's by the rise of Prussia." Herman Kahn, *The Emerging Japanese Superstate; Challenge and Response* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1970), vii, ix, 237.

deployed the Self-defense Forces abroad to participate in military operations; increased defense spending above an arbitrary, normative, and self-imposed ceiling of one-percent of GNP; recognized Japan's (UN Charter-granted) right to collective self-defense; or employed military force, or the threat of military force, as a tool of coercive diplomacy? These questions remain hypothetical because, simply put, during this period Japan's leaders *chose not* to do any of these things. Instead, they opted to chart a categorically different path to great power status; one which explicitly eschewed the development or employment of military power as a means by which to stake Japan's claim to membership in the 'great power club.'[6] Together with the case of late 20th-century Germany, Japan's military trajectory during the period of its rapid industrialization and economic growth suggests that some rising powers make a conscious choice to preemptively 'opt out' of what Reinhold Niebuhr once called the "temptation to injustice" that the possession of great military power brings.[7]

As the above brief counterfactual exercises illustrate, the decisions of leaders of rising powers about whether (or not) to exploit surging industrial and economic wherewithal to implement major shifts in military policy can be hugely consequential for international relations. They also demonstrate that there is important variation in the military trajectories of states undergoing rapid industrialization and economic development that is both theoretically and historically significant. Contrary to influential claims in the existing theoretical literature in international relations, structural anarchy does not inevitably compel rising powers to behave in predetermined ways, or even to efficiently pursue their material interests. Rather, the historical record shows that even in the military domain how leaders in rising powers respond to structural pressures and material incentives result from a series of policy *choices*, some of which are extremely puzzling from the perspective of existing theory. As will be argued in this study, equally and sometimes more important in shaping these choices is the interaction of two non-material factors: the international normative context into which the rising power emerges and to which its leaders become socialized, and a widely-held, if contested, national identity concerning the desirability of status as a 'military great power.'

[6] I briefly expand upon these points in the 'motivating puzzles' section in Chapter 2. I then address them much more extensively in Chapter 4.

[7] Reinhold Niebuhr and Gary Dorrien, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness: A Vindication of Democracy and a Critique of Its Traditional Defense* (University of Chicago Press, 2011), 185.

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These days, all eyes are on rising China. Its rapid economic and industrial expansion and military buildup since the mid-1990s have raised concerns about its future capabilities and intentions. The multi-platform aircraft carrier program that may have recently been green-lighted by the Politburo is only one of the most conspicuous elements of the military modernization program and expansion of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) mission set that has kicked into high gear in the new millennium. It is also the most visible manifestation of an ongoing shift toward what China's top leaders explicitly identify as China's pursuit of military power "commensurate with its international standing" [与我国国际地位相称] and as a "strategic task of China's modernization drive [我国现代化建设的战略任务]."[9] Part and parcel of this push is the ill-defined pursuit of status as a "military great power" [军事大国]. This remarkably explicit, if abstract, objective suggests a degree of status dissatisfaction and raises an important question of interest to international relations (IR) theorists and policymakers alike: what sort of military trajectory will China take as its leaders pursue their coveted 'great power' status, and what will be the implications of the resulting policy choices for regional and global peace and stability?

2. Objective and Preview of Shadowing/Avoiding Theory

What explains the variation in the military trajectories of rising powers and the major shifts in military policies (or lack thereof) that define them? IR scholars have bemoaned the state of the theoretical literature on rising powers, which still lacks a unified theory of the "geopolitical phenomenon" of great power emergence.[18] While a parsimonious 'unified theory' is certainly desirable, it probably is not feasible given the motley assortment of factors that shape any given policy decision.

This study has a more moderate objective: to contribute to our understanding of the major factors that shape rising powers' military policy choices a mid-range theory that identifies an important, yet heretofore overlooked, pattern of cause and effect that accounts for important and

[9] Chairman Jintao Hu, "中共十八大政治报告 [Political Report of the 18th Party Congress]," *ChinaReviewNews.Com*, November 9, 2012, http://www.zhgpl.com/crn-webapp/doc/docDetailCreate.jsp?coluid=7&kindid=0&docid=102297778.

[18] Christopher Layne, "The Waning of U.S. Hegemony—Myth or Reality? A Review Essay," *International Security* 34, no. 1 (2009): 163.

theoretically puzzling variation in the military trajectories of rising powers across time and space. In doing so, it aims to fill a major lacuna in the theoretical literature on rising powers, military affairs, and international relations more generally. It also seeks to inform contemporary policy debates about how the U.S. and other leading states can most effectively shape the foreign policy choices of China and other rapidly developing states. It adopts an explicitly empirical, comparative historical approach based on a belief that developing a deeper understanding of the factors that have shaped actual military policy decision-making in past rising powers can help to shed light on China's policy shifts to this point. This approach can also provide insight into where China may be headed in the future, and to inform policies aimed at shaping that future trajectory in a positive, peaceful, and international order-sustaining direction.

3. Structure of the Dissertation

This study contains six additional chapters: a theory chapter that briefly introduces the empirical puzzles motivating this study, more fully develops this study's contribution to international relations theory, *shadowing/avoiding theory*, and explains this study's research design (Chapter 2); three in-depth primary case studies of past and current rising powers' military trajectories (Meiji Japan, late 20th-century Japan, and contemporary China; Chapters 3-5); a chapter which further tests the generalizability of shadowing/avoiding theory through three concise secondary case studies of Western countries selected for diversity across time and space—two cases from the pre-1914 period (Germany and the United States) and one from the latter half of the 20th century (Western/reunified Germany) (Chapter 6); and a conclusion (Chapter 7). Chapter 7 includes a brief synopsis of the overall argument and evidence, as well as a discussion of the theoretical and policy implications of the analysis—especially as it concerns efforts of the U.S. and other established powers to shape the military trajectory of the People's Republic of China.