

# Between Integration and Coexistence

## US-Chinese Strategies of International Order

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In March 2011, the United States supported UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1973 which approved a no-fly zone over Libya, authorizing all necessary measures to protect civilians from attacks by its own government under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. The resolution was passed by a vote of 10 in favor with five abstentions. China abstained from voting on UNSCR 1973. Its abstention was determined by Beijing's preferences for noninterference in the internal affairs of other states and for peaceful means of conflict settlement as well as by its concern not to block measures approved by regional organizations. This incident illustrates that the current international order is characterized by conflicting US and Chinese concepts for international order. The US version is founded in universal liberal values of civil and political rights and market economic structures. These principles have been translated into US post-World War II efforts at constructing an alliance system and economic and political institutions with a view toward integration between member states on the basis of common liberal values. By contrast, the Chinese version of international order is founded on coexistence, promoting policy coordination to maintain international peace and stability and enhance the ability of states to pursue their own national interests. These principles have been translated into efforts at preserving a UN-based international order founded in the Cold War interpretation of the UN charter. This interpretation stresses that absolute sovereignty and noninterference in the internal affairs of other states are fundamental principles that allow states to choose their own model of state-society relations.

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Analyses of US aspirations for world order are often based on considerations of relative military, economic, and political power and the extent to which the United States is able to maintain its current position of preeminence in the international system. For example, John Mearsheimer argued in 2001 that if China's economy continues to grow at a robust pace and it eventually becomes a potential hegemon, its huge population advantage will allow it to build the most powerful army in the region and acquire an impressive nuclear arsenal. This would force the United States to remain a major military power in Northeast Asia to contain China and prevent it from becoming a peer competitor.<sup>1</sup> Stephen Walt argues that the current world order is not determined merely by the condition of unipolarity, but also by the particular geographic location of the United States, the liberal ideals with which it is associated, and the specific historical features and institutional connections inherited from the Cold War. For example, the fact that the United States is the sole great power in the Western Hemisphere while all other major powers are located on the Eurasian landmass means that a coalition against the United States is very unlikely to emerge. Similarly, in addition to the outward thrust of liberal ideology with its built-in universalism, the US effort to exert active global leadership is also an artifact of the particular historical circumstances in which unipolarity emerged. These particular features of the specific unipolar order either strengthen or weaken the impact of unipolarity on state behavior, but they do not alter the causality following from the structural condition.<sup>2</sup> Barry Posen and Andrew Ross contend that the basic premises of international politics determine the various strategic arguments on the propensity for developments unfavorable to the United States to move in ever more unfavorable directions or for developments favorable to the United States to move in ever more favorable directions. These premises are: first, whether states tend to balance against or bandwagon with a neighbor growing in power and ambition; second, whether nuclear weapons make conquest easier or harder; and third, how much influence can the United States exercise due to its share of gross world power resources. Posen and Ross acknowledge the impact of factors such as political will and institutional preferences on states' strategies, but relative power considerations are fundamental to the strategic choices available.<sup>3</sup>

Analyses of Chinese aspirations for world order are based most often on the growing economic power of China since Deng Xiaoping pushed

for aggressive economic reforms beginning in 1978 and the extent to which this challenges US unipolarity. Avery Goldstein analyzes how China's diplomacy of reassurance, partnerships, and a *quid pro quo* policy toward other states is founded in its attempt to cope with the constraints of US power and the continuing dominance of the United States in the international system.<sup>4</sup> Taylor Fravel substantiates that it is not psychological-cultural factors, such as individual leaders' characteristics or nationalism, which determine China's inclination to use force in territorial disputes but rather the threats facing the regime. China's propensity to use force in a territorial dispute is determined by growing weakness or decline in relative power in the particular dispute, whereas domestic threats to regime security may induce Chinese leaders not to use force in territorial disputes.<sup>5</sup> Aaron Friedberg argues that as a state's capabilities grow, its leaders define their interests more expansively and seek a greater degree of influence in the international system. This logic suggests that China seeks regional hegemony. This aspiration is enhanced by its history of being the center of civilization in East Asia, encouraging it to attempt to reestablish a Sino-centric system, which adds to US-Chinese mistrust and competition. Additional rivalry derives from the fact that the United States is a liberal democracy while China maintains authoritarian rule.<sup>6</sup>

Most analyses of the US and Chinese approaches to world order recognize that both changes in the distribution of power affecting China's growing challenge to US preeminence in the international system and Washington's response to this challenge remain subject to the domestic political characteristics of the two polities. This paper focuses on the link between the domestic political systems of the United States and China and their strategies for positioning themselves in the current world order. It argues that basic ideological principles built into the US and Chinese polities emerge in their respective aspirations for world order, encouraging Washington and Beijing to pursue fundamentally different international objectives by different means. The most pervasive consequence of US aspirations for international integration is its post-World War II efforts to construct an alliance system based not merely on momentarily overlapping interests but also on common values of liberal democracy and human rights. The most obvious consequence of China's aspirations for international coexistence is its efforts since the beginning of the reform and opening period in the late 1970s to convince international

society that its rise to great power status would remain peaceful through engagement in multilateral security institutions all over the world.<sup>7</sup>

In the vacuum left by the Soviet implosion in the post–Cold War era, the liberal integration and coexistence perspectives have been translated into programs of international order. The US proposal for international order is based on the right to use a broad interpretation of international norms to counter grave violations of human and political rights.<sup>8</sup> The argument rests on the notion that serious threats toward the peace and security of individuals spill over to the international realm and threaten international peace and security. US efforts to revise the world order are based on the use of existing provisions of international law to establish new legal precedents to promote fundamental liberal notions of democracy and human rights at the global level. The attractions of this version of international order give the United States sufficient political influence that it can continue to advocate and implement the program at the international level. The viability of the US alliance system in all regions of the world and widespread support for US initiatives on global security issues in the UN Security Council testify to its attractions. In particular, the strength of the US alliance system allows Washington sufficient power to implement its worldview, even at times of crisis when its policies meet with considerable and prolonged criticism, such as when the United States decided to go to war against Iraq in 2003.

China's response has been to present an alternative interpretation of existing UN charter provisions based on its principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual nonaggression, noninterference in the internal affairs of others, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.<sup>9</sup> The Chinese concept of international order is useful for a would-be great power that does not yet command the military and economic capabilities of a full-blown great power but has already obtained political influence at a great power level. Coexistence requires extensive policy coordination for conflict management and promotes a system of co-management of global security issues between great powers that subscribe to different programs of international order. The Chinese version of international order is also based on existing provisions of international law. At the center are the principles of absolute sovereignty and nonintervention adjusted to demands from the developing world for enhanced regionalization and specialization of global security management. In the absence of an alliance system, Beijing relies predominantly on

UN-based multilateral institutions to spread its worldview internationally. China's growing role in institutions engaged in security governance and the widespread support for Chinese policies on global security issues in the UN Security Council indicate the attraction of its program of international order.

This article discusses the US integration approach and the Chinese coexistence approach to international order. It then examines US and Chinese strategies for implementing their programs and concludes by discussing the implications of these findings for managing US-China relations.

### **US and Chinese Programs of International Order: Integration vs. Coexistence**

The United States took the lead in formulating Western political aspirations for enhancing international integration.<sup>10</sup> Spreading the liberal ideas of human rights, democracy, and a market economy is the long-term means for preserving US dominance. The concept of human rights is based on respect for the autonomy of individuals.<sup>11</sup> A society based on individual autonomy requires the protection of such rights by means of law to ensure the right to life and property as well as the obligation to respect agreements. No entity, not even the state, ranks above the law, and as such, the state apparatus itself is also obliged to respect the law. The liberal idea of democracy requires that people are sovereign and that the will of the people is respected by the right to elect representatives to manage the political authority. In essence, the liberal democratic model implies that adult members of society determine what constitutes the good life and how it is realized. The liberal idea of the market entails that economic growth is the road to prosperity. This economic philosophy implies that the state plays a minor role in the economy, allowing the decisions of market agents to engender the most effective use of resources.

US foreign policy since the Cold War involves globalizing these liberal concepts to ensure the strengthening of international peace, security, and prosperity. Economic globalization is not a fundamentally contested issue since it has been embraced worldwide by and large. The financial and economic crisis of the late 2000s has not given rise to alternatives, but instead suggestions for revisions in market economic structures to make them more robust against abuse. According to some analysts,

governments cannot resist the tides of international trade and finance, but instead compete for the benefits of globalization by accommodating themselves as much as possible to the preferences of market agents to enhance their wealth. In trade, this means opening the economy to foreign competition through commercial exchange and direct investment. In finance, it means creating an environment of sound monetary and fiscal policies to sustain the confidence of creditors and portfolio managers.<sup>12</sup> Economic globalization is a more pervasive feature in terms of trade than finance, but the trend points consistently toward enhanced financial interpenetration. Consequently, at present the principal US concern is to maintain the United States as the economic and military world leader by advancing proposals for economic freedom through open markets.

Liberal democratic and legal globalization has, however, yet to take root. The United States still foresees a mission to build and preserve a community of free and independent nations with governments that answer to their citizens and reflect their own cultures. Thus, the US national security strategy document of January 2012 states that the United States seeks “a just and sustainable international order where the rights and responsibilities of nations and peoples are upheld, especially the fundamental rights of every human being.”<sup>13</sup> And because democracies respect their own people and their neighbors, the advance of freedom will lead to peace. The United States believes in the concept of democratic peace, meaning that international peace is best engendered by democracies governed by rule of law. Such states are less likely to go to war against one another because they consider each other legitimate entities behaving in accordance with common rules of state conduct.<sup>14</sup> The US goal of spreading democracy may be traded for stability in the short term, but it remains the long-term goal of US governments. Even the Obama administration, which tends to prioritize stability rather than democratization, fights terrorism and rogue regimes by military means initially to create the preconditions for the spread of liberal democracy in the long run, arguing that peace and international stability are most reliably built on a foundation of freedom defined as democracy.

One core element in Washington’s program for international order is the US alliance system. It originates from the Cold War threat of Sino–Soviet expansion and does not merely encompass the customary understanding of alliances as pacts of mutual military assistance. Rather, the

United States developed an extensive system of alignments in which the actual military alliances formed the iron core. Initially, the Soviet Union was surrounded by a virtual power vacuum along its entire periphery, from Scandinavia and the British Isles, along the rimlands of Eurasia, to Japan and Korea. The United States therefore established and maintained a substantial military presence in and close to the chief Eurasian danger areas, projecting US power across the water barriers.<sup>15</sup> After the Cold War, the US alliance, or perhaps more precisely, alignment system has remained in place. One of the core strategic objectives of US national defense is to strengthen security relationships with traditional allies and to develop new international partnerships, working to increase the capabilities of its partners to contend with common challenges. The US overseas military presence operates in and from four forward regions: Europe, Northeast Asia, the East Asian littoral, and the Middle East–Southwest Asia. The United States has embarked on a comprehensive realignment of its global defense posture to enable US forces to undertake military operations worldwide, reflecting the global nature of its interests. However, the enhanced prioritization of the Asia-Pacific in the US military force posture testifies to the fact that this region is of primary significance to US interests. As such, it is pivotal for the United States to assure partners, dissuade military competition, deter aggression and coercion, and be able to take prompt military action in this region. The continued US ability to perform in these capacities aids Washington in promoting its program of international order.

China's promoting coexistence as a basis of world order has developed into a steadily more effective foreign policy doctrine for advocating international political pluralism as an alternative to the liberal integrationist US pursuit. Coexistence allows for a plurality of domestic regimes to coordinate their national interests without jeopardizing international peace and stability. This has proven most effective in allowing China to focus on its domestic development toward being a power based on independent ideological principles adapted to Chinese circumstances and interests. Chairman Mao Zedong, who led the People's Republic of China (PRC) from its establishment in 1949 until his death in 1976, based his concept of coexistence on Lenin's belief that the capitalist and communist systems could exist side by side if the Soviet state could exploit the differences between them. Unlike Lenin, however, Mao was engaged in intermittent civil war over a period of more than 20 years before

seizing power. Consequently, Mao's doctrines and precepts combine prudence with revolutionary enthusiasm as a result of having to adapt to the conditions that confronted him on the ground.

By August 1946, Mao set down four theses on the international state of play, which, with some modification, continued to guide China's national security strategy throughout his rule. First, an all-out war between the United States and the Soviet Union in the immediate future between the socialist and imperialist camps would take place in "the vast zone" separating the two. Second, this zone included many capitalist, colonial, and semicolonial countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa. This principle was the origin of the concept of the "intermediate zone." Third, the atomic bomb was a paper tiger because the outcome of war was decided by the people, not by one or two new types of weapons. Fourth, all reactionaries, including US reactionaries, were paper tigers. Though these reactionaries may have been terrifying in appearance, in reality they were not so powerful from a long-term point of view. This first independent assessment by Mao of the global situation confronting the international communist movement reflected his strategy during the Chinese revolution.<sup>16</sup> Mao took the view that China must learn how to wage diplomatic covert struggles against the imperialists, eyeing the possibility of adding developed countries like France and Japan as a top tier to the intermediate zone of countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and throwing them all into the balance against the encircling great powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, that were colluding and competing for hegemony over them. In so doing, China hoped to establish a third force in the international system that could challenge the dominance of the Eastern and Western blocs.

It was on this basis that Premier Zhou Enlai launched peaceful coexistence in his address to the developing world at the 1953 summit of the Non-Aligned Movement.<sup>17</sup> Although the 1966 Cultural Revolution—aimed at removing all liberal, bourgeois elements from the Chinese Communist Party and Chinese society—put a temporary halt to the peaceful coexistence effort, it resumed in 1969. On 1 January 1970, China restored peaceful coexistence as the primary theme of its foreign policy by officially declaring its willingness to establish or improve diplomatic relations with all countries, regardless of their social systems, on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. China received a large number of foreign delegations, expressed renewed interest in joining the United

Nations, signed aid agreements, and established diplomatic relations.<sup>18</sup> China's resurrection of peaceful coexistence improved its foreign relations so dramatically during 1970 that it could claim with justification that it had friends all over the world. In November 1970, the UN voted in favor of the PRC's membership, and in 1971 it replaced Taiwan as the fifth permanent, veto-wielding member of the UN Security Council.<sup>19</sup> In 1982, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence were written into the Chinese constitution. This act confirmed that the principles express the Chinese concept of right and wrong state conduct.<sup>20</sup>

China's foreign policy profile during the Cold War points to the existence of an alternative worldview to that of the United States and the Soviet Union. China presented itself as a developing state aiming for peaceful coexistence, a new economic world order, and the defiance of alliances. In contrast to the great powers, China did not occupy a position that enabled it to export its development model to other countries to any significant extent. China demanded respect from other powers and sought to play a significant role in international affairs, even when it had little money to spend. For example, Beijing undertook the prestige project of building the Tanzania-Zambia railway. But in contrast to India, which intervened to exercise sovereignty over the Portuguese colony of Goa, China left the Portuguese colony of Macao alone. China displayed a strong streak of pragmatism at the time, which was largely determined by the failure of the 1960s development project known as the Great Leap Forward.<sup>21</sup> For the most part, the alternative political framework remained a rhetorical device designed to highlight China's foreign policy independence, because Beijing was insufficiently influential to have an impact on the fundamental principles of international order. China's principal gain was the considerable strategic, economic, and political benefits it was able to extract through its foreign policy. However, it did not fundamentally contribute to, or alter, international order.<sup>22</sup>

China's current strategy of peaceful coexistence is designed to maximize its national interests from the uneasy position of a weak power that may wield political influence at the great power level, but as of yet, without commanding the economic and military power of the United States. Its international political influence stems from the fact that it provides secondary and small powers with an appealing complementary model of world order which attracts support from developing countries seeking protection against a liberal integrationist West. In effect, China has created

a parallel structure to the US alliance-based version of international order offering security guarantees. This parallel structure is based in regional and global organizations under the UN system, offering influence over the principles that govern international behavior. For economically and militarily weak developing countries, this is an appealing alternative that limits US preeminence and gives China international political influence.

China is attempting to revise the current international order by focusing on negotiation, compromise, and policy coordination in conflict management efforts; by increasing the role of regional and functional institutions in security management in the UN system; and by preserving the status of absolute sovereignty and noninterference in the internal affairs of other states. China's understanding of peaceful coexistence does not entail extensive cooperation on the basis of common values. Instead, Beijing advocates that national interests should be pursued on the basis of a combination of individual foreign policy choices and extensive international dialogue to prevent the use of force between states with conflicting national interests. This form of policy coordination is a means of allowing states to concentrate on fulfilling their individual goals rather than an end in itself.

Coexistence is potentially at odds with national identity issues linked to demands for the restoration of China's so-called motherland.<sup>23</sup> For example, in the South China Sea, Beijing maintains an enigmatic claim to the entire area and regularly exercises its alleged right to exploit resources and refuse passage to foreign vessels.<sup>24</sup> On another note, uncontrolled Chinese migration into the Russian Far East creates the perception that China is effectively colonizing Russian territory, slowly but surely undermining existing border arrangements by means of immigration.<sup>25</sup> In its relations with India, the low-intensity skirmishes and China's demands for sovereignty over Ta Wang, birthplace of the sixth Dalai Lama, along the eastern part of the Chinese-Indian border raise doubts about China's willingness to continue to prioritize peace and stability with India.<sup>26</sup>

China reconciles the apparent dilemma between coexistence and national identity issues by seeing coexistence as a means to an end—the restoration of Chinese supremacy—rather than an end in itself. The principles of coexistence are designed for a world consisting of states, and as such, they offer China protection from foreign threats while it builds up economic and military capabilities necessary to revise the setup

of the international realm to suit its national unity goals. Consequently, the principles are not intended as guiding tenets of international relations on a permanent basis. Instead, they are to serve in the interim until such time as China has been restored to its former historical greatness as a full-blown great power on par with the United States.

The essential differences between the US and Chinese approaches to international order are summarized in the following table:

**Comparison of US and Chinese programs of international order**

Factors	United States	China
International objective	Integration	Coexistence
Institutional basis	Alliance system	UN system
Membership basis	Liberal states (common values)	Developing countries (common interests)
International relations dynamics	Cooperation	Coordination

### **US and Chinese Strategies for Implementing International Order**

Programs of international order would ordinarily address issues of how state survival is secured under conditions of international anarchy. How can states continue to go about pursuing their interests without destroying the condition of international anarchy which forms the basis of their political authority? Preservation of the state system requires a framework for international order that regulates the use of force, the control of persons and territory, and agreements with other political entities.<sup>27</sup> The first requirement, principles on the use of force, is designed to ensure that peace is the normal condition in an international system in which states enjoy a monopoly on the issue of who holds political authority and as such forms part of the diplomatic community. The second requirement, diplomacy, concerns the power, will, and intellectual and moral impetus to shape the entire international system in accordance with one's own values.<sup>28</sup> Henry Kissinger points out that the elusive aspect of intellectual and moral impetus that is nowadays often called ideational power is at least as important as the more substantial elements when we address issues of diplomacy and great power status. Third, influence on international order requires legitimacy in the eyes of other international actors. International legitimacy depends on the collectivity of states' assessment of the righteousness of the designs on international order suggested by a

great power. Influence is a function not of a country's stature only, but of its connections.<sup>29</sup> Goodwill with other states and status as a worthy partner is the basis for a state's successful interaction with other states. Reputation is an asset that states cannot afford to take lightly.<sup>30</sup> The fact that states routinely look to the collectivity of states for approval indicates that they invariably attach importance to acceptance of their foreign policy decisions from the diplomatic community.<sup>31</sup> In other words, allies and partners are a necessity for a state to exercise influence on the rules of the game. Even the most powerful state needs to convince its partners that its policies are responsible and feasible to avoid the eclipse of common interests due to internal differences.<sup>32</sup> The principles pertaining to a particular order will often be nested in actual state behavior rather than in written agreements, since decades or even centuries may pass before a principle has become accepted by all states as a legal rule. The remainder of this section addresses US and Chinese strategies on the use of force, diplomacy, and legitimacy as reflected in their international state practice.

### **The US Program of International Order**

US policies on the use of force, one of the fundamental elements of international order, are based on deterrence through the use of alliances. US deterrence involves a wide range of policy initiatives and options, such as its policy of strategic ambiguity with regard to Taiwan, the permanent US military presence on the Korean peninsula, and its nuclear deterrent. Washington's post-Cold War approach to deterrence, especially under the 2009 Obama administration, involves the strengthening of existing alliances and the building of strategic partnerships, allowing the United States to reorganize its force posture to increase its flexibility and its rapid power projection capabilities. To implement these plans, the United States will focus on smaller conventional ground forces but increase capabilities in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), counterterrorism, countering weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and operating in environments of attempted access denial.<sup>33</sup> In addition, trilateral and bilateral security dialogues with core allies such as Japan, South Korea, and Australia have become more significant. The concepts of pivoting and rebalancing launched by the Obama administration testify to the US concern to demonstrate its enhanced focus on key Asian allies including Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines,

and Thailand—as well as key partners such as India, Singapore, and Indonesia—and its desire to demonstrate the superior security benefits from cooperation with the United States. Washington also encourages cooperation with Beijing to establish common approaches to security challenges, recognizing that the US-China relationship is among the most important and also the most challenging in the world.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, the United States stresses that it is a global power which will continue to invest in critical partnerships and alliances, such as NATO, and stay vigilant in regions like the Middle East.<sup>35</sup>

However, the US alliance system is not only a mechanism for deterrence; it also forms the basis for Washington's diplomacy beyond concerns about traditional security threats and the US force structure. The president's visit to Australia celebrating the 60th year of the US-Australian alliance signifies the security infrastructure that allows for the free flow of trade and commerce throughout the region. The US security posture in the Asia-Pacific will continue to be a top priority, because the alliance system is key to continued US prosperity.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, updating the alliance system is accompanied by US steps to strengthen economic cooperation with core allies. Examples include the US-Korea free trade agreement which entered into force in March 2012 and US support for Japanese efforts to become a member of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which is a multilateral free trade agreement that aims to further liberalize the Asia-Pacific economies. These recent efforts continue the trend of post-World War II efforts at integrating security and economic concerns by a unified diplomatic effort to promote cooperation between states on the basis of common liberal economic and political values.

Multilateral security institutions with a membership basis outside of the US alliance system are secondary to US efforts at integrating liberal states. The involvement of global and regional organizations such as the UN and ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) is ad hoc and conditional, depending on their contributions to US security priorities. If their contribution does not exceed the cost, the United States prefers to rely on its alliance system.<sup>37</sup> Washington is concerned about the emergence of pan-Asian regional structures that may tackle security problems with China as the central actor rather than the United States. It is anxious that new "Asia-only" institutions might duplicate the work of existing trans-Pacific structures, because US interests would be greatly challenged by evolution of the region into an exclusionary bloc.<sup>38</sup> Examples

that fall within this category are the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which includes Russia, China, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, and the ASEAN+3, which includes South-east Asia, China, Japan, and South Korea. Such concerns explain US efforts to strengthen and expand its alliance system in the Asia-Pacific.

US policies on legitimacy are founded in the logic that the spread of liberal democracy across the world will serve to sustain the popularity of the United States as the principal power representing this model of state-society relations. The 2012 US national security strategy is formulated on the belief that “regime changes, as well as tensions within and among states under pressure to reform, introduce uncertainty for the future. But they also may result in governments that, over the long term, are more responsive to the legitimate aspirations of their people, and are more stable and reliable partners of the United States.”<sup>39</sup> Again, the alliance system forms the basis for creating the preconditions for the spread of liberal democracy. Efforts such as the war on terrorism, which is based principally on military initiatives of the United States and core allies, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which is mainly founded in trade agreements between liberal democratic states, are seen as preconditions of liberal political development. These efforts are seen to contribute to stability and prosperity on the basis of liberal market economic principles and liberal rule of law regimes that pave the way for liberal political systems. The near universal embrace of market economic structures, save for a few regimes such as North Korea, is considered an encouraging step toward subsequent transformations to more liberal political structures that include individual rights which liberals argue further enhance stability and prosperity. Developments such as Myanmar’s preliminary legal and political reforms in 2012 indicate that political liberalism is gaining ground.<sup>40</sup>

US efforts to maintain its alliance system as the foundation for military, economic, and political integration on the basis of common liberal values appear to be relatively successful, judging from the fact that the majority of the world’s states continue to rely on US security guarantees. The United States has formal pacts of mutual military assistance with states such as Japan, the UK, Canada, Denmark, Senegal, and numerous others around the world. It also has defense responsibilities for the Pacific islands of Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, which are US territories, and the Marshall Islands,

Palau, and Micronesia that have signed compacts of free association. Some states which do not have a formal alliance with the United States are close, de facto strategic partners. For example, Singapore hosts a contingency of the US Pacific Command. Taiwan is not a state de jure, but considerable US military assistance and Taipei's participation in the theatre missile defense program indicate that it occupies a central position in the US alliance system. Outside of this core, the United States has strategic partnerships with states such as Afghanistan and India. Russia is a strategic partner of the NATO alliance, and states such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Mexico have military cooperation agreements with the United States. Washington uses its global alliance system to assure states that they form part of the US security umbrella, giving them some measure of protection against aggression.

### **The Chinese Program of International Order**

Chinese policies on the use of force are based on a Cold War interpretation of the UN system, advocating a fundamental role for the principles of absolute sovereignty and noninterference in the internal affairs of other states. China argues that force should not be used for conflict resolution and that interference in the internal affairs of another state is only justified to prevent a threat to international peace and security or if the target government approves of interference. According to Beijing, its military modernization program is intended only for access denial, stressing China's right to be left alone to pursue its national interests.<sup>41</sup> China's record of not using force outside its borders lends some merit to this claim, if for no other reason than, as the weaker power without an alliance system, China simply cannot afford to project military power beyond its borders in ways that may produce military conflict.

China's approach to using force within the UN system contrasts with US and European efforts to do so in the event of alleged serious breaches of civil and political rights covenants or the nonproliferation treaty, such as genocide or the acquisition by nonnuclear powers of material used to produce WMD. China has used its permanent membership on the UN Security Council to block using force for these reasons and to reduce punitive measures taken in the event of proof of noncompliance with the UN system. For example, it supports Iran's right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy on the grounds that nonnuclear powers are entitled to establish civil nuclear programs under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

In November 2011, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) published a report suggesting that Iran is engaged in nuclear weapons-related development without saying anything about its prospects for developing a nuclear weapon or who might be responsible for these activities.<sup>42</sup> On these grounds, China refuses to tighten sanctions against Iran in contrast to the United States which, recognizing that China will block a punitive UNSC resolution, tightened sanctions unilaterally on 20 November 2011. The IAEA board of governors resolution, approved by both the United States and China on 17 November 2011, expressed continued support for a diplomatic solution and called on Iran to engage in talks aimed at restoring international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear program.<sup>43</sup>

Another example is China's response to UNSC Resolution 1973 which, acting under the peacemaking provisions of Chapter VII, approved a no-fly zone over Libya. The resolution authorized all necessary measures to protect civilians by a vote of 10 in favor with five abstentions. China's abstention was determined by its preference for peaceful means of conflict settlement and its concern not to block measures approved by the African Union, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the League of Arab States.<sup>44</sup> China has been critical of NATO's very wide interpretation of the resolution. This interpretation has made China reluctant to accept similar UNSC resolutions, as demonstrated by its veto of a proposed resolution endorsing an Arab League peace plan which called for Syrian president Assad to resign.<sup>45</sup> Beijing was not willing to approve what it saw as a violation of Syrian sovereignty. A proposal merely supported by the Arab League but not by other regional organizations was not considered representative but seen instead as an expression of Western demands for order that do not carry any weight in Beijing.

Outside the UN system, China also adopts a policy of nonuse of force to manage conflicts, demonstrating its concern to maintain international peace and stability by peaceful means and to uphold the Cold War interpretation of UN principles of absolute sovereignty and nonintervention. For example, China has settled most of the 17 territorial disputes it was party to at the end of the Cold War. In those remaining, it has engaged in dialogue and negotiation with a view to avoid the use of force. Beijing's approach involves trying to forge a compromise to maintain peace and stability, allowing the parties to focus on the pursuit of their national interests. Instead of insisting on rights of effective control, China has

entered into dialogue with all disputing parties after the Cold War, focusing on the political and practical aspects of border disputes rather than the legal principles. At a minimum, this approach has contributed to a rapprochement between the contending states. Despite continued low-intensity conflict, bilateral talks from 2003 to 2007 have arguably kept a lid on the Chinese-Indian border dispute.<sup>46</sup> The approach has sometimes contributed to agreement on shelving sovereignty issues to allow the parties to pursue their national interests, as in the South China Sea disputes involving China, Taiwan, and several Southeast Asian states which agreed on this formula for using the sea in 2002.<sup>47</sup> The approach even resulted in a permanent settlement in the Chinese-Russian border dispute.<sup>48</sup> Even in territorial and maritime disputes that have proved difficult to resolve, China has been reasonably successful in avoiding zero-sum contests over relative gains and achieved peace and stability along its borders.

The UN system forms the basis for China's bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. After the Cold War, China put a high premium on normalizing diplomatic relations with other states to maintain international peace and stability with a view toward allowing Beijing to pursue its national interests. In the 1990s, China began experimenting with multilateral security dialogue and institutionalization of security cooperation in Southeast and Central Asia. International cooperation beyond the stage of dialogue requires a willingness to compromise, such as shelving the sovereignty question in the South China Sea in return for the opportunity to develop economic and security ties with the ASEAN. The main payoff for this new policy was that China established links with US allies and strategic partners, making inroads into the US alliance system by offering alternative benefits. In a sense, China overtook US post-World War II multilateralism, presumably out of necessity because its economic and military capabilities remain far too modest to pursue a policy of imposition. In a very few years, China's diplomacy has helped obtain numerous strategic partners across the world's regions.

In diplomatic relations, China tends to emphasize areas of mutual benefit rather than areas of conflict, which can be shelved to proceed with dialogue where the element of common interest dominates. For example, in its relations with Russia, China focuses on their mutual interest in preserving the Cold War interpretation of the UN system and mutual trade relations rather than issues of contention, such as Chinese

immigration into Russia's Far East and Russia's 2008 military intervention in Georgia.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, despite the South China Sea disputes of overlapping maritime claims between China and several Southeast Asian states, China's relations with the ASEAN focus on trade and investment relations. Those relations are founded in China's accession to the ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia.<sup>50</sup> This accession implies China's willingness to adapt to programs for preserving international peace and stability set up by other states, provided these are based on the provisions for international relations under the UN system. Similarly, China addresses fora such as the African Union (AU), the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the IAEA as entities recognized by the UN system. As such, it sees them as entities that should play a determining role in establishing the existence of threats and what is to be done about these threats within their regional and functional area of specialization. For example, in the run up to the UNSC vote which established a joint UN-AU hybrid force, China's special envoy to Darfur, Liu Guijin, commented that "it is not China's Darfur. It is first Sudan's Darfur and then Africa's Darfur."<sup>51</sup>

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Central Asia arguably demonstrates the kind of coexistent world order envisaged by China. The SCO was created at Beijing's initiative to exercise some control over the growing great power competition for strategic and economic influence in Central Asia.<sup>52</sup> The SCO brings together China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan in an attempt to establish policy coordination on economic and military issues. This coordination is largely limited to the annual summit, joint cultural events, and annual joint military exercises on a moderate scale. The SCO's principal usefulness is as a flexible platform for policy coordination between its members as well as its observers: India, Iran, Pakistan, Mongolia and Afghanistan. Policy coordination is not an instrument for enhanced multilateral cooperation. Instead, it keeps a lid on potential international conflicts and facilitates bilateral agreements.

At the practical level of implementation, Chinese-style peaceful coexistence involves policy coordination on conflict resolution and prioritizing nonmilitary means of persuasion and negotiation rather than coercion and punishment. It is based on solidarity with other governments through top-down cooperation, and it involves strengthening the old UN system and its emphasis on absolute sovereignty. In addition,

China appears to promote the regionalization and specialization of authority to assess and act upon alleged threats to regional peace and security. This set of coexistence principles enjoys widespread legitimacy in the developing world and justifies China's status as a maker rather than a taker of international order. An indication of the support for China's program of world order is that approximately half of the states in the UN Security Council favor the Chinese principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, nonaggression, equality and mutual benefit, and noninterference in the internal affairs of other states in the cases of Iran's nuclear program, Sudan's Darfur conflict, and Myanmar's conflict between the regime and the opposition.<sup>53</sup>

Reservations about China's program of world order emerge due to the secondary nationalist theme in its security strategy.<sup>54</sup> This theme is less pronounced in China's multilateral diplomacy, which involves large elements of international coordination, and more pronounced in its territorial and maritime border disputes where coordination with multiple actors is less important. The nationalist theme comes to the fore in situations where China is under pressure to compromise on issues of national identity and its definition of the so-called Chinese motherland giving rise to the use of coercive means. This secondary nationalist theme calls into question Beijing's genuine commitment to its coexistence program of international order, indicating that national identity issues linked to demands for the restoration of the Chinese motherland are its ultimate objective. These identity issues hamper Beijing's efforts to win a stable group of loyal partners comparable to Washington's alliance system.

### **Comparing US and Chinese Implementation Strategies**

The US and Chinese programs of international order are based on different dynamics. As a full-blown global great power, the United States bases its program on liberal values of integration requiring extensive cooperation. By contrast, China's uneasy position in between a great power and a secondary power gives rise to a program of international order based on mutual interests in policy coordination on issues of great power conflict. The two programs are not functioning in different geographical hemispheres. Instead, they intersect on numerous issues across economic, military, and political sectors of the international system in an uncoordinated fashion. This dynamic gives rise to a type of in-between international system that is not necessarily more prone to the outbreak

of war than the Cold War system between the Soviet Union and the United States. However, it is an unpredictable and expensive system to operate in because permanent conflict resolution mechanisms cannot be devised in such an environment. Instead, security threats are addressed by means of ad hoc frameworks of conflict management. The membership and rules of these frameworks are defined on a trial-and-error basis.

This in-between system leaves great room for secondary powers such as Russia, India, Brazil, and South Africa to exercise influence, because both Washington and Beijing will vie for their attention. Russia considers its national interests to be best served by aligning with China on the majority of global security issues, but Moscow keeps its options open, maintaining a high-level strategic dialogue with NATO. Similarly, Washington has recognized *de facto* that India is a responsible nuclear weapons state despite the fact that New Delhi is not a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Despite closer relations with the United States to counter growing Chinese power, India also keeps its options open, maintaining a strategic dialogue with China through measures such as Indian observer status in the SCO and endorsement of China's observer status in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. Secondary powers do not have sufficient influence to pursue a program of international order that protects the common interests of states, but they have sufficient influence to maximize their own national interests by siding with both the United States and China on different issue areas without choosing sides.<sup>55</sup>

## **Implications for Managing the US-China Relationship**

The US integrationist and the Chinese coexistence programs of international order give rise to an international system characterized by a proliferation of loose strategic partnerships and ad hoc collaboration, the absence of permanent conflict resolution mechanisms, and competing programs for maintaining international peace and stability. These characteristics produce a highly unpredictable international environment requiring swift policy adjustments and considerable freedom of action. What are the implications for Washington's ability to manage the US-China relationship?

The principal US concern is to maintain world economic leadership by advancing proposals for financial liberalization through open mar-

kets. China has not handed over control of its economy to corporations or other nonstate actors. Even if it does not have the hyperglobalist inclination of the United States to break down state barriers by means of growing interdependence in trade and finance, China has fundamentally embraced the international market economic structures. Due to the innovation and research-and-development investments of the US economy, Washington remains the principal beneficiary of this development. Most obviously, China's market economy development is a vast improvement compared with the East-West partitioned economic order of the Cold War.

Moreover, the United States has an unprecedented chance to promote its domestic political system. The post-Cold War Iraq and Afghanistan interventions have brought out the difficulties of undertaking overseas nation-building projects in states with weak sociopolitical structures. By contrast, the power of example is a source of strength in an international system without great power agreement on common rules of the game and with competition for strategic partners. And in this game, the liberal political model of the United States has attractions because it clearly defines its long-term objectives. US great power status is by and large a known quantity, not only because the United States is the incumbent superpower, but also because it is defined by liberal values that have been translated into a model for economic and political state-society relations—the alliance system—that also defines its overseas engagements. The United States may not always live up to the liberal standard by which its performance is measured, but the international community knows which standard to use when assessing Washington's policies. By contrast, China is in a transition period from communism to a state-society model that is as yet unknown to the Chinese leaders or their international audience.

The Chinese coexistence model is an interest-based one designed to protect China against overseas interference and maintain international peace and stability without obligations for extensive cooperation. One reason for these modest international ambitions is that China does not have a domestic state-society model which complements its model of international order. The Confucian notion of harmonious society remains a rhetorical device without much practical applicability. The idea has not been translated into essential political structures, such as feedback mechanisms from society to government, or into processes such

as the use of elections to facilitate political succession. The absence of a stable political model to complement the market economy transition of recent decades means that China relies on continued economic growth and improved standards of living for regime legitimacy. The lack of a state-society model also implies that Beijing relies on random feedback mechanisms of protest and complaint and on coercion for dealing with societal dissatisfaction. Another implication is that one does not know by which value standard to measure China's performance. Hence, Beijing's objectives as a prospective great power remain unknown beyond those of maintaining national unity and restoring the Chinese motherland. This is not an attractive great power in the eyes of the international community. A majority of states will therefore continue to rely on US security guarantees and support continued US preeminence in the international system.

As of late, Washington has reasserted itself as an Asia-Pacific power intent on paying attention to the security concerns of allies by updating security commitments to states such as Japan and South Korea, by stepping up military and economic support for states such as the Philippines and India that enables them to counter growing Chinese assertiveness, by reengaging with multilateral institutions such as the ASEAN and the UN Security Council, and by promoting free trade agreements such as the South Korean–US Free Trade Agreement. Not surprisingly, China expresses a strong critique of this development. However, US clarification of its priorities and policies and its limits of acceptance with respect to China's behavior in places such as the UN Security Council and the South China Sea reassures the international community of Washington's continued commitment to the responsibilities toward other countries that comes with global great power status. This reassurance will continue to keep Chinese challenges to US preeminence at a manageable level. ■■■

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