SHADOWING THE HEGEMON? GREAT POWER NORMS, SOCIALIZATION, AND THE MILITARY TRAJECTORIES OF RISING POWERS

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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 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’ behavior—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.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

“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.”

-- 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.”

-- 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.”

-- Randall Schweller

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 far-flung 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 with catastrophic consequences in 1914. 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 over Korea’s future 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 such initial, unprecedented policy shifts also eventually contributed heavily to Japan’s tensions with the United States in the inter-war period. Its legacies continue to negatively affect Japan’s relations with China and Korea to this day. 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 rise during this period was so rapid that its economy became the world’s third-largest by the late 1960s. 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

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4 If one does not identify the Soviet Union’s economy as a national economy, then by the late 1960s Japan already had the world’s second-largest.
surging latent material capabilities in the manner that many contemporary observers believed was inevitable: 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); 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-endowed) 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 pursue 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.’ Japan’s military trajectory during the period of its rapid industrialization and economic growth suggests that some

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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 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 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. Influential 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. 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.
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, and which has yet to be adequately explained.

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 puzzling from the perspective of existing theory when actual decision-making is examined empirically. As will be argued in this study, the rise of new potential great powers does not always trigger disaster and, even when it does, it is often in large part for reasons other than those privileged by the existing literature. Equally and sometimes more important in shaping rising powers’ military policy choices can be 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 international status as a ‘military great power.’

The factors shaping rising powers’ military trajectories are not only of academic interest. These days, all eyes are on rising China. Its rapid economic and industrial expansion and surging investment in military power 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” [yu woguo guoji diwei xiangcheng 与我国国际地位相称] and as a “strategic task of China’s modernization drive [woguo xiandaihua jianshe de zhanlue renwu 我国现代化建设的战略任务].” A key driver of this push appears to be an ill-defined pursuit of status as a “military great power” [junshi daguo 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?

China’s rise of course is an ongoing process and the jury is still out concerning its future military trajectory. Yet some influential IR scholars have already predicted, based on existing

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theory and alleged historical precedent, that contemporary China will inevitably follow an expansionist and destabilizing military trajectory similar to that of past, ‘revisionist’ and expansionist rising powers.\(^9\) As Samuel Huntington wrote in 1998,

> “Every other major power, Britain and France, Germany and Japan, the United States and the Soviet Union, has engaged in outward expansion, assertion, and imperialism coincidental with or immediately following the years in which it went through rapid industrialization and economic growth. No reason exists to think that the acquisition of economic and military power will not have comparable effects in China.” [emphasis added]\(^10\)

Huntington’s analogical reasoning in this instance exemplifies a tendency among many scholars who write about rising powers to conclude from the historical record that for structural and other material reasons military, political, and even territorial expansion and the pursuit of hegemony are an inevitable result of rapid economic and industrial growth.\(^11\) In other studies with similarly unsettling implications for the future, in addition to rising powers’ pursuit of material self-interests as a potential cause of conflict other scholars have demonstrated that the desire for ‘prestige,’ ‘status,’ and entry into the ‘great power ranks’ can also serve as a major driver of leaders’ military policy choices. This pursuit, in turn, it has been argued, can foment

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\(^10\) Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, 229.

global instability and even ‘hegemonic war.’\textsuperscript{12} Indeed, the historical record of a century ago suggests that it was not until bloody victories in wars with more established powers Spain and Russia in 1898 and 1905, respectively, that the United States and Meiji Japan were recognized by their peers as having attained membership in the exclusive ‘great power club.’ Germany’s failed effort against Great Britain in World War I was in large part brought about by a similar status-seeking driver.\textsuperscript{13}

The afore-mentioned quote from recently-retired Chinese president Hu Jintao suggests that rising China, too, is intent on investing in military power for the purpose of staking its own claim to ‘military great power’ status. This begs the question: what are the qualifications for membership in this exclusive ‘club’ of nations in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century? Are military expansion, imperialism, or the defeat of an established great power in war still necessary conditions? The question on the minds of many policymakers and scholars is: is China’s path in pursuit of great power status destined to be similarly shaped by the same allegedly powerful and unavoidable structural and material forces that have supposedly compelled past rising powers to develop and employ military power in a self-serving manner that was expansionist and ultimately extremely destabilizing?

At the extreme, concerns about China’s future trajectory tend to originate in a general belief that states cannot modernize peacefully.\textsuperscript{14} Yet even the moderate 2004 U.S. National

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item See Chapters 3 and 6.
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Intelligence Council report cited above also suggests that the emergence of China may have consequences similar to the rises of Wilhelmine Germany and the United States—two pre-1914 rising powers whose ‘coming of age’ entailed the violent acquisition of distant colonies, major naval buildups, and wars with established great powers. More recently, the possibility of America and China falling into a so-called “Thucydides Trap,” which could result in a ‘hegemonic war,’ has become a hot topic among scholars and policymakers in both countries.  

While it of course important to be mindful of these more sobering historical cases, this study argues that the empirical record demonstrates that the rise of new potential great powers does not always trigger disaster and, even when it does, it is often in large part for reasons other than those privileged by the existing literature. Not all rapidly industrializing states with the requisite latent material capabilities opt to convert them into developing and employing military power in pursuit of territorial expansion, hegemony or, in at least two important cases, even independent territorial security. In short, and in contrast to widespread claims to the contrary, there is nothing inevitable about the military trajectory a rising power takes. Although not widely appreciated, what leaders in rising powers choose not to do is often as, if not more, significant in practical and theoretical terms as what they choose to do. In short, the pursuit of the military pathway to status as a ‘great power’ is a choice, as are the policies leaders adopt along the way in seeking, or avoiding, that status.

1. Objective and Preview of Shadowing/Avoiding Theory

What, then, explains the variation in the general 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.16 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 humble 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 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. This study also seeks to inform contemporary policy debates about how America and other leading states can most effectively influence the foreign policy choices of China and other rapidly developing states now and in the future. With these objectives in mind, it employs an empirical, comparative historical approach. It aims to directly identify the primary causal mechanisms that have shaped leaders’ actual military policy decision-making at more than two-dozen critical ‘strategic decision points’ during periods of rapid industrialization and economic growth in six rising powers in the modern era. 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, as well as provide

insights into where it may be headed in the future. Furthermore, it can inform policies aimed at shaping that trajectory in a positive, peaceful, and international order-sustaining direction.

Through a comparative historical analysis of five past cases and one contemporary ‘case-in-progress’ of rising powers in the modern era, the empirical chapters that follow evince the powerful ways in which perceived contemporaneous ‘great power’ norms and widely-held national identity within the state can interact to shape rising powers’ military trajectories. Chapters 3-6 demonstrate that the interaction of these two non-material factors, which have been largely overlooked in the existing IR theoretical literature on rising powers and military affairs,\(^\text{17}\) has historically had powerful and independent effects on leaders’ decisions about whether and how to develop military power and to employ it abroad. Specifically, shadowing/avoiding theory (SAT; developed more fully in Chapter 2) posits that a natural inclination of leaders is to adopt policies aimed at moving their state up the international social hierarchy. This ‘status-seeking’ driver can effectively function as a mechanism driving rising powers’ socialization to the constitutive and regulative norms contemporaneously associated with status as a member of the higher-ranking ‘great power club.’ In this sense, SAT posits that a factor of central importance in shaping a rising power’s general military trajectory is the international normative context into which it emerges. SAT’s focus on normative context and socialization processes as key elements shaping military policy outcomes represents a sharp departure from the structural Realist and materialist assumptions that currently dominate the literature on rising powers and the ‘high politics’ of military affairs.

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SAT contends that major variation in outcomes derives primarily from two primary sources. First, the norms ‘defining’ the conditions for international status as a great power are not fixed; rather, they are socially-contingent and, as such, susceptible to change. Leaders’ perceptions of these norms derive primarily from the military policies and rhetoric of the higher-ranked, leading state(s)—i.e., ‘the great powers’—in the system at the time of the rising power’s emergence. In other words, the leading state(s) in the system play the central role in defining for leaders in the rising power what policies can help it to attain coveted status as a member of the ‘great power club.’ Second, the manner in which leaders modify military policy in response to these norms is heavily contingent on widely-shared, if contested, national identity within the rising power concerning the desirability of status as a ‘military great power.’ For the purposes of the theory, which, it should be stressed, is necessarily a simplified abstraction of complicated empirical reality, states separate into two ‘ideal-types’ of rising powers. Leaders in rising powers whose national identities effectively covet entry into the ranks of the military great powers will often mimic military policies of higher-ranked states primarily in pursuit of this status. The independent effect of this status-seeking driver will manifest most clearly empirically in those platforms and missions that leaders pursue for reasons of prestige and which are divorced largely, or entirely, from their own evaluations of pressing external threats to territory or material interests overseas. The result will be a military trajectory defined to a significant extent by inefficient over-investment in military power, despite opportunity costs. Conversely, leaders who for reasons of widely-held national identity within their state have incentives to avoid status as a military great power will often eschew normatively associated policies. The independent effect of this status-avoiding driver will manifest most clearly empirically in those platforms and missions that leaders eschew despite simultaneously recognizing them as necessary to defend
against pressing external threats to the state’s territory and other material interests overseas. The result will be a military trajectory defined to a significant extent by inefficient under-investment in military power, despite explicit recognition of the associated risks and territorial, diplomatic, and economic—to say nothing of prestige—costs.

In short, SAT argues that the interaction of perceived contemporaneous great power norms and national identity is the primary cause of the observed variation in outcomes. This interaction effectively distorts, or ‘bends the curves,’ of rising powers’ military trajectories away from the expectations of the structural Realist and exclusively materialist theories that have tended to dominate the literature on rising powers, as well as ‘hard’ military affairs more generally.

2. Structure of the Dissertation

The pages that follow contain six additional chapters: a theory chapter that introduces the empirical puzzles motivating this study, more fully develops 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 SAT 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/unified 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 several theoretical, methodological, and policy implications of this study’s findings. With regard to the latter, particular attention is paid to implications for efforts of the
United States and other established powers to shape the military trajectory of the People’s Republic of China.

3. Contributions of the Study

Theoretical Implications

Combined with systematic tests of SAT’s explanatory power against several leading alternative explanations, this study’s findings challenge several widespread claims in the existing international relations literature about the fundamental drivers of state behavior under anarchy.

First, this study’s findings challenge foundational arguments in the existing literature on rising powers, especially as they concern claims of the alleged inevitability of some of the more destabilizing behaviors of past rising powers in pursuit of security and material interests, inter alia, such as military expansionism and imperialism. On the one hand, alleged structural imperatives notwithstanding, some rising powers make an explicit choice to opt out of ‘the great power game’ altogether, despite possessing the economic, industrial, and technological wherewithal necessary to play and despite their leaders’ awareness of the costs and risks of eschewing such a path. On the other hand, even those rising powers that choose to pursue status as a ‘military great power’ sometimes do so by adopting military policies aimed at ‘shadowing the hegemon’—i.e., mimicking the policies of the leading state(s)—primarily for normative reasons that in important cases are even disconnected from, or even run against, leaders’ stated strategic and other material priorities.

In pursuit of status as a member of the ‘great power club,’ leaders in rising powers belonging to this latter ‘type’ often adopt military policies aimed at conforming to what they perceive to be the socially-defined markers of their coveted status. Depending on the content of
the norms contemporaneously associated with this status, the policies that result from this socialization process can be disastrous or salubrious for international peace and stability. In short, this study demonstrates that even under the alleged constraints of international anarchy, whether and how leaders choose to invest rapidly expanding latent material capabilities into developing military power and employing it abroad and/or pursuing social recognition as a ‘military great power’ is heavily shaped by the normative context into which the rising power emerges. The resulting trajectory is largely the consequence of a series of policy choices.

Second, this study’s findings pose challenges to influential strands of Realism, a paradigm that tends to be especially influential in the literature and policy discourse on rising powers and military affairs. In a challenge to ‘defensive realist’ theories, the empirical analysis of Chapters 3-6 demonstrates that leaders in rising powers often do not only trade off security against economic welfare, à la the ‘guns vs. butter’ rationalist model; they also may trade both off against prestige and social status. In a major challenge to more aggressive strands of structural Realism, such as offensive Realism, the empirical analysis in this study suggests strongly that imperialism, territorial expansion, and the pursuit of hegemony, inter alia, are by no means inevitable consequences of structural imperatives and/or rapid industrialization and economic growth. Even some of the worst, most destructive and destabilizing policies of past rising powers typically associated with the self-help imperative under anarchy (e.g., imperialism and naval arms races) often have strong ideational roots.

Third, and most generally, the empirical analysis in subsequent chapters demonstrates that—for better or worse—non-material variables can have independent and significant effects on rising powers’ policy choices, even in the so-called ‘high politics’ of military affairs; a
domain which many IR scholars who explore the effects of non-material factors tend to avoid.\textsuperscript{18} Although in practice these non-material factors are of course not determinative of state behavior, the core mechanisms posited by shadowing/avoiding theory, status-seeking and status-avoiding, nevertheless manifest as powerful drivers of rising powers’ military policy decision-making and go far toward explaining theoretically and historically significant variation in outcomes.

Shadowing/avoiding theory contends that some of the less nuanced, pessimistic predictions based on unqualified historical analogies and/or exclusively structuralist/materialist factors often inappropriately—and often categorically—overlook the powerful role that contemporaneous ‘great power’ norms and socialization processes can play in encouraging or proscribing certain military policies in status-conscious rising powers. Historically, these norms have had major implications for the security of populations of weaker states and international peace and stability writ large, for better or for worse. When thinking about the trajectories of current and future rising powers, it is therefore important to recognize that the norms defining what constitutes a ‘great power’ in the international system today are categorically different than those which prevailed in past periods (e.g., prior to World War I).

\textit{Policy Implications}

This study’s findings also have practical implications for the likely military trajectories of current and future rising powers. They also provides insight into at least one potentially potent tool by which established powers may be able to shape rising powers’ behavior within and beyond the military domain.

As it concerns China’s future military trajectory and a possible power transition in the medium- to long-term, this study’s findings provide grounds for \textit{guarded} optimism, with the

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., xix.
following important caveats. In addition to nearly seventy years of tension with Washington over the status of Taiwan, major frictions also exist between Beijing and its neighbors over decades-old disputes over maritime territory. Both constitute longstanding sovereignty claims that China’s leaders appear to remain willing to assert coercively. Unfortunately, Beijing’s policies vis-à-vis these sovereignty claims—although a far cry from the territorial expansionism of past rising powers—may nevertheless have disastrous consequences. Even a low-level, and unintended, accident could foment a crisis that escalates to a war rapidly; a risk exacerbated by nationalism in one or both sides and China and other disputants’ lack of robust crisis management mechanisms.\footnote{For example, see Richard C Bush, \textit{The Perils of Proximity: China-Japan Security Relations} (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2010). As it concerns crisis management capabilities in both the South and East China Seas, a few salubrious developments have occurred since the publication of this study.} Due in no small part to China’s own historical experiences, conservative political and military leaders in Beijing also remain deeply skeptical of the intentions of the United States and its security allies and partners, and for these and other (especially institutional) reasons remain frustratingly non-transparent and resistant to robust military-to-military engagement, significantly limiting opportunities for more active socialization and cooperation. Furthermore, it is abundantly clear that leaders in Beijing are determined to achieve status for China as a ‘military great power,’ as both SAT and its Realist alternatives would expect. Given these circumstances, very real risks of continued tension or even conflict, especially over disputed territory on China’s immediate periphery, are destabilizing and obvious areas of concern. But it is also important to recognize that they are also not the whole story of China’s rise.

The empirical record of the past two decades suggests that, in several important cases, and despite deep-seated ideological and institutional resistance to the associated military policy
shifts, including from China’s military itself, the pursuit of recognition as a member of the ‘great power club’ is causing civilian leaders to adopt policies in accordance with their assessments of the socially-defined material trappings and behaviors of status as a ‘responsible’ great power as they exist today. While policies flowing from this status-seeking mechanism do not (yet?) appear to constitute the main thrust of China’s force development, some important shifts of potentially long-term significance have taken place. Furthermore, leaders’ perceptions of normatively associated policies (e.g., nontraditional security operations and international military cooperation) appear to be shaped in large part by the behavior and rhetoric of the leading state(s) in the system (above all, the United States). In contrast to those norms in the past that gave leaders in past rising powers clear and significant status incentives to adopt military policies—e.g., racialized imperialism—that were of dubious material or strategic benefit yet which ultimately put the state on a path to a military clash with other great powers, the norms shaping China’s behavior today proscribe most of those behaviors. To a significant degree, today’s great power force employment norms are not inherently zero-sum or conflictual. In fact, in several important cases, China’s adoption of the policies normatively associated with ‘great power’ status in the contemporary international system would actually be beneficial for both the United States and the rest of the world.

It is important to emphasize that this study’s contribution to IR theory, shadowing/avoiding theory, is a theory about rising powers; it is not intended to be a theory of China’s rise, which remains ongoing. It is intended as a generalizable, albeit mid-range, theory derived from comparative analysis of five past and one contemporary case that, inter alia, has implications for China’s current and future trajectory and for how other actors, above all the United States, can most effectively shape its emergence in a peaceful and system-sustaining
direction by defining, upholding, and abiding by more cooperative great power norms. Together with other important differences between the contemporary international system and those of the past that also provide powerful material disincentives to use military force in pursuit of narrow material self-interest,\textsuperscript{20} this study’s findings provide empirical and theoretical reasons to expect that even in the (unlikely) event that China’s breakneck economic, industrial, and military development continues apace, for normative reasons its leaders are likely to largely support the existing order. They are also unlikely to follow an expansionist trajectory remotely similar to those of the sort predicted by Huntington and others. This does not mean that China’s rise will not involve frictions and conflicts of interest with Beijing’s neighbors and the United States. Nor does it mean that a military clash over its vast, ambiguous, and controversial sovereignty claims is impossible. It does, however, suggest a significantly reduced probability of military conflict and a decreased likelihood that, inter alia, China’s emergence will lead to the sort of zero-sum expansionism and ‘hegemonic war’ of the sort envisioned by many influential studies in the international relations literature.\textsuperscript{21}


\textsuperscript{21} The theoretical, methodological, and policy implications of this study’s findings are discussed at greater length in Chapter 7.
Chapter 2: Explaining Variation in the Military Trajectories of Rising Powers

This chapter is divided into five sections. First, it reviews the three empirical puzzles that motivate this study. Second, it introduces this study’s contribution to international relations (IR) theory, *shadowing/avoiding theory (SAT)*, including its associated causal variables and mechanisms, expectations, and scope conditions. It then discusses briefly the leading alternative explanations against which I test the relative explanatory power of SAT in empirical chapters 3-6. The penultimate substantive section provides an overview of this study’s research design, case selection, and data sources. This section also explains how this study’s research design corrects for several issues found in influential past studies, which in turn contribute to its novel conclusions about the important role of non-material factors in shaping the military trajectories of rising powers. This chapter closes with a brief outline of the subsequent chapters and a brief review of how SAT fits into the existing literature, as well as its theoretical and practical implications.

1. Motivating Puzzles

From foundational theories adopting a classical Realist framework to immensely influential recent scholarship emphasizing the rationalist ‘guns versus butter’ tradeoff, seminal studies of rising powers, as well as more general paradigms in IR, fail to explain two related empirical puzzles about the extent to and manner in which leaders in rising powers choose to translate growing economic, industrial, and technological wherewithal—aka latent material capabilities—into military power. First, why, despite the anarchical nature of the international system and the allegedly existential threats posed by more powerful states, do leaders in rising
powers sometimes choose to invest scarce resources in developing military power and/or employing it abroad for reasons that in important cases are divorced from, or even run directly against, pressing strategic threats or economic interests, despite opportunity costs? Conversely, in other important cases why do leaders opt not to invest surging latent material capabilities into developing and employing military power in certain ways, despite having the requisite wealth and being cognizant of the severe strategic, political, and diplomatic costs and risks of their failure to do so?

In other words, despite anarchy as a constant fact of life in the international system not all leaders of rising powers choose to leverage surging latent material capabilities to maximize security or military power, much less prepare for hegemonic war. Meanwhile, some others even make a choice to avoid developing sufficient military power to achieve even far less ambitious goals, such as being able to employ military force as a tool of coercive diplomacy or simply to gain the ability to safeguard and/or assert independently the state’s territorial, security, economic, and political interests. Leaders in some rising powers explicitly opt out of ‘the great power game,’ despite possessing the economic and industrial capabilities necessary to play and understanding the risks (e.g., exploitation or invasion) and opportunity costs (e.g., reduced political influence, coercive capabilities, international status and prestige) of not doing so.

The aforementioned possible distortions to a rising power’s military trajectory are deeply puzzling from the standpoint of existing theory. After all, if the utility functions implied by foundational theories of rising powers and military affairs are correct, only ‘irrational’ leaders would knowingly either under-invest scarce resources in military power, a decision which would leave the state vulnerable to elimination in a war, or over-invest (e.g., by procuring unnecessary
platforms or deploying forces on unnecessary missions abroad), which would not only distract from efforts to deter actual pressing strategic threats but also reduce domestic consumption.22

Illustrative examples

Examples of the afore-mentioned empirical puzzles, or distortions from theoretical expectations, can be found in the historical record. The empirical puzzles that motivate this study

22 The fact that leaders in rising powers develop and employ military power in these distorted ways runs counter to the expectations of many influential studies in contemporary international security studies, especially those which adopt a material rationalist approach (in the political scientific sense). For Realists, international politics under anarchy means that states’ military capabilities pose threats to one another, intentions are uncertain, and therefore states cannot trust or depend on others for their survival; i.e., they have no choice but to engage in ‘self-help.’ Under these conditions, armaments are the principal means through which the state ensures its survival. Hans J Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, 6th ed. (McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1985), 200. For classical Realists, economic wealth is the foundation of military power and military power is the protector of wealth. As Kennedy argues, “wealth is usually needed to underpin military power, and military power is usually needed to acquire and protect wealth.” Kennedy, Rise&Fall, xvi. And just as firms are profit-maximizers, states are “power-maximizers” and therefore they will pursue their interests (i.e., power) as efficiently as possible. Zakaria, FWTP, 9. Gilpin, War&Change, xii. For seminal works adopting some variant of classical realism, see Choucri and North, Nations in Conflict; Gilpin, War&Change; Kennedy, Rise&Fall. For offensive realism, see Mearsheimer, TToGPP. More recent neoclassical Realist scholarship modifies classical realism’s dependent variable from “power maximization” to “influence maximization” and even recognizes that states occasionally “under-expand” or “under-balance.” Yet this puzzle is explained as due to a deficit of state, as opposed to national, power; the Realist assumption of the inclination to expand/balance power or influence for material ends remains unchanged. Zakaria, FWTP; Randall L. Schweller, “Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing,” International Security 29, no. 2 (2004): 159–201. From this perspective, national interests are determined by material resources; and as the state grows more powerful its interests and military will inevitably expand, leading in turn to a push for territorial, political, and economic expansion as the state seeks to maximize its power over others and even pursue hegemony. Gilpin, War&Change, 10; Zakaria, FWTP, 5; Mearsheimer, TToGPP. As Thucydides wrote, "the strong take what they can and the weak suffer what they must." For scholars adopting defensive/Neorealist assumptions the causal story differs, yet international anarchy still compels states to maximize security while minimizing economic costs, i.e., to translate economic wealth efficiently into military power in response to external threats to material interests. A case-in-point is recent influential scholarship on the ‘guns vs. butter’ tradeoff, which assumes that because of international anarchy and the fact that state’s resources are scarce, allocating defense spending efficiently is critical because, while necessary for the state’s survival, investment in the military brings no other direct benefits. In other words, the opportunity costs of military spending are severe in terms of lost ‘butter’ (i.e., consumption) now and in the future; yet failure to spend sufficiently on military power risks the loss of an existential war and de facto elimination of the state. As Thucydides runs counter to the expectations of many influential studies in contemporary international security studies, especially those which adopt a material rationalist approach (in the political scientific sense). 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One can infer that this desire to maximize security as efficiently as possible would be especially pronounced for rising powers, which by definition face more powerful states with possible aggressive intentions. For the security dilemma, see John H. Herz, “Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma,” World Politics 2, no. 2 (January 1950): 157–80. Gilpin notes that a declining power’s “first and most attractive option” in response to the emergence of a potential challenger is to “eliminate the source of the problem”—i.e., preventive war. Gilpin, War&Change, 191. Copeland’s argument suggests that rising powers should be especially concerned about their security, as the dominant but declining power is likely to launch a preventive war against the rising power out of fear for its future security. Dale C. Copeland, The Origins of Major War (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).
are the military trajectories of two past rising powers—late 19th/early 20th-century Germany and late 20th-century Japan—while for its part the contemporary ‘case-in-progress’ of rising China also evinces some puzzling developments that challenge the assumptions of existing theory. This study develops a theory to account for this puzzling variation.

Late 19th/Early 20th-century Germany

A poster-child for the first distortion—puzzling and inefficient over-investment in military power—is late 19th/early 20th-century Germany. Two of the most significant military policy shifts during its period of rapid industrialization and economic growth in the three decades prior to World War I were aimed primarily at gaining international prestige, or “a place in the sun” to use a favorite phrase of German leaders at the time. Although pre-1914 Germany’s military policies are often put forward by Realists as a prime example of the ‘self-help’ imperative under anarchy and/or the innate aggressiveness and expansionism of rising powers, quintessential continental state Germany’s pursuit of far-flung colonies abroad and a massive battlefleet, in particular a hugely expensive fleet of dreadnoughts, are widely recognized by historians as having been largely divorced from of its most pressing strategic threats and material interests—all of which emanated from the European continent. Far from being of marginal historical importance, these hugely wasteful military policy shifts were arguably the primary contributors to exacerbating tensions with Great Britain; thereby creating a mutual “antagonism” which ultimately culminated in hegemonic war in 1914.24 These costly policies also likely contributed to its defeat in World War I.

23 This case is examined in Chapter 6.
Late 20th-Century Japan

A poster-child for the second distortion—puzzling and inefficient under-investment in military power—is late 20th-century Japan. At various points during its rapid ascent, and despite having achieved record-breaking annual economic and industrial rates of growth over a period of several decades, Japan’s post-war military trajectory consistently bucked the expectations of both contemporaneous observers and Realist and other materialist-oriented theoretical paradigms.

From both a theoretical and policy perspective, its military policies during this period were most remarkable for what Japan’s leaders chose not to do, rather than what they did. Japan’s self-restraint and ‘low-posture’ (tei shisei 低姿勢) in foreign affairs is particularly puzzling not only because of its trajectory over the seven decades prior to 1945, but also in light of the fact that throughout this period Japan’s staunchly anti-communist and conservative post-war leaders recognized severe external security threats, especially from nuclear-armed, communist China and the Soviet Union—both countries with which Japan had fought major wars twice in the previous century. Additionally, Japan’s leaders had clear and increasing territorial, diplomatic, and economic—to say nothing of prestige— incentives to leverage their country’s rapidly growing economic, industrial, and technological capabilities to adopt a more ‘normal’ and independent defense posture, and to become more directly involved and assertive in regional and global political and security affairs.

Yet throughout the period of its ‘miracle’ economic, industrial, and technological development, Japan’s conservative leaders were compelled by fears of a strong public backlash against any moves that could possibly be construed as an attempt to return to the military pathway to great power status to make a virtue of asymmetric, high-cost, and high-risk reliance.

25 This case is examined in Chapter 4.
for security on another country—the United States. These leaders chose to essentially outsource significant aspects of Japan’s territorial and material security despite deep concerns about entrapment and widespread fears of likely abandonment by America in the event of an actual major crisis or military conflict. They also faced immense pressure at times from Washington to do otherwise. Finally, and, most puzzlingly from the perspective of existing theory, Japan possessed copious latent material capabilities that were more than sufficient to develop and employ military power to provide independently for its own defense—a cause in fact championed by several leaders, but never successfully implemented. Indeed, the 1955 founding party platform of the conservative Liberal Democratic Party, which has ruled Japan for most of the past sixty years, explicitly called for “national independence,” a “collective security system,” “self-defense military commensurate with national power and conditions,” and the “withdrawal of foreign forces stationed [in Japan].”

Especially puzzling is that despite very low spending on defense for most of this period even those limited investments that leaders did make in Japan’s Self-defense Forces were sometimes highly inefficient. In many cases, platforms and weapons (e.g., nuclear weapons, aircraft carriers, and offensive-strike missiles) that would have produced significant deterrence, political influence, or prestige ‘bang’ for a relatively small ‘buck’ were consistently and explicitly eschewed.

In short, the expectations of Realist and other materialist-oriented theories—including theories of security maximization, power maximization, and those founded in the ‘guns vs. butter’ tradeoff—were significantly off-the-mark. Late-20th century Japan’s rapid economic and industrial growth did not cause it ‘inevitably’ to reemerge as a military great power, pursue independent military capabilities sufficient to protect its own territory and material interests

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abroad, or even to invest scarce resources efficiently in maximizing the security payoff of the limited amount that its leaders chose to spend on defense. In short, in many aspects of historical and theoretical significance, late 20th-century Japan’s military trajectory runs directly counter to prevailing assumptions in IR theory about the fundamental drivers of state behavior under anarchy.

**Contemporary China**

Several aspects of contemporary China’s military trajectory appear to indicate that it is taking what some Realist studies of rising powers have called “a thoroughly traditional course.” Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 5, based on existing theory China seems to check many of the boxes for a likely revisionist power intent on revising the international system in its favor. Beijing has long been identified as having a thoroughly ‘realpolitik’ approach to foreign affairs. It is an authoritarian state that for many reasons seems an unlikely candidate to be socialized to contemporary norms, which are promoted by ‘Western,’ liberal democracies, especially the United States—the country Beijing explicitly identifies as its number one threat. Its nominal four-fold increase in annual defense spending during the 2003-2012 period, its investment in developing asymmetric capabilities aimed at preparing for potential conflicts in the ‘Near Seas’

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27 This contemporary case-in-progress is examined in Chapter 5.
30 In addition to identifying China’s system of authoritarian rule as a likely source of major friction with the United States in the years ahead, Friedberg argues that “Beijing’s ultimate aim is to ‘make the world safe for authoritarianism’” and that a “desire for dominance and control” is a direct consequence of its political system. Aaron L. Friedberg, “Hegemony with Chinese Characteristics,” *The National Interest*, June 21, 2011. Based on this argument, China seems likely to oppose norms promoted by the liberal democratic leading states, above all the United States.
(jinhai 近海), and its leaders’ apparent determination to procure multiple aircraft carriers, space planes, and a motley assortment of other platforms ostensibly useful for power projection suggest as much. Meanwhile, as discussed in the previous chapter, the evident desire of China’s leaders’ to develop China into a first-rank great power with military power commensurate with its international economic standing is clear. Yet a close analysis of the major changes to the manner in which China develops and employs military power over the past two decades reveals that important aspects of its general trajectory differ from that of expansionist late 19th- and early 20th-century rising powers in ways of theoretical and practical significance.

Although it is important to recognize that China’s rise is ongoing, several important aspects of policy shifts thus far suggest that the factors shaping its course differ in some significant ways from the expectations of influential theories of rising powers, especially variants of structural realism and others that assert the across-the-board preeminence of material interests in shaping military policy choices. For example, China has shown no clear signs of engaging in what many of the Realist works on rising powers cited earlier suggest is an inevitable pastime: overseas military expansion. Beijing’s ‘assertiveness’ vis-à-vis Taiwan and unresolved maritime territorial disputes, while undoubtedly provocative and clearly destabilizing, is focused exclusively on sovereignty claims that are longstanding and which predate China’s current phase of rapid development by several decades. This is not to say that the vast (and vague) bounds of the sovereignty claims themselves or China’s willingness to assert them coercively are justified. But they do not appear to represent an example of the clear change in policy or manifestation of the kind of territorial expansionism that existing theories would expect a rapidly rising power such

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as China to inevitably pursue. This distinction between causal mechanisms and outcomes may be subtle, but it is important in both theoretical and practical terms for thinking about China’s likely future.

Significantly, and again contrary to theoretical expectation, despite rapidly expanding military power China’s leaders have not called for, much less pursued, expansion into previously undisputed territory. The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) has not used force kinetically against another country since 1988 and has not fought a war since 1979. Over the past two decades Beijing has resolved most of its land territorial disputes peacefully, in some cases on terms generous to the other party. Even in the cases of its expansive and increasingly volatile island and maritime sovereignty claims, since the early 2000s Beijing has held the PLA Navy (PLAN) back from front-line operations and has instead typically relied on non-military vessels to further or otherwise support its claims. Finally, there are as of yet no obvious signs that China seeks to challenge the United States militarily for global leadership despite its civilian and military leaders’ clear frustrations with U.S. foreign policy and longstanding identification of the U.S. military as China’s foremost military threat.

In fact, while frictions over disputed territories over which China claims sovereignty are likely to persist and appear to remain the primary focus of China’s force development, further afield there are grounds for (guarded) optimism about China’s military trajectory. In recent years China has significantly increased its constructive participation in the very international institutions that its leaders have traditionally shunned. In the Far Seas (yuanhai 远海), where deeply sensitive issues of territorial sovereignty are not salient, China appears to be behaving in

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an constructive manner that evinces a significant, though gradual, departure from both the expectations of existing theories of rising powers and China’s own very conservative foreign policy traditions. Its leaders appear to be increasingly, albeit from an extremely low base, acting in accordance with some contemporary norms defining what some in Washington call ‘responsible great power behavior.’

In an important shift of potentially great long-term significance, since 2004 China’s civilian leadership has compelled the PLA to accept major changes to its roles and missions and to increase its involvement in overseas non-traditional security operations and naval cooperation with other countries. Both developments are unprecedented in the history of China’s military forces. One case-in-point is the PLA Navy’s participation in the U.S.-led and U.N.-sanctioned counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden (since 2008). This ongoing deployment represents a seminal shift in China’s foreign policy: it is both China’s first far-seas operational deployment of naval power since 1433 A.D. and its first-ever involvement in a multinational military operation. In another shift, China has begun to participate in overseas humanitarian assistance and disaster-relief operations, even procuring its first-ever purpose-built hospital ship (2008). Taking a page directly out of the U.S. Navy’s playbook, since 2010 Beijing deploys this hospital ship annually on ‘harmonious missions’ (hexie shiming 和谐使命) around the world and to provide medical assistance to other countries following tragedies, such as Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines (2013). And in yet another unprecedented move, in 2012 and again in 2013 PLA combat troops deployed abroad operationally for the first time since China’s 1979 war with Vietnam—to support UN peacekeeping operations. As recently as the 1990s China’s leaders refused to participate in these operations—primarily for ideological reasons. Even with the U.S. superpower—a country still referred to regularly, and disparagingly, as a ‘hegemon’ (baquan 超霸
Beijing is gradually expanding cooperation in the military realm, such as joint counter-piracy operations and search-and-rescue and humanitarian assistance/disaster-relief exercises.

Although still at a low base, the aforementioned changes to China’s military role have occurred despite China’s longstanding principle of ‘noninterference’ and a traditionally realpolitik strategic culture that militates strongly against the associated policy shifts. These new nontraditional security additions to the PLA’s mission set also occur despite the fact that China has yet to come close to resolving any of what its own leaders have identified for decades as its primary strategic tasks closer to home—above all, Taiwan—and during a period in which its military capabilities outside of very specific, and significant, pockets of excellence remain behind those of several countries with which its own leaders believe it is most likely to fight a war, especially the United States and Japan. Significantly, there is at least anecdotal evidence that these new policies have elicited opposition even from within the PLA itself.

Meanwhile, observable trends in China’s military hardware procurement suggest that, as is the case with its expensive manned space program and possible missions to the moon and Mars, changes to China’s force development policies in recent years are in some important cases aimed increasingly at acquiring conspicuous prestige-driven, highly-publicized, and extremely expensive capabilities of dubious military utility for China’s stated strategic priorities. For example, the Politburo appears to have sanctioned a multi-platform aircraft carrier program as part of a blue-water navy development program—a puzzling and potentially extremely costly choice, especially for a continental state like China. Furthermore, this nascent push occurs in an era when these hugely expensive platforms are increasingly criticized even among leading U.S. Navy strategists (not to mention many Chinese commentators and even some former leaders) as
immensely vulnerable to modern intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (e.g., satellites) and weapons of war (e.g., precision-guided missiles and submarines). Still more puzzling is the fact that China does not yet appear to be making major investments in crucial defense capabilities—especially anti-submarine warfare—or logistical support necessary to actually employ these hugely expensive and vulnerable surface ships in any likely high-intensity military conflict. Arguably for good reason, not only did China’s past political leaders oppose some of these platforms on economic, operational, and strategic grounds, even official PLA journals—remarkably—have criticized recent military procurement trends. For example, an internal PLA journal recently argued that recent trends are tantamount to “blind shadowing [i.e., mimicry] [mangmu genzong 盲目跟踪] of overseas developments in arms and equipment technology [in a manner that] lacks a foundation in [China’s] national strategic direction and policies and the potential threats from [China’s] enemies.”\(^{34}\)

To be sure, China’s rise is ongoing and the jury is still out concerning its future course. Its military’s resources, capabilities, and confidence increasingly give it the ability to attempt to assert China’s interests on its contested periphery, a development which has the potential to seriously challenge the interests of the United States, its allies, and other partners in the region. An apparent willingness of China’s leaders to assert its vast and ambiguous sovereignty claims over disputed territory on its immediate periphery via coercive measures short of actual use of kinetic military force also remains deeply problematic, exacerbates frictions with its neighbors and provides clear grounds for concern about the possibility of a military conflict that no

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\(^{34}\) This quotation comes from a 2011 article in an authoritative internal PLA journal *Military Economic Research* written by three bold officers from the PLA Institute of Equipment Command and Technology. Ming Zhang 张明, Wei Qu 曲, and Haiwei Bai 白海威, “Jiantan Tigao Wuqi Zhuangbei Caibian Xiaoyi 浅谈提高武器装备采办效益 [On Increasing the Efficiency of Armaments and Equipment],” *Junshi Jingji Yanjiu 军事经济研究*, no. 3 (2011): 29.
involved parties appear to want, and which could easily drag in the U.S. military. Nevertheless, the empirical record of the past decade also suggests another important, far more hopeful, trend with potentially huge long-term implications for China’s future military trajectory and possible emergence as a global power.

In sum, major changes to China’s military policy profile with potentially long-term implications suggest a general trajectory that differs in important ways from those of most of the past cases upon which IR theorists have developed foundational theory on rising powers. It is also characterized by some nascent trends in the PLA’s evolving force structure and roles and missions of potential long-term significance for which existing theory has difficulty accounting. While China’s future course is of course unknowable, these recent trends provide grounds for guarded optimism. In fact, some aspects of China’s rapidly changing military policy profile may not only bode well for the avoidance of a hegemonic war and the gradual socialization of China’s leaders to a degree that will culminate in China’s emergence as a ‘responsible stakeholder’ and supporter of the existing international order.

2. Toward an Explanation of Variation in Military Trajectories of Rising Powers

While the empirical puzzles discussed above motivate this study, they are but three cases from a larger pool of rapidly industrializing rising powers. This section develops a generalizable, but mid-range, theory—shadowing/avoiding theory (SAT)—designed to explain puzzling distortions from the expectations of existing theories. This important variation in the general military trajectories of rising powers is a phenomenon of theoretical and practical significance, yet one which the existing IR literature has yet to address explicitly. Although many leading IR scholars writing on related issues appear to recognize—often implicitly—that the military
trajectory a rising power takes is a choice, the literature has yet to directly identify or explain this dependent variable—especially in a comparative study.

The four empirical chapters that follow analyze military policy decision-making in six rapidly industrializing rising powers experiencing breakneck economic growth, selected for diversity across time and space: three pre-1914 cases (Meiji Japan, the United States, and Germany), two late 20th-century cases (Japan and Germany), and one contemporary ‘case-in-progress’ (China). In the interest of providing a rigorous empirical test of SAT’s causal mechanisms, each case study also contains tests of SAT’s explanatory power relative to that of each of several leading alternative explanations (see section 3, below).

**The Dependent Variable**

This study seeks to explain a rising power’s general military trajectory, as captured by leaders’ decisions about military policies during a period in which the state’s economic and industrial wherewithal, i.e., its latent material capabilities, are expanding rapidly. It focuses on these periods of rapid growth in order to control for a key independent variable that existing theories suggest should inevitably cause states under international anarchy to invest heavily in developing military power and employing it abroad for reasons of territorial security, expansion, or to safeguard overseas material and political interests.

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35 See ‘Case Selection’ section below for more details.
36 There are three main reasons why this study uses the term ‘military policy’ as opposed to ‘security policy.’ First, by definition the term ‘security policy’ contains an implicit assumption that the military is used exclusively to ensure the security of the state and/or to directly protect its territorial/material interests. Second, use of the term military helps elucidate the scope conditions of the theory developed herein by explicitly stating that the policy outcomes of interest are limited strictly to those involving the development and employment of the state’s military forces. For example, policies related to a state’s economic security are out-of-bounds unless they explicitly involve the use of the military. Third, the theory aims to explain the ways that states construct and employ their militaries, period. I see no compelling reason to bias the study’s findings by excluding a priori those policies which do not involve the use, or threat of use, of kinetic or non-kinetic force for the purpose of destruction, coercion, etc. For example, the deployment of military forces overseas to participate in humanitarian assistance/disaster relief missions falls within the scope of the theory.
Operationalizing and Measuring the Dependent Variable

The task of developing a valid, analytically-tractable, social-scientific test for the cause of a rising power’s general military trajectory, an outcome which unfolds over a period of several decades, presents several methodological challenges. In order to facilitate measurement of this dependent variable and to maximize the analytical tractability of the empirical tests in this study, I employ two simplifying measures.

The first simplifying measure is to ‘map’ the rising power’s general military trajectory over a multi-year period by examining outcomes at a series of specific, major decision nodes during its period of rapid economic and industrial growth. Each individual node, or strategic decision point (SDP), represents a moment in time when leaders in the rising power consider whether to develop the state’s military capabilities and/or employ its military overseas in an unprecedented manner that represents a major shift from past practice.\(^{37}\) The notional ‘big picture’ dependent variable—the rising power’s general military trajectory—is effectively operationalized as the aggregate of the series of decisions about military policy made at each of these SDPs.

This operationalization and measurement strategy aims explicitly to measure the relative influence of the specific factors that shape actual military policy decision-making in rising powers. The objective is to identify the key forces driving change or continuity in rising powers’ military policies during periods of rapid economic and industrial growth. This approach departs from much of the existing theoretical literature, which tends to develop or test theory primarily based upon a broad survey of policy outcomes or be mostly non-empirical. In contrast, this study zooms in on specific decision points and tests theoretical expectations against the empirical

\(^{37}\) For a list of candidate SDPs, see case selection sub-section below.
record of actual policy decision-making. This study’s focus on identifying causal mechanisms also facilitates empirical tests of the explanatory power of SAT relative to leading alternative explanations for the major drivers of shifts (or lack thereof) in rising powers’ military policies. As discussed in Section 5, below, extensive consideration of multiple alternative explanations is often absent from or glossed over in foundational works in the field.

The second simplifying measure is to break down the broad category of “military policies” into two sub-categories: force development and force employment. The first sub-category—force development policies—is operationalized as leaders’ decisions about how to develop, or structure, the rising power’s military forces, especially the weapons and platforms that leaders choose to procure. The latter sub-category—force employment policies—refers to the manner in which the rising power’s military forces are actually used overseas. It is operationalized as leaders’ decisions about what overseas roles and missions to assign to the military.

Table 1 Defining ‘Military Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-category of military policy</th>
<th>How is it operationalized?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Force development</td>
<td>what weapons and platforms does the state procure?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• what the military is composed of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Force employment</td>
<td>In what overseas roles and missions is the military involved?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• what the military is used for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

38 I use this term more broadly than some other scholars. For example, in an influential study of battlefield outcomes, Biddle defines force employment narrowly as “the doctrine and tactics by which armies use their materiel in the field.” Stephen Biddle, *Military Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 2.

39 Differentiation between force development and force employment is not merely an academic distinction; policymakers and even top military leaders clearly look regularly to force employment policies for signals about a given state’s intentions, especially whether it should be seen as threatening. For example, in July 2011, Admiral Mike Mullen, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, while stating his view that China’s large investment in developing its military forces was “fairly natural,” he also added that his view of China’s growing military might would depend on how it was used. “Mullen Cites Importance of U.S.-China Relationship,” *American Forces Press Service*, July 11, 2011.
Why Focus on Debates Over Unprecedented Changes to Military Policy?

There are several reasons why this study focuses specifically on debates among leaders about whether to develop the rising power’s military capabilities and/or employ its military overseas in a manner that represents a major departure from past practice. First, influential Realist theories on related topics suggest that as a state’s latent material capabilities grow and its interests expand overseas its leaders will inevitably make major changes to the state’s military policy profile. Conversely, in this view military policy stasis in a rising power is unlikely. From a Realist perspective, because the anarchical nature of the international system compels states to engage in ‘self-help’ behavior in order to survive and thrive, these changes should be aimed in the first-order at efficiently enhancing its territorial security and safeguarding its expanding material interests against perceived external threats (security-maximizing hypothesis) and/or expanding militarily in order to dominate others and pursue hegemony (power-maximizing hypothesis). ⁴⁰

An analysis of the content of elite debates about such potential policy changes at SDPs during periods of rapid growth, as well as the content of the subsequent policy choices themselves, enables robust empirical tests of the explanatory power of these hugely influential Realist and materialist assumptions. A focus on shifts also allows for a test of whether anarchy compels leaders *ab ovo* to adopt military strategies aimed at achieving certain objectives (e.g., territorial expansion; nuclear weapons acquisition; hegemony), or, alternatively, leaders develop strategies in fits and starts and have mutable preferences over means and/or outcomes. ⁴¹ After all, the most appropriate way to test for SAT’s posited independent and significant effect of

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⁴⁰ The full set of alternative explanations is developed fully in section 3, below.

⁴¹ In this sense, it allows for an empirical test of the validity of Wendt’s claim that “Identities are the basis of interests. Actors do not have a ‘portfolio’ of interests that they carry around independent of social context; instead, they define their interests in the process of defining situations. Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 398.
socialization to contemporaneous great power norms—socialization, of course, being a

*process*—is to examine trend lines and the causes of change or stasis in rising power behavior.

Developing a more complete understanding of the factors that shape leaders’ decisions about changes to military policy over time is not merely of theoretical interest. It also has potentially profound implications for the efforts of established powers to shape the manner in which rising powers emerge. Understanding the outcomes and effects of rising powers’ policy shifts is of course important, but understanding the causes of these shifts is a prerequisite for efforts to shape the future decisions of leaders in rising powers. In particular, significant empirical evidence that leaders’ preferences are not predetermined allows for the possibility that outside actors can play a role in shaping not only the manner in which these leaders choose to pursue the rising power’s interests—be they material or non-material—but also how they define those very interests. It also allows for the possibility that states could become socialized early on in their rise in a manner that ‘locks in’ certain logics of appropriateness concerning ends and means in foreign affairs—for better, or for worse.⁴²

Second, focusing on debates at SDPs, whose outcomes this study’s research design assumes are not predetermined, rather than restricting the analysis to policy outcomes of a certain type *a priori*, will help to shed further light on the causal mechanisms at play in actual military policy decision-making. This approach not only generates multiple testable observations per rising power country case study, it also mitigates selection bias found in studies on related topics (see Section 4, below.) For example, this approach includes in the analysis even those

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⁴² In an analysis of Bismarck’s abortive embrace of imperialism, Wehler discusses ‘founding periods,’ or periods of time in which states get set on a particular path during a crucial stage of development. For reference, see Hans-Ulrich Wehler, “Bismarck’s Imperialism 1862-1890,” *Past & Present*, no. 48 (August 1, 1970): 150–151. The possibility of a socialized ‘lock-in’ effect is why focusing on major shifts in rising powers early on in their rise is so important, which in turn informs the methodological approach employed in this study.
SDPs when leaders debate, but ultimately decide not to change policy; the kind of ‘non-event’ that is often overlooked.43

**Defining ‘Rising Powers’ and ‘Great Powers’**

Scholars, political and military leaders, policy analysts, and the media frequently use the terms ‘rising powers’ and ‘great powers’ to describe types of states with particular characteristics that make them distinct from others. But the characteristics of states associated with these (fundamentally socially-contingent) labels are rarely defined explicitly, if at all.44 And even those definitions which do exist “can be a bit elastic.”45 In order to facilitate evaluations of the validity of the theory developed and tested herein, this study provides explicit definitions of the group labels ‘rising power’ and ‘great power.’ It does so in a manner designed to allow for a case selection that avoids selecting on the dependent variable. As discussed below, it contends that in the empirical world the characteristics of the states to which these widely-used labels are applied are in fact socially-defined.

In this study, a *rising power* is a state whose rapid, positively-sloped industrialization and economic development, coupled with its absolute size, leads observers both within and outside the state to identify it as a candidate for entering the ranks of the ‘great powers’ in the near future. Framing the concept of a ‘rising power’ in this way acknowledges rapid and long-term growth in

43 Although not explicitly addressed in the empirical analysis in this study given obvious methodological hurdles, it should be noted that additional ‘non-decision’ policy outcomes could also be attributable to the ‘logic of habit,’ prior to which no observable debates would occur. These outcomes could still be attributable primarily to normative factors; norms so deeply-seated in identity that their effects are not even observable. Ted Hopf, “The Logic of Habit in International Relations,” *European Journal of International Relations* 16, no. 4 (2010): 539–61.
44 For example, even Kennedy’s famous tome lacks a clear definition of “great power.” Kennedy, *Rise&Fall.*
latent material capabilities as a prerequisite for acquiring the ability to develop significant military power and project it overseas. It also establishes this growth as a secular trend. In this sense, this definition is compatible with the long-standing Realist idea that economic power and differential growth rates are necessary conditions for great power emergence.

Yet the concept of a ‘rising power’ employed in this study differs from that found in most existing scholarship on related issues in that it explicitly avoids baking into the definition an assumption that all rising powers will inevitably exploit rapidly expanding latent material capabilities to become military great powers, to compete militarily with the established powers, and/or to develop or employ military power in a certain way. In short, this study identifies rising powers based on the rapidly growing economic and industrial wherewithal that enables the state to make the choices to adopt those policies typically associated in the IR literature with ‘great power’ status in the military domain. In other words, it avoids identifying ‘rising powers’ retroactively based on certain later policy choices; i.e., the acquisition of certain platforms or capabilities (e.g., dreadnoughts; nuclear weapons) or the employment of the military on certain missions (e.g., territorial expansion; imperialism) that—because of their own socialization—scholars tend to associate with status as a ‘great power.’ This identification strategy mitigates problems inherent in selecting cases based on a predetermined value of the dependent variable, a methodological issue widespread in the existing literature on rising and great powers. Selecting on the dependent variable would otherwise weaken the theory’s explanatory power by eliminating variation in outcomes a priori and in so doing, prevent a robust test of causal mechanisms.

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46 In contrast, a definition based on defense spending would often lead states to be reclassified as “rising” or “declining” year-to-year. Liebman, “Timing of Power,” 27.
47 For more on selection bias in existing studies, see Section 5, below.
Because this study is focused explicitly on explaining the military policy choices of rising powers from the perspective of their leaders, a *great power* is a state that leaders in the rising power identify as the leading state in the system (or as a member of an exclusive grouping of higher-ranked leading states).\(^48\)

To be sure, how these two terms should be defined is not straightforward, and the alternative approaches come with important tradeoffs.\(^49\) From a purely methodological standpoint it is tempting to use definitions based exclusively on metrics that are relatively easy for scholars to objectively identify and straightforward to measure, such as GDP, steel production, or military expenditure statistics.\(^50\) These material indicators appear to be important, and employing these traditional, readily-quantifiable metrics to differentiate ‘types’ of states has clear advantages, such as enhancing the replicability of any given study. But using them also risks inappropriately implying a sense of scientific precision that may distract more than it reveals by suggesting that leaders base their decisions about whether to label a state a ‘rising’ or ‘great’ power exclusively, or even primarily, on objectively-identifiable and purely quantitative

\(^{48}\) In most cases, this great power definition will correlate closely with the ‘dominant nation’ concept expounded on in power transition theory: “[the state] at the top of the hierarchical pyramid […] that, for most of its tenure, is the most powerful nation in the international order. Today that nation is the United States, and its predecessor was England.” J. Kugler and A.F.K. Organski, “The Power Transition: A Retrospective and Prospective Evaluation,” in *Handbook of War Studies*, ed. Midlarsky, Manus I. (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 173. Similarly, Nye uses the term “leading state” to refer to the same powers. Nye, *Bound to Lead*, 34.


\(^{50}\) These metrics have often been used to the security studies literature; e.g., to identify ‘great powers.’ For example, power transition theorists suggest that a rising power has achieved parity once it has acquired 80 percent of the dominant state’s material power. See A. F. K Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 49. This cut point seems to be relatively arbitrary, however. Even more troubling is the fact that based on Correlates of War data, China’s share of world power capabilities surpassed that of the United States in the early 1980s. Alastair Iain Johnston and Sheena Chestnut, “The People’s Republic of China at 60: Is It Rising?,” in *The People’s Republic of China at 60: An International Assessment*, ed. William C. Kirby (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 109. Yet even after three decades of rapid growth and surging military spending, few China experts today would argue that China’s global material power is even close to that of the United States. According to COW data, in the 1980s Japan was not a ‘major power,’ while China has been one since the 1950s.
measures of material capabilities. \(^{51}\) Indeed, as the case of contemporary China illustrates, disconnects between contemporary discourse and material indicators suggest that the perceptions upon which these labels are typically based rely less on the latter than political scientists often imply. \(^{52}\) Instead, their specific content is often socially-contingent.

**Introducing Shadowing/Avoiding Theory**

In contrast to the claims of influential existing theories, a closer look at the historical record demonstrates clearly that international anarchy does not compel all rising powers to inevitably follow some predetermined military trajectory as their latent power grows and their interests expand overseas. Of greatest relevance to this study are the two possible major distortions from theoretical expectation delineated earlier: First, leaders in rising powers sometimes choose to invest scarce resources in developing military power and employing it abroad for reasons that in important cases are divorced from, or even run directly against, pressing strategic threats or economic interests. And second, in other important cases leaders opt not to invest the rising power’s surging latent material capabilities into developing and employing military power in the ways that existing theories expect, despite having the requisite wealth and being fully cognizant of the severe strategic (even existential), political, and diplomatic costs of their failure to do so.


\(^{52}\) For example, through comparative analysis of trends in China’s material power and contemporary discourse, scholars have shown that the only definition by which contemporary China universally can be said to be rising is contemporary discourse. Johnston and Chestnut, “The People’s Republic of China at 60: Is It Rising?,” 114–115.
To more fully account for this important and unexplained variation in rising powers’ military trajectories, including the oft-overlooked but equally theoretically and historically significant ‘dogs that don’t bark,’ I advance a middle-range theory of rising power military policy decision-making called shadowing/avoiding theory (below, “SAT’). The remainder of this section contains an explanation of SAT’s causal variables and expectations, a brief discussion of its microfoundations and how core concepts differ from those employed in the existing literature, and a summary of scope conditions.

**Part 1 Causal Variables**

Causal variable 1: National identity—to be, or not to be, a ‘military great power’?

SAT’s first causal variable captures the presence or absence of a widely-shared national identity concerning the desirability of attaining international status as a ‘military great power.’ This identity variable will be shaped primarily by widely-held, though domestically contested, historical memories. For theoretical purposes, it is operationalized as a simple binary variable—specifically, whether the previous regime pursued status as a military great power in a manner that resulted in what the majority of the public interprets as self-initiated national suffering (i.e., massive casualties as well as huge economic, material, and reputational costs). This variable determines state ‘type.’

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53 “National identity” refers to beliefs about the social group to which one belongs, or aspires to belong, in a given domain. Using the term in this way is merely a shortcut for theoretical simplicity to roughly capture domestic preferences about military policies shared by a critical mass of the domestic audience. It does not mean to reify or totalize domestic sentiment concerning military power, which is contested at both the mass and elite level in all countries, or to suggest that this identity is fixed. All of these are empirical questions. On treating identity as a variable in political science, see Rawi Abdelal et al., “Identity as a Variable,” *Perspectives on Politics* 4, no. 4 (December 1, 2006): 695–711; Rawi Abdelal et al., eds., *Measuring Identity: A Guide for Social Scientists* (New York, 2009).

54 Extensive research in cognitive psychology has shown that people’s future behavior tends to be shaped most by those events which affected themselves or a socially proximate group and are recent, dramatic, and “formative.” A number of scholars have sought to apply these basic concepts to IR, especially issues related to foreign policy.
For theoretical purposes SAT conceives of rising powers as separable into two ideal-types: *Type A, status-seeking rising powers*, whose national identity has no such powerful negative associations with the pursuit of the military pathway to great power status, and *Type B, status-avoiding rising powers*, in which such national identity does exist.\(^{55}\) This widely-held national identity will affect leaders’ military policy choices by shaping the domestic political incentives of leaders as they consider implementing major changes to military policy. Specifically, it will cause a critical mass of the public either to support (Type A) or to oppose (Type B) leaders’ efforts to adopt military policies perceived to be normatively associated with international status as a ‘great power.’\(^{56}\) It is important to stress that the usage of ‘status-seeking’ and ‘status-avoiding’ in this study is limited strictly to the military domain; for example, to say that a state avoids status as a military great power is not necessarily mean that it does not covet status in other domains.

Causal Variable 2: Contemporaneous ‘great power’ norms

The second causal variable in SAT is the perceptions of leaders in the rising power of the contemporaneous norms marking the military force development (weapons and platforms) and force employment (missions) policies associated with status as a ‘military great power.’ These

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\(^{55}\) For reasons of simplicity SAT treats national identity as an exogenous independent variable, and thus its contested origins fall outside the model. In other words, the complex factors that shape the ways in which different subnational groups interpret history and form identity are outside the theory. For Type B rising powers, the first variable’s effects on policy outcomes should be greatest when the majority of the public personally experienced the suffering. Though its effects will be sticky they will gradually attenuate during subsequent generations.

\(^{56}\) For an extensive discussion of the concepts of status, prestige, as well as the mechanisms of status-seeking and status-avoiding, see Part 3, below.
norms are constitutive of this ‘great power’ status and regulative of role-appropriate ‘great power’ behavior in the military domain.领导者对这些规范的感知主要来自于上升者所追求的军事政策和话语的指称。这些规范通过直接和间接的社会化影响领导者。它们提供了一条通往更高声望的道路，供那些追求这些军事政策的领导者识别为适宜甚至期望的伟大国家。在追求这种渴望的地位的同时，禁止其他人。《

In effect, these norms ‘map out’ for leaders in the rising power the conditions necessary for the state to attain recognition as a ‘military great power’ from the established members of the (socially-defined) ‘great power club.’ Put another way, these norms can cause leaders in rising powers to adopt (or to avoid) certain policies designed to play a role in order to achieve coveted status as a great power, not necessarily in order to optimize expected material benefits.

It is important to emphasize that SAT conceives of these norms of socially-expected, ‘appropriate,’ or ‘responsible’ great power behavior in a morally agnostic manner. Levels of ‘appropriateness’ of certain military policies are entirely contingent on the values of the contemporaneous actors themselves. In other words, while these norms may socialize states to seek prestige gains or recognition as belonging to a particular status group by behaving in more constructive, cooperative ways, in a different international social context the very same status-seeking mechanism could also socialize states to adopt policies that are detrimental—or even

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57 In this study, “norm” refers to the shared expectations about the behaviors that are considered appropriate for states belonging to a particular group. Ronald L. Jepperson, Alexander Wendt, and Peter J. Katzenstein, “Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security,” in *The Culture of National Security*, ed. Peter J Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 54.

58 See discussion section (Part 3, below) for an extensive discussion of the concept of socialization as employed in SAT, as well as an explanation of how its conceptualization differs from Neorealist usage.

disastrous—for the well-being of other peoples, the rising power’s own citizens, and/or international peace and stability writ large.\textsuperscript{60}

Furthermore, SAT holds that in certain social contexts a rising power’s pursuit of recognition as a great power by adopting military policies aimed at conforming to associated norms could, paradoxically, exacerbate tensions with higher-ranked powers (e.g., Wilhelmine Germany’s pursuit of dreadnoughts and colonies in Great Britain’s claimed sphere of interest in Africa). This pursuit could even place the rising power on a collision course in the medium- to long-term for reasons originally unrelated to pursuit of material interests. The key variable here is the nature of the military policies of the leading state to which leaders in the rising power become socialized. In other words, what matters is the \textit{content} of contemporaneous norms; especially whether they are inherently ‘conflictual.’

\textbf{Part 2 Expectations of Shadowing/avoiding Theory}

As discussed above, SAT parts ways with most existing theories of rising powers in its expectation that the forces shaping their military trajectories do not exist in a normative vacuum; rather, the international social context into which a given rising power emerges will have significant, often primary, effects on its leaders’ military policy choices. Specifically, SAT hypothesizes that leaders in rising powers will look to higher-ranking states in the

\textsuperscript{60} For example, in the early 21st century great powers are expected to be stabilizing ‘stakeholders’ in international society and forswear the use of force in pure self-interest, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Robert B. Zoellick, “Whither China: From Membership to Responsibility? (Remarks to National Committee on U.S.-China Relations)” (New York, N.Y., September 21, 2005), http://2001-2009.state.gov/s/d/former/zoellick/ rem/53682.htm. As Buzan writes, “In the absence of world wars, or the threat of them, recognition and acceptance by others of the legitimacy of their leadership role in international society has become the hallmark of superpower status.” Barry Buzan, “China in International Society: Is ‘Peaceful Rise’ Possible?,” \textit{The Chinese Journal of International Politics} 3, no. 1 (March 20, 2010): 28. But the analogous ‘responsibilities’ of great powers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were far less benign, including racialized imperialism and other policies designed to ‘civilize’ less developed societies via colonization and forced subjugation. Another example of change is the fact that while efforts to “join the nuclear club” and nuclear testing were considered sources of national prestige and legitimacy in the 1960s, today these same behaviors are widely considered to be “illegitimate and irresponsible.” Scott D. Sagan, “Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?: Three Models in Search of a Bomb,” \textit{International Security} 21, no. 3 (December 1, 1996): 76.
contemporaneous international system for cues to identify the constitutive and regulative norms—or, in more colloquial language, the ‘trappings’ and behavioral ‘markers’—associated with status as a ‘great power.’ These norms will shape leaders’ subsequent military policy choices. Yet these great power norms will not affect all rising powers in the same way. Rather, different national identities will effectively ‘bend the curve’ of the rising power’s military trajectory away from a notional Realist, materialist interest-maximizing baseline and in opposite directions, contingent on rising power type—i.e., whether widely-held national identity provides domestic political incentives (Type A) or disincentives (Type B) to pursue status as a ‘military great power.’ SAT posits that in both types of rising powers this interaction between norms and identity will shape leaders’ choices about military policy based on a desire to role-play (or not) in a manner consistent with the mores of members of their coveted social group; a causal pathway distinct from structural factors or primarily material considerations.

Specifically, SAT provides the following testable hypotheses:

Type A, status-seeking rising powers

For leaders in Type A rising powers, national identity will function as an *enabler* and *accelerator* of military policies aimed at attaining for the state accession to the exclusive club of higher-ranked ‘great powers.’ In pursuit of this objective, leaders will ‘shadow,’ or mimic, the normatively-defined behavioral markers and trappings of the leaders’ aspirational referent group: the contemporaneous great power(s), or leading state(s). The resulting military trajectory of Type A rising powers may not be across-the-board mimicry of the military policy profile of the leading state(s), but the general trend will be toward convergence. In important cases the cause of policy decisions will be distinct from first-order consideration of expected security or material benefits. The independent effect of *status-seeking* as the driver of growing conformity with these
perceived norms will manifest in leaders’ adoption of even those force development and employment policies that constitute materially inefficient allocation of the state’s scarce resources; or ‘over-investment’ in military power in the pursuit of recognition as a member of the ‘great power club.’ In other words, in important cases these mimetic policies will be costly and have dubious connections to, or even run against, what leaders identify as the state’s pressing external threats to territory and global economic interests.  

Type B, status-avoiding rising powers

In contrast to Type A rising powers, national identity in Type B rising powers will present leaders with diametrically opposed domestic political incentives as it concerns the development and employment of military power. Memories of the self-initiated devastation and suffering that resulted from the state’s past pursuit of status as a military great power will effectively discredit for a critical mass of the public this pathway as a means for gaining enhanced prestige and standing within the international social hierarchy. In other words, the nationalist dreams of international prestige based on military power that typically manifest in states undergoing rapid industrialization and economic development will be absent among the overwhelming majority of the population. Due to the presence of this national identity, leaders will confront widespread hostility from a critical mass of the public to any policy measures perceived to be normatively associated with great power status in the military domain. Consequently, these policies effectively will be taken ‘off the menu’ of choices available to leaders. In other words, because the attainment of status as a ‘military great power’ will be perceived domestically as antithetical to a widely-held national identity, out of concern for their

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61 The underlying causal mechanism will be demonstrably distinct from the primarily material-interest driven form of socialization found in Neorealist theory (see Part 3 ‘Discussion’ section below).
political survival leaders will eschew normatively associated force development and employment policies.

The independent effect of this interaction between perceived great power norms and national identity will be so powerful that even platforms and missions that leaders simultaneously identify as necessary to ensure the state’s territorial security, and/or to safeguard and promote its global material interests will be eschewed. In this sense, and in stark contrast to Type A rising powers, national identity in Type B rising powers will cause leaders to engage in status-avoiding in the military domain. It will also serve as a potent obstacle to and spoiler of efficient military policymaking, blocking not only those materially-inefficient military policies the primary objective of which is greater international prestige. It will also frustrate even leaders’ efforts to adopt efficient military policies, just because of their normative association with status as a military great power. The result will be a military trajectory defined to a significant extent by materially inefficient allocation of scarce resources and ‘under-investment’ in military power. This military domain-specific status avoidance will occur concomitant with a proactive search for domestically acceptable and strictly non-military pathways to enhance the rising power’s international standing.

Table 2 Expectations of Shadowing/Avoiding Theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rising Power Ideal-type</th>
<th>Type A, Status-seeking (Default)</th>
<th>Type B, Status-avoiding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prevailing public sentiment as it concerns pursuit of status as a ‘military great power’</td>
<td>No strong opposition</td>
<td>Historical experience renders pursuit of status as military great power anathema to widely-held national identity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 3 Discussion

(1) Looking inside ‘the box’: SAT’s microfoundations

In the social scientific literature, ‘status’ is typically conceived of as a socially-contingent label that recognizes an actor as belonging to a particular social group. Membership in this group, in turn, is associated with certain social expectations of behavior, rights, and responsibilities. ‘Status’ differs from ‘identity’ in the sense that the latter refers to one’s self-perception, whereas the social role aspect of the former is concerned with how one is perceived and treated by others. For an excellent related discussion of the concept and definition of ‘status,’ see Allan Dafoe, Jonathan Renshon, and Paul Huth, Reputation and Status as Motives for War, SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, September 27, 2013), http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2332048, esp. pp 6-11. Thus, status-seeking (or status-avoiding) is a direct consequence of a human desire to be recognized (or not) by others as a member of a particular social group. In the
case of the rising powers in this study, the social group of interest is the exclusive grouping of (higher-ranked) ‘great powers.’

SAT’s causal argument is derived inductively. Indeed, from Wilhelmine Germany’s pursuit of “a place in the sun” a century ago to “New Thinking” in the U.S.S.R. under Gorbachev in the 1980s, there is extensive empirical support for SAT’s core claim that a status-seeking driver can have powerful effects on leaders’ foreign policy decisions. Indeed, references to ‘status,’ ‘prestige,’ ‘first- and second-rank powers,’ etc. permeate the historical record of discourse among leaders in rising powers. Recognizing the significance of this mechanism, in recent years there has been growing interest among IR scholars in the role of status concerns as a driver of foreign policy. Especially relevant to this study is recent scholarship that draws on social identity theory from the field of social psychology.\(^{63}\) Social identity theory helps to provide the microfoundations of SAT’s causal mechanisms. In other words, it helps to explain the puzzling tendency of leaders in rising powers to adopt military policies that are largely disconnected from, or which even go against, their stated strategic priorities concerning territorial and economic interests, primarily in the pursuit (or avoidance) of a socially-defined status label.

To briefly summarize the findings of a voluminous literature in social psychology, social identity theory holds that human beings are hard-wired to value status in a social hierarchy and to derive positive self-esteem from the achievements of the social groups with which they identify strongly. Accordingly, each individual will seek to enhance the standing of the groups to which

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he or she belongs, a process which in turn feeds back and enhances his or her self-esteem. This idea of status-seeking as a core disposition of individuals and status as an end goal, rather than merely as a means by which to acquire material benefits, is supported by large volumes of research and experimentation in a variety of disciplines in the physical and social sciences, from neuroscience to anthropology.  

In recent years political scientists have extended and applied this basic mechanism to the study of international relations, and the foreign policy decisions of leaders in particular. Because the state is one of the core social groups with which a leader identifies, by the logic of social identity theory leaders will gain positive utility (self-esteem) from the prestige afforded to the state by a relevant ‘peer group’ of other states (or leaders of those states). Accordingly, leaders’ policy choices will often be aimed at maximizing their state’s international standing through the attainment of membership in higher-ranked social groups—a drive referred to in the social identity theory literature as “social mobility.” In pursuit of this coveted status, leaders will have self-esteem incentives to adopt measures aimed at conforming to the norms associated with membership in a desired group. Furthermore, they may do so even in situations when the associated policies either provide no direct material benefits or result in net negative material utility. Conversely, states that, for whatever reason, are unable to conform to these norms may adopt a strategy of “social creativity”; i.e., they may attempt to chart a unique pathway to enhanced prestige that the higher-ranked group of aspirational referents recognizes as valid. In both cases, social identity theory suggests that the international status coveted by leaders “cannot

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64 Wohlforth, “Unipolarity,” 35.
65 Larson and Shevchenko, “Shortcut to Greatness,” 79; 89; Larson and Shevchenko, “Status Seekers,” 68; 71–72; 75. Importantly, social identity theory implies that while states may seek to be part of a club and that objective will lead to an embrace of many norms of that group, there will not necessarily be across-the-board emulation; states may also want to maintain some distinctive characteristics. Larson and Shevchenko, “Shortcut to Greatness,” 89.
be attained unilaterally. In other words, a prerequisite for successful attainment of a certain coveted status is recognition from the states belonging to the higher-ranked social group in question.

Applied to shadowing/avoiding theory, social identity theory’s “social mobility” driver provides the microfoundations to explain why leaders in Type A, status-seeking rising powers would derive positive utility from the pursuit of status as a member in an exclusive grouping of higher-ranked states (e.g., the oft-referenced but rarely explained ‘great power club’) and negative utility from either exclusion from this group, which the state’s identity as a rising power suggests it deserves to belong, and/or even perceived rhetorical slights to the state’s international prestige. It also explains why leaders would do so by adopting policies in accordance with what they perceive to be the constitutive and regulative norms associated with status as a “great power,” even when doing so either yields no direct material benefits or may actually harm the state’s security and/or material interests.

Conversely, social identity theory’s “social creativity” driver helps to explain why leaders in Type B, status-avoiding rising powers, who for reasons of widely-shared national identity are effectively unable to pursue military policies aimed at conforming to great power norms and, consequently, for whom status as a military great power is not in the cards, would seek out alternative, strictly non-military pathways to enhanced international prestige.

Why focus on rising powers? Why rapidly industrializing rising powers in the modern era?

As discussed above, a wealth of empirical evidence from research in both the physical and social sciences suggests that status-seeking is a powerful driver of human behavior. It follows that the status-seeking mechanism central to SAT should apply to all states. So why does

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this study focus exclusively on states undergoing rapid industrialization and economic development? The primary rationale for explicitly bounding SAT to the universe of rising powers is that this study’s research objective is to provide explanations of empirical puzzles involving and to directly engage, test, and challenge influential theoretical claims in the existing literature about the factors shaping the behavior of this specific category of state.

There are also at least two additional reasons why we should expect SAT’s causal mechanisms to be exceptionally powerful in explaining military policy decision-making in rising powers.

First, the rapidly expanding latent material capabilities that define rising powers afford their leaders the unique luxury of a choice unavailable to other states—whether to adopt the extremely expensive and industrially and technologically demanding military policies most frequently associated with ‘great power’ status, such as imperialist expansion, the development of a blue water navy, nuclear weapons, dreadnoughts, aircraft carriers, etc. In contrast, while leaders of states lacking the enabling material wherewithal may also desire to implement these same policies for similar reasons—e.g., international prestige and higher status—limited wealth and/or industrial and technological prowess effectively prevents them from doing so, at least in a manner of even potentially commensurate consequence for international peace and stability. In other words, while rising powers’ choices always have major consequences—positive or negative—for global peace and stability, the military policy choices of less materially capable states are significantly less interesting and consequential, in both theoretical and practical terms.

69 For example, Thailand acquired an aircraft carrier in the late 1990s, yet it has no combat capability and is used primarily for disaster relief and transporting the royal family. “These Are The 20 Aircraft Carriers In Service Today,” *Business Insider*, August 9, 2012, http://www.businessinsider.com/the-20-in-service-aircraft-carriers-patrolling-the-world-today-2012-8. See also the discussion of sociological institutionalism and conventional weapons proliferation below.
Second, as is reflected clearly in the historical record, the combined effect of two externalities frequently associated with the processes of rapid industrialization and modernization that define rising powers significantly amplifies the power of the status-seeking and status-avoiding drivers that are central to SAT. These externalities are surging nationalism and domestic instability. These generally destabilizing factors, in turn, make the leadership especially sensitive to public sentiment and social cohesion, as leaders often perceive both forces as threats to regime legitimacy and, consequently, to the leadership’s grip on power.

With regard to the former externality, the idea that surging nationalism would intensify the status-seeking drive is consistent with the social identity theoretic microfoundations of SAT. After all, nationalism is—by definition—the process of individuals identifying en masse with the nation (the de facto social group to which those sharing a common nationality belong). Accordingly, during periods in which nationalism is surging, it follows that both leaders and ‘publics’ would become increasingly concerned with the state’s international status and

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extremely sensitive to perceived slights or exclusion from any groups to which they believe their state deserves to belong.

With regard to the latter externality, the widespread and severely disruptive forces typically unleashed domestically by rapid modernization significantly increase the domestic political incentives of leaders to be responsive to public sentiment. It is therefore in their interests to both respond to nationalism generated organically as a result of the state’s surging latent material capabilities and social cues and to further appeal to it through international prestige-generating (i.e., collective self-esteem enhancing) foreign policies. The empirical record

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72 Empirical and theoretical support for these claims can be found in the existing political science literature. For seminal studies exploring the negative domestic/social externalities of rapid modernization and economic and industrial growth, see Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man; the Social Bases of Politics* (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1960), 68–72; Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, inc, 1944). Recent research suggests that weak political institutions (such as those found in some rising powers) may also increase the likelihood of civil war or state failure, thus explaining why these state’s leaders would feel vulnerable. Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, “Democratization and War,” *Foreign Affairs* 74, no. 3 (June 1995): 79–97; Robert H. Bates, “State Failure,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 11, no. 1 (2008): 8–10. Although Mansfield and Snyder’s research focuses specifically on *democratic* transitions, they do not focus on *mature* democracies and the mechanisms they explore are broadly applicable to any society undergoing political change or domestic instability. Additional research has shown that nationalism will be especially severe whenever public grievances against the regime are high. Weiss, “Authoritarian Signaling,” 5–6. Mansfield and Snyder, “Democratization and War.” Nationalism-driven demands are especially dangerous—even to authoritarian regimes—because they are ostensibly “patriotic” in nature and therefore especially costly to the regime to suppress. As such, they can directly threaten the foundation of state legitimacy. Weiss, “Authoritarian Signaling,” 5–6. As SAT suggests, one important means by which leaders in rising powers will respond to this surging nationalism is to adopt foreign policies seen by the public as increasing the nation’s status in the international hierarchy, even when the associated policies are disconnected from material national interests. As even Neorealist Waltz notes, failure to do so risks widespread public criticism of the regime “for not taking its proper place in the world.” “Pride,” he writes, “knows no nationality.” Kenneth N. Waltz, “The Emerging Structure of International Politics,” *International Security* 18, no. 2 (October 1993): 66. Similarly, a large literature suggests that political leaders facing internal challenges to their grip on power (e.g., mass protests, elite divisions) or other sources of international fragility have incentives to engage in foreign policies abroad that they would not have otherwise in order to divert the public’s attention away from domestic social and economic problems, to deepen social cohesion, and to enhance the regime’s domestic legitimacy. The objective is to bolster the elites’ domestic political support and grip on power. Perhaps the most well-known argument from this literature is diversionary war theory. For a concise summary and critique, see Jack S. Levy, “The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique,” ed. Manus I. Midlarsky (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 259–88. See also Mansfield and Snyder, “Democratization and War”; Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2005). SAT allows that any foreign policy that is seen by the public as enhancing the state’s international prestige, up to and including foreign military deployments and war, can serve this function. In other words, diversionary war is merely a relatively extreme outcome of the same mechanism. For example, Shirk shows how related factors can shape foreign policymaking in ways short of war initiation. Susan L Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).
shows that leaders often judge such measures to be effective means by which to strengthen the cohesion of an increasingly fractious society during a period of grievance-generating domestic transformation and, by extension, to consolidate the leadership’s increasingly tenuous grip on power.

In short, to a degree absent in other states the rapidly expanding latent material capabilities that define rising powers *enable* leaders to pursue those ‘great power-esque’ policies of greatest interest to IR theorists, which makes their military policy choices theoretically and practically significant, while the consequences of rapid modernization in terms of surging nationalism and grievances against the regime can be expected to effectively amplify the domestic political incentives of leaders to pursue foreign policies aimed at attaining membership in a higher-ranked status group. It is because of leaders’ concern with maintaining power at home that the resulting policies may appear irrational from the perspective of paradigms that assume unitary rational actors and the pursuit of security and material benefits as the exclusive, or at least primary, driver of state behavior under anarchy. As the subsequent empirical analysis demonstrates, in theoretically important, historically significant cases leaders’ insular focus on maintaining domestic legitimacy (and thus their grip on power) and concern with the state’s international status, rather than straightforward cost/benefit calculations of external threats and material interests can effectively ‘blind’ them to the international strategic ramifications of their decisions. Unfortunately, the unintended consequences of these otherwise ‘rational’ decisions can be tragic.
(2) Clarification concerning similar terminology employed in Realist IR theory

Because of terminology similar to that which also appears in some alternative paradigms, it is important to clarify a few crucial distinctions concerning the definitions of several key concepts employed in SAT.

‘Hierarchy’

First, SAT shares with many influential studies by historians and political scientists (especially Realists of various stripes) the twin assumptions that international relations to a large extent occur within a hierarchy comprised of dominant states, rising states, and other states with no ability to be system-dominant states, and that an important driver of rising power’s policy decisions is the objective of moving up the hierarchy and ultimately entering the ranks of ‘the great powers.’ Yet the concept in Realist and materialist IR scholarship tends to conceive of ranking within this hierarchy as defined solely by the distribution of material power in the international system. From these perspectives, the great powers are simply the most materially powerful states in the system. Full stop.

In contrast, SAT conceives of an international social hierarchy in which the conditions for certain status, or ‘rank,’ including membership in the exclusive great power ‘club,’ are socially-contingent. In other words, SAT contends that although the drive for a move up the

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73 The idea of the international order as hierarchical appears prominently within IR theory, such as the “power transition” literature and the “English School” of IR. PT identifies an international hierarchy and discusses the ‘dominant state’s’ role in shaping the system. Kugler and Organski, “The Power Transition,” 173–5. J. Kugler and D. Lemke, “The Power Transition Research Program: Assessing Theoretical and Empirical Advances,” Handbook of War Studies II, 2000, 131.

74 This premise allows for the possibility that one primary source of state utility is higher rank within the international social status hierarchy. This perspective draws on the English School and its conception of an “international society” of states, in particular the seminal scholarship of Hedley Bull. Buzan defines “international society” as the “acceptance of the deep rules of the game that states share with each other sufficiently to form a kind of social order,” which Bull referred to as “the anarchical society.” Buzan, “China in International Society,” 6; Hedley Bull, The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics (Columbia University Press, 2002). Hedley Bull later clarifies the difference between international society and the more materialist “system” when he writes, “A
international hierarchy and desire for recognition as a ‘great power’ may be relatively constant across rising powers, the conditions for such recognition—i.e., the constitutive and regulative norms associated with entry into this exclusive grouping of states—are socially-defined and susceptible to change. Accordingly, the manner in which leaders in the rising power will seek to pursue (or avoid) a certain status will be contingent on leaders’ perceptions of the associated contemporaneous great power norms.

‘Status’ and ‘Prestige’

The related concepts of status and prestige are not unique to SAT. In fact, these concepts are central in much of the foundational scholarship in IR theory, particularly classical Realism. Nevertheless, the manner in which these concepts are defined in this study differs fundamentally from Realist usage. On the one hand, Realists typically see the material utility of status as all that matters for deciding whether a state is satisfied with its place in the international hierarchy. Similarly, they typically conceive of prestige in a strictly utilitarian sense; i.e., it is merely an instrument of power. More recent work on status-seeking as a mechanism shaping state

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*society of states* (or international society) exists when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions.” Ibid., 13. For more on the idea of hierarchy in this context, see Ian Clark, *The Hierarchy of States: Reform and Resistance in the International Order* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).


76 For example, Morgenthau defines prestige as “the reputation for power,” arguing that “Whatever the ultimate objectives of a nation's foreign policy, its prestige […] is always an important and sometimes decisive factor in determining success or failure of its foreign policy.” In Morgenthau’s view, prestige matters because a state with
behavior goes beyond materially-deterministic Realist assumptions but appears to conceive of the mechanism merely as a source of otherwise irrational conflict and aggression in the international system.\textsuperscript{77}

As employed in SAT, however, these two concepts differ in subtle but significant ways. First, this study contends that the Realist definitions of status and prestige inappropriately conflate socially-contingent concepts with concepts—material utility and/or power (aka capabilities)—that can be identified independent of social context.\textsuperscript{78} By conflating these two concepts Realists in effect assume \textit{a priori} that nonmaterial sources of status and prestige either do not exist, or at most are largely irrelevant for, explaining/predicting state behavior. Yet the historical record suggests strongly that these assumptions do not accurately reflect empirical reality. While it is conceivable that in some extreme cases hard, purely instrumental military power could be the primary—or even sole—source of prestige in a society, such values are the exception rather than the rule. Accordingly, SAT maintains that the policies that leaders expect to lead to prestige gains or recognition from others as having attained a particular status are socially-defined and contingent on the norms of the social group in question. In other words, unlike other influential paradigms, SAT makes no \textit{a priori} assumptions about the content—or sources—of that social prestige, which is changeable.


\textsuperscript{78} For example, the following could all be sources of prestige: battleships, colonies, nuclear weapons, man-made satellites, aircraft carriers, pacifist foreign policies, involvement in peacekeeping operations, etc. While some of these are arguably of significant \textit{material} value, it is not necessarily the case that their material value is the reason why leaders pursue them. In some cases, associated policies may run \textit{against} the state’s material interests. In other words, a state may pursue any or all of these objects for their symbolic, rather than instrumental, value.
Second, in contrast to the assumptions that Realists make about prestige, leaders often pursue prestige for non-instrumental reasons; *as an end in itself*. As discussed earlier, an especially salient driver is the desire for social recognition from a valued other as having achieved a certain ‘status,’ ‘standing,’ or ‘rank,’ and for reasons distinct from expected material benefits.  

‘Socialization’

Another key concept employed in both SAT and an alternative explanation against which it counterpoises itself—Neorealism—is the idea of state ‘socialization.’ The idea of socialization as employed in SAT differs in important ways from that adopted by Neorealists.

From a Neorealist perspective, socialization is a structurally-determined process the end state of which is predetermined by the self-help imperative in an anarchical and hostile world: isomorphism of military force structures and convergence of military behavior on realpolitik behavioral traits. Accordingly, a rising power’s adoption of military policies similar to those of more powerful states will be “the fullest and clearest manifestation of internal balancing” against external threats from other powers. In other words, socialization will be driven

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82 Resende-Santos, “Anarchy&Emulation,” 203.
exclusively by desire to prepare to deter, and/or to defeat, the militaries of more powerful states in war. From this perspective, rising powers will seek to maximize security as efficiently as possible, gaining “maximum returns on security-enhancing efforts,” because in a world with no guarantees of survival the “imperatives of convergence and emulation are all-powerful and ever present;” failure to balance efficiently risks state “death.”

In contrast, the idea of socialization employed in SAT maps more closely to constructivist usage and a social-psychological conceptualization of socialization as a “process of inducting actors into the norms and rules of a given community” and a “switch[] from a logic of consequences to a logic of appropriateness.” In other words, socialization is the process by which states mirror the behaviors of other states; i.e., conscious role-playing (Type I socialization) or in cases of deeper socialization, internalize the values of states belonging to their self-identified (or in the case of SAT, aspirational) peer group (Type II socialization).

SAT’s conceptualization allows for states to be socialized into the behaviors and values of the state’s aspirational peer group in ways that can be, but are not necessarily, strictly motivated by survival or an expectation of other material benefits. Furthermore, socialization can shape national identities as well as national interests as leaders seek to conform to these normatively-defined expectations, which in turn can directly influence leaders’ policy choices. Seminal

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83 Ibid.
84 Ibid., 260.
constructivist scholarship in IR posits that this kind of socialization will be most likely when the would-be target is in a novel or uncertain environment, sensitive to its image, and engaged in regular social interactions with authoritative members of the group to which the actor wants to belong. As the following empirical chapters show, these conditions typically obtain in the case of rising powers in the modern era, albeit to varying degrees.

Of particular interest to this study is the related literature on the role of norms in shaping states’ military policy choices through a socialization process. Especially salient are studies in the sociological institutionalism literature that explore an issue directly relevant to this study: the normative causes of weapons proliferation. Scholars working in this tradition have shown that the proliferation of high-tech weaponry and professional military organizations can be social phenomena. In other words, they are not necessarily the result of leaders’ rational calculations of the most efficient means by which to deter a given threat or pursue the state’s material interests. These scholars demonstrate that states sometimes procure (or attempt to procure) extremely expensive weapons systems (e.g., supersonic aircraft) despite obvious ‘absorption handicaps’ and/or the existence of readily-available, equally-serviceable, and less expensive alternatives that

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would be equally, if not more, appropriate to their particular threat environments. In short, leaders sometimes procure certain weapons because of their socially-constructed meanings, rather than their expected military utility. Acquisition of these weapons can facilitate a state’s recognition as belonging to a certain social group, such as the ‘great powers,’ while failure to acquire these weapons—regardless of whether the state’s strategic environment creates a material demand for them—can result in it being relegated to a lower-ranked status.

Other scholars have also identified the prestige motive as a major driver of other force development decisions, ranging from the development of nuclear weapons to large-scale naval buildups. Although the specific claims of individual scholars differ, the constructivist approach’s openness to ideas and social interactions divorced from considerations of military utility as a key determinant of military policy outcomes provides a clear contrast with alternative Realist approaches, which typically treat states’ interests as fixed and inherently conflictual. As it concerns SAT the implication is clear: even in the realm of military policy decision-making,

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91 Eyre and Suchman, “Status, Norms, and the Proliferation of Conventional Weapons: An Institutional Theory Approach,” 85–7. Specifically, they argue that “Highly technological militaries symbolize modernity, efficacy, and independence. Thus the spread of weapons is a process both driven and shaped by institutionalized normative structures linking militaries and their advanced weapons with sovereign status as a nation, with modernization, and with social legitimacy […] Consequential action (which lies at the core of traditional explanations for weapons proliferation) is not the only useful theory of human behavior.”

92 For example, in the mid-1990s a Chinese military officer argued explicitly that Japan “certainly was not yet a normal great power because it lacked trappings of such [status],” such as aircraft carriers, nuclear submarines, nuclear weapons, long-range missile systems, and other weapons platforms and systems necessary for power projection abroad. Quoted in Christensen, *WTAM*, 229. Realist IR scholars have advanced similar views of the necessary military trappings of great power status—effectively establishing the value of these weapons, at least partially, as sources of social prestige. Waltz, “Emerging Structure,” 50, 55, 64; Mearsheimer, *TToGPP*, 55–56.

93 Scott Sagan suggests that states may pursue nuclear weapons for their symbolic power as “badges” of prestige. Sagan, “Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?”. Victor Cha argues that these may be particularly salient drivers of decision-making in Asia, which is “rich with nationalisms growing out of history, colonial legacies, and economic growth.” Victor D. Cha, “North Korea’s Weapons of Mass Destruction: Badges, Shields, or Swords?,” *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 2 (July 1, 2002): 209–30. See also the categorically different naval building programs of Stalin and Khrushchev. Milan Vego, “Soviet Russia: The Rise and Fall of a Superpower Navy,” in *China Goes to Sea: Maritime Transformation in Comparative Historical Perspective*, ed. Andrew S Erickson, Lyle Goldstein, and Carnes Lord (Annapolis, Md: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 201–33. Many historians point to Wilhelmine Germany’s naval buildup as a strategically disastrous example. For one recent study, see Murray, “Identity, Insecurity, and Great Power Politics.” See also the analysis in Chapter 6.
norms can influence not only the manner in which states develop their military power, but also how they choose to employ those capabilities; i.e., the military’s roles and missions.

**Part 4 Scope conditions**

This study includes a test of SAT under the following two scope conditions.

First, SAT’s hypotheses should apply primarily to a subset of states: rapidly industrializing rising powers during the modern era. For the reasons discussed in Part 3, above, the rapid, long-term, secular economic and industrial growth that defines rising powers creates conditions that amplify the impact of SAT’s variables on leaders’ military policy decision-making and contribute to the significant, and puzzling, policy distortions manifest in the empirical record. Although national identity and ‘great power’ norms in the military domain may help to explain policy outcomes in non-rising powers or during periods before the industrial revolution, this study does not provide an explicit test of SAT’s ‘portability’ to cases from earlier historical periods. Accordingly, it makes no claims of SAT’s generalizability along those lines. Furthermore, as a theory of rising powers SAT also does not make any explicit predictions about what leaders in a rising power will do once, or more accurately, if, they attain for their state’s social recognition as a member of the ‘great power’ club. That said, there are strong theoretical and empirical reasons to expect that the effects of the socialization mechanism central to SAT will cause leaders to largely continue along a similar path even after attaining great power status, with consequences for international peace and stability for better or for worse. Although this claim is not subjected to a rigorous test in these pages, Chapter 7 does provide a brief discussion.

Second, SAT’s explanatory power should be greatest in cases of rising powers whose emergence occurs during a period in which the international social hierarchy is clearly defined and the leading state(s)—and, by extension, the status markers defining conditions for
membership in the great power club—is (are) nearly universally-recognized by leaders in the rising power. Thus, we should expect the explanatory power of SAT to decline during periods in which this hierarchy is ambiguous and/or heavily contested, such as the period between 1919 and 1945.\textsuperscript{94}

3. Alternative Explanations to Shadowing/Avoiding Theory

In order to test SAT’s validity rigorously and empirically, each of the following case studies includes a systematic assessment of SAT’s explanatory power relative to leading alternative explanations. All of these alternatives are derived from influential paradigms in the existing literature. In the interest of completeness, when appropriate I also include in the analysis influential case-specific alternative explanations.\textsuperscript{95}

Most of the theoretical literature related to rising powers focuses on explaining or predicting international outcomes (e.g., balances of power, power transitions). SAT, in contrast, is a theory to explain aspects of state behavior—i.e., foreign policy outcomes. Despite this distinction, it is possible to derive several strong candidate alternative explanations for military

\textsuperscript{94} For example, Germany’s behavior during the late 1930s and early 1940s appears to fall outside the bounds of SAT. Although an argument could be made that Nazi Germany simply dusted off the great power playbook from the pre-1914 period, the ideological rationale that drove Nazi expansionism had many unique elements. And it was clearly not a candidate for Type B identity as its experience during WWI did not meet even basic criteria: the party to blame for starting the war was ambiguous; Germany’s defeat was far from total; and the devastation on the home front during the war was limited (the war was largely fought outside German territory). Indeed, many Germans appeared to feel they suffered more as a result of the peace settlement than they did during the actual fighting. Lastly, the hierarchy was ambiguous throughout this period as for ideological and other domestic reasons the obvious ‘would-be hegemon’—the United States—failed to ‘step up’ sufficiently to define a new order and new norms, which otherwise could have delineated an alternative pathway for Germany to regain its lost status different than that it pursued prior to 1914. Consequently, those voices within Germany calling for leaders not to repeat past mistakes were weakened. Circumstances were categorically different after surrender in 1945. Thus, although this specific case falls outside the bounds of SAT’s generalizability, an SAT-compatible explanation would be roughly consistent with that offered by Legro, who argues that in the 1930s Germany returned to the same ideas that led to its defeat in World War I because a prerequisite for ideational change is collapse of the old and consolidation of the new ways of thinking. Yet post-WWI there was no novel collective ideational consolidation between the wars. Jeffrey W. Legro, \textit{Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order} (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2005), chap. 4; See also, Ikenberry, \textit{After Victory}, chap. 5.

\textsuperscript{95} For example, in Chapter 4 I address opportunistic ‘free-riding’ and/or domestic institutional constraints established during the U.S. Occupation as alternative explanations of late 20th-century Japan’s military policy choices.
policy decision-making from the core arguments advanced by proponents of leading alternative IR paradigms. Below, I generate three general alternative explanations to account for the military trajectories of rising powers, which for shorthand purposes I give the following labels: power-maximization/offensive realist, security-maximization, and domestic institutions/interest group politics. For reasons of space and analytical tractability, each of these alternative explanations and their associated policy predictions are necessarily generated based upon a synthesis of a larger literature.

**Summary of the Competing Hypotheses**

**Shared Assumptions of Leading Realist Alternative Explanations**

Two of the three categories of leading alternative explanations for rising powers’ military policy choices delineated below represent major strands of Realist theory. They share a set of common assumptions that is especially influential in the literature focused on rising and great powers, as well as military affairs in general. Core assumptions of the Realist paradigm include the following: the international system is anarchic and defined by the distribution of material capabilities; state preferences are unchanging and invariably “conflictual;” states possess offensive military capabilities that pose threats to one another; it is impossible for states to be certain of other states’ intentions; states seek to survive and think strategically about how to do so; and armaments are the principal means through which the state ensures its survival. Under

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97 A wide range of assumptions can be found in the related theoretical literature and they are contested. I simplify here for the sole purpose of generating straightforward alternative expectations against which to test SAT’s explanatory power. For one concise summary of the common assumptions of Realist work in IR, see John J. Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” *International Security* 19, no. 3 (December 1, 1994): 9–12. For a critique of the proliferation of ‘Realisms’ and a reformulation into three core assumptions—nature of actors as rational, unitary political units in anarchy; state preferences as fixed and uniformly conflictual goals; international structure as defined by the primacy of material capabilities—see Jeffrey W. Legro and Andrew Moravcsik, “Is Anybody Still a Realist?,” *International Security* 24, no. 2 (October 1, 1999): 5–55 esp. 12-18.
these conditions, states have no choice but to engage in ‘self-help;’ i.e., to take responsibility for their own survival by developing and employing military power to deter, or if necessary, to fight and win a war. States therefore will avoid reliance on others for their security, lest they either give other states opportunities to exploit that reliance—a so-called “leverage strategy” —or leave themselves vulnerable to abandonment or entrapment in a crisis. From this perspective, a state’s choice to rely on another state, or states, for defense of its territory and to safeguard and promote its global economic and political interests is only explainable as a consequence of material necessity—i.e., insufficient wealth to develop and/or employ the necessary levels of military power independently. Most important in the context of this study is the shared contention of these Realist and materialist alternative explanations that only structural imperatives and material interests can explain major changes to rising powers’ force development and employment policies. In other words, national identity, international normative, and/or domestic political factors should be epiphenomenal.

**Power-maximizing Hypothesis**


The power-maximizing hypothesis posits that because international politics under anarchy is “a recurring struggle for wealth and power among independent actors,” changes in military policies will be a direct consequence of the natural inclination of all states to expand as

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99 Robert Art argues that “the default position of states, especially when it comes to military matters, is not dependence, but autonomy and independence, if they can achieve it.” Robert J. Art, “Correspondence: Striking the Balance,” *International Security* 30, no. 3 (2006): 185.
their latent material capabilities increase. In the view of this paradigm, all states have inherent preferences to expand their control over territory, the behavior of others, and the world economy. Although not all states enjoy material capabilities sufficient to act on these preferences, those which can will inevitably do so. National interests will be determined by the state’s material resources and as a rising power’s latent power increases its interests will inevitably expand. Leaders will push for territorial, political, and economic expansion as the state seeks additional resources, to maximize its coercive power over others, and to pursue hegemony. In short, increases to latent material capabilities will generate a need for the state to expand externally in order to sustain itself. Rising powers will prepare militarily to challenge dominant powers both in order to maximize their share of the distribution of material benefits and to hedge against a preventive war launched by a more powerful state. And because as firms are “profit maximizers” states are “power maximizers,” leaders will pursue these material objectives as efficiently as possible. This paradigm identifies such material interest driven-expansion as the source of international conflict, crises, wars, and, ultimately, the rising power’s own eventual decline.

101 Gilpin, War&Change, 7.
102 Ibid., 23–25. As Thucydides wrote, “the strong take what they can and the weak suffer what they must.” Zakaria opens the black box to argue that only a weak state (central executive) can prevent expansion. Zakaria, FWTP. This possibility will also be addressed in the case studies that follow.
103 Choucri and North, Nations in Conflict, 1; Gilpin, War&Change, 10; Zakaria, FWTP, 5.
104 Choucri and North, Nations in Conflict. As Kennedy argues, “wealth is usually needed to underpin military power, and military power is usually needed to acquire and protect wealth.” Kennedy, Rise&Fall, xvi.
105 Organski, World Politics. Three caveats, however: 1) although often associated with Realism, power transition theory envisions a world that is hierarchical; 2) power transition theory makes no specific predictions about military policy choices; however, it can be inferred that the rising power (and potential challenger) would have every reason to invest efficiently in military power in order to challenge the dominant state in case the latter attempts a preventive war or is; 3) the outcome of the transition is not predetermined, and peace is possible if the rising power is satisfied with the existing order or if the dominant state is flexible.
106 Zakaria, FWTP, 9.
107 Gilpin, War&Change, xii.
108 Choucri and North, Nations in Conflict. As Kennedy argues, rising powers will eventually over-expand to the point of neglecting their economic and industrial base. Kennedy, Rise&Fall.
In short, this category of alternative explanation predicts that rising powers will inevitably invest their rapidly growing latent power into efficiently developing military power and projecting it abroad in support of their expanding global interests. This objective will lead to territorial, political, and economic expansion and, ultimately, hegemony. Military policies will aim to enhance the rising power’s ability to coerce other states. Because military power is the protector of the state’s wealth, military spending allocation decisions will be efficient and competition and preparation for war with more powerful states who threaten the rising power’s expanding interests and growing influence will be a top priority. Significantly, military policy stasis during periods of rapidly growing latent material capabilities, much less periods in which the state’s strategic environment is worsening, is anathema to this paradigm. Additionally, because of the self-help imperative under anarchy the same holds for a choice to outsource significant portions of security of territorial and economic interests to another state despite having the material capabilities to achieve those basic objectives independently.

Sub-category: Offensive Realist Hypothesis

Example of related scholarship: Mearsheimer 2001\textsuperscript{109}

A subset of the power-maximizing category of alternative explanations that is particularly pessimistic about rising powers’ military trajectories is derived from offensive realism. The offensive realist hypothesis posits that changes in military policies will be a consequence of insecurity under anarchy, which compels states to maximize their power and “to think and act offensively and to seek hegemony,” often through military aggression.\textsuperscript{110} Military policy stasis, leaders’ exercise of self-restraint, and ignoring the “imperative to gain more power to enhance

\textsuperscript{109} Mearsheimer, *TToGPP*.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 53.
their state’s prospect for survival” during periods of rapidly expanding latent material capabilities all appear to be anathema to this theory.\textsuperscript{111} Offensive realists argue that three universal patterns will manifest in state behavior regardless of the state’s particular strategic environment: fear, self-help, and power maximization,\textsuperscript{112} with power defined solely in military terms and force being “the \textit{ultimo ratio} of international politics.”\textsuperscript{113} Because states will view relationships with other states in zero-sum terms, they will therefore seek out “opportunities to gain power at the expense of others”\textsuperscript{114} and to maximize their share of world power (aka military capabilities).\textsuperscript{115} This drive for hegemony will be so powerful that in order to achieve it the rising power will rely on one or more of four violent strategies: war, threats of war (“blackmail”), provoking a war between a rival and a third party (“bait and bleed” tactics), or taking steps to extend wars between two other adversaries (“bloodletting”).\textsuperscript{116}

In short, the offensive realist hypothesis expects anarchy to compel all states experiencing rapid industrialization and economic growth to leverage those expanding capabilities to adopt military policies aimed at maximizing its military power, engaging in outward territorial expansion, gaining wealth primarily for the purpose of building up military power, achieving superiority in the dominant form of military power at the time,\textsuperscript{117} using military force in pursuit of self-interest and hegemony, and preparing for great power war. Security cooperation or the formation of alliances with other states will only be pursued opportunistically—to the extent they help the state to achieve its hegemonic objectives.

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 168–169.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 31.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 56.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{115} Mearsheimer, \textit{TToGPP}, 21, 50, 56.
\textsuperscript{116} Adapted from “Strategies for Gaining Power” in ibid., 147–155.
\textsuperscript{117} Adapted from ibid., 138–40.
Security-Maximizing Hypothesis


The security-maximizing hypothesis posits that the outcome of debates among leaders at strategic decision points will be attributable first and foremost to changing threats to the state’s territory or overseas material interests. Accordingly, changes to military policy will be designed explicitly to mitigate these threats. Conversely, military policy stasis will be attributable only to a stable security environment.

This alternative explanation traces its roots primarily to a school of Realist theory often referred to as ‘defensive realism,’ the core assumption of which is that under anarchy states are concerned primarily with ensuring their security—not dominating others. In this view, because states’ resources are limited, military power has no intrinsic value, and leaders prefer to spend money enhancing domestic welfare, leaders will choose to invest only in those military capabilities and missions that are necessary to protect territorial and material interests against specific current and expected future material threats. This is the famous ‘guns vs. butter’ tradeoff, and it also implies that because of the severe domestic welfare opportunity costs of waste, investments in military power will be made in the most efficient manner possible.

A large theoretical literature suggests that existential security threats will be especially salient drivers of military policy decision-making in rising powers due to these states’ unique combination of material weakness relative to the established great power(s) and the fact that they are rapidly closing the gap. Accordingly, and because of the rising power’s inability to commit to rising peacefully, this shrinking power differential will give the established power clear material

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incentives to launch a preventive war to maintain its hegemonic position.\textsuperscript{119} Thus, the security maximizing hypothesis expects that the security dilemma will compel rising powers to balance internally and externally against the established power as efficiently as possible in order to mitigate the existential threat posed by the dominant state and to ensure that the state can secure its material interests now and in the future. The rising power’s key concerns will be security and autonomy. Any visible emulation will be attributable exclusively to competitive pressures and will reflect efforts to develop military power efficiently to survive—i.e., to deter adversaries and if deterrence fails, to emerge victorious in a military conflict.\textsuperscript{120} In this view, ‘mimicry’ of more powerful states’ military policies will be “the fullest and clearest manifestation of internal balancing.”\textsuperscript{121}

Importantly, this hypothesis expects that the self-help imperative under anarchy will foment powerful entrapment and abandonment concerns in the rising power. These concerns, in turn, will cause leaders to pursue autonomous military capabilities to the extent that their material resources allow.\textsuperscript{122} In other words, the choice of a rising power to rely on an outside security guarantor despite possessing the economic, industrial, and technological wherewithal to independently defend and expand its territorial and economic interests (with or without supplementary alliances) is anathema to this paradigm. The pursuit of military capabilities and missions disconnected from, or even running against, a direct response to the state’s most pressing military threats is also incompatible with this alternative explanation.

\textsuperscript{119} Gilpin notes that a declining power’s “first and most attractive option” in response to the emergence of a potential challenger is to “eliminate the source of the problem”—i.e., preventive war. Gilpin, \textit{War&Change}, 191. Copeland argues that the dominant but declining power is most likely to initiate a preventive war against a rising power out of fear for its future security, \textit{especially} when there is only one challenger (i.e., the international system at the time is not multipolar). Copeland, \textit{The Origins of Major War}.
\textsuperscript{120} Waltz, \textit{TofIP}, 122, 127; Resende-Santos, “Anarchy&Emulation,” 202.
\textsuperscript{121} Resende-Santos, “Anarchy&Emulation,” 203.
\textsuperscript{122} Art, “Correspondence: Striking the Balance,” 185.
Domestic Institutions/Interest Group Politics

A third category of possible alternative explanations outside the Realist paradigm would expect leaders’ decisions at SDPs to be attributable primarily to specific governmental institutions or bureaucracies and/or patterns of interaction among domestic interest groups, especially powerful bureaucracies acting in pursuit of parochial interests.123 From this perspective, a given shift in military policy will be attributable first and foremost to a powerful domestic coalition (e.g., commercial exporters or the defense industry) or bureaucracy (e.g., a specific branch of the state’s armed forces) ‘hijacking’ policymaking and advancing policies in service of its parochial self-interest. In this view, the leaders of rising powers will be agents of domestic coalitional interests first and foremost and decision-making primarily will be ‘bottom-up.’124 Major shifts will not be attributable to decisions made at the pinnacle of state power (i.e., ‘top-down’). Of particular relevance to this study is one influential argument holding that log-rolling coalitions of powerful interest groups (cartels) with parochial interests in imperial expansion, military preparation, or economic autarky hijack policymaking with self-interested arguments that national security can only be safeguarded through expansion.125

125 Snyder argues that late-industrializing states should be especially vulnerable to these factors while early industrializers and democracies like the United States will be less so. Snyder, Myths of Empire.
### Table 3 Basic Expectations of Leading Alternative Explanations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative Explanation: Power Maximizing Hypothesis</th>
<th>Key causal variables</th>
<th>Concise Summary of Hypothesis(es)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                                                      | *International anarchy* (\(\rightarrow\) *need for dominance*) *Growing latent power and expanding interests* | **Proposition 3a:** International anarchy will compel all rising powers with the economic capacity to maximize their independent military capabilities and become ‘military great powers’ to attempt to do so.  
**Proposition 3b:** All rising powers’ military policy choices will first and foremost reflect a desire to maximize power, often through aggression. Specifically, each rising power’s military policies will be aimed at buttressing its power and projecting it abroad in support of its expanding interests, pursuing hegemony, gaining wealth for the purpose of enhancing its military power and vice versa, and achieving superiority in the dominant form of military power at the time. |
|                                                      | *International anarchy* (\(\rightarrow\) *security dilemma*) *Changing degree and nature of external threat(s), especially those posed by more powerful states (e.g., the hegemon)* | **Proposition 2a:** International anarchy will compel all rising powers with the economic capacity to maximize their independent military capabilities and become ‘military great powers’ to attempt to do so.  
**Proposition 2b:** Rising powers’ military policies will be exclusively a response to perceived external threats to territories and interests and based on a rational calculation of the most efficient way for the state to ensure its survival and/or protect its material interests. The measures that result will entail both internal and external balancing against the sources of external security threats. With regard to the former, weapons procurement will be carried out in the most efficient means possible. With regard to the latter, alliances will serve to maximize aggregate deterrent power while minimizing dependence and the risks of abandonment. |
| Domestic Institutions/Interest Group Politics        | *Unique institutional arrangements/relative influence of interest groups within the domestic polity* | **Proposition 4:** Policy choices at strategic decision points will be best explained by uniquely influential domestic institutions or the relative influence of specific domestic interest groups; military policy outcomes will be shaped primarily by parochial interests. |
4. Overview of Research Design

Methodology

The research objective of this study is to develop a theory to account for important variation in the military trajectories of rising powers in the modern era. Because it seeks to explain the actual factors at play in shaping empirical outcomes, it aims to avoid post-hoc rationalization in favor of testing theory based on empirical analyses of actual decision-making from the perspective of leaders in the rising power. To this end, this study employs a comparative, multi-case, qualitative methodology.

This study’s comparative, qualitative approach enjoys several advantages over alternative methodologies. First, its qualitative case studies-based research design allows for more accurate identification and measurement of the indicators most relevant to explaining the dependent variable. Although the complexity of the empirical world means that measuring exactly how much explanatory power to grant to each causal variable is a challenge, this approach is most appropriate for drawing conclusions about whether and how a posited causal variable has a demonstrable, significant, and/or independent effect on the observed outcome. This, in turn, makes it an effective means by which to develop and test empirically-grounded, policy-relevant IR theory. Furthermore, this study’s comparative analysis of multiple cases across time and space allows for an expanded set of observations (i.e., a larger ‘n’) both within and across cases, which in turn enhances the internal and external validity of its findings.

127 Ibid., 25.
128 After all, effective foreign policy is predicated on an understanding of the factors defining the utility function of the actor whose behavior one is seeking to influence.
The methodological approach employed in this study facilitates causal inference by adopting a case selection and methodological framework designed to mitigate several issues frequently associated with so-called “indeterminate research designs” in some qualitative research. Especially salient in this regard are the relatively large—at least for a study employing qualitative methods—number of diverse observations (more than two-dozen, including multiple SDPs per rising power case), comparisons across space (i.e., examining multiple countries) and across time (examining the same country in different time periods), and efforts to shed light on the actual decision-making process by which the outcome of interest was produced via process tracing. Disaggregating each country case study into multiple SDPs expands the number of observations in this study beyond those typically found in the existing literature. Finally, in each case study extensive testing of SAT’s explanatory power relative to that of multiple leading alternative explanations enhances the persuasiveness of this study’s findings.

Measuring Explanatory Power

In order to identify the factors driving military policy decision-making at each SDP and to most effectively test the explanatory power of SAT relative to the alternative explanations delineated in the previous section, I employ the following basic strategy. Prior to conducting the empirical analysis in each primary case study, I generate preliminary predictions about the military trajectory of the rising power expected by SAT and each of the alternative explanations. I summarize these predictions at the beginning of each chapter. In all cases I examine the real-world behavioral outcomes (i.e., military policy choices) at each SDP and make a preliminary judgment about which of the alternative explanations from the previous step comes closest to

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130 For reference, see Ibid., chap. 6.
explaining the observed outcome. Next, to the extent that the data available allow, I conduct a close examination of the empirical record to assess the extent to which there is evidence for or against this causal mechanism in the actual decision-making process.¹³¹ In short, the objective is two-fold: to test SAT and its alternatives by a) identifying the factors shaping decision-making in rising powers at key strategic decision points empirically, rather than by backward-induction or post-hoc rationalization based upon observed military policy outcomes, and b) to then determine which theory offers the primary, or best, explanation of these outcomes.

Case Selection

This study’s case selection includes six rising powers in the modern era, all of which are experiencing rapid industrial development and economic growth during the period under examination. In chronological order, the case studies in Chapters 3-6 are Meiji Japan, Germany, and the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries; late-20th century Japan and Germany; and the ‘case-in-progress’ of contemporary China. As discussed above, the empirical analysis disaggregates each of these cases into multiple observations, i.e., the SDPs (see table below).

¹³¹ This approach basically combines the congruence method with process-tracing. George and Bennett, *Case Studies*, chap. 9–10.
# Table 4 Primary Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rising Power</th>
<th>Candidate Strategic Decision Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Meiji Japan (1873-1911)**     | - 1874 punitive expeditions to Taiwan  
- 1876 ‘gunboat diplomacy’ to ‘open’ Korea and establish unequal treaty  
- 1894 decision to go to war with China; i.e., the Sino-Japanese War  
- 1895 decision to annex Taiwan  
- 1900 decision to participate in the multinational coalition to suppress the Boxer Rebellion in China  
- 1904 decision to go to war with Russia  
- 1905/1910 decisions to establish a ‘protectorate’ in, and then to formally annex Korea |
- 1967/8 decisions to establish ‘Three Non-Nuclear Principles’ and the “Four Pillars” of Japan’s non-nuclear policy  
- Late 1970s/early 1980s response to surging Soviet threat and the 1% ceiling on defense spending  
- Early-1990s response to commercial and oil interests threatened by crisis in the Middle East and the Gulf War  
- 1992 decision to allow JSDF involvement in UNPKO |
| **Contemporary People’s Republic of China (1991-2013)** | - 1990s decisions to initiate rapid informatization/mechanization of the PLA; to transform the Second Artillery Corps, in particular to add conventional strike to its mission and to develop the Anti-ship Ballistic Missile  
- Early 2000s shifts to expand PLA’s mission set to include ‘military operations other than war,’ peacekeeping operations, cooperative nontraditional security, and other efforts to enhance China’s “soft power”  
- 2008 deployment of the PLAN to the Gulf of Aden to participate in a multinational counter-piracy operation  
- 2008 procurement of ‘Peace Ark’ hospital ship and its subsequent deployment on “Harmonious Missions”  
- Ongoing development of a modern, blue-water navy and pursuit of multiple aircraft carriers |
Table 5 Secondary Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rising Power</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>United States of America</th>
<th>Germany</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Late-19th/Early 20th-century</td>
<td>Post-1883 decision to become a colonial power</td>
<td>Post-1898 decision to launch the Spanish-American War</td>
<td>Post-1950s and 1970s/80s decisions over nuclear weapons policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-1897 decisions to implement Weltpolitik, pursue further colonial</td>
<td>Post-1898 decisions to become a colonial power (esp. annexation of the Philippines)</td>
<td>1990s (post-Cold War) decisions over use of military force overseas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>expansion, and to development a battleship-centric navy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late-19th/Early 20th-century</td>
<td>1898 decision to launch the Spanish-American War</td>
<td>Post-1898 decisions to become a colonial power (esp. annexation of the Philippines)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-1898 decisions to become a colonial power (esp. annexation of the</td>
<td>Post-1898 decisions to engage in naval buildup and to deploy “The Great White Fleet”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Philippines)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late 20th-century Germany</td>
<td>1950s and 1970s/80s decisions over nuclear weapons policy</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1990s (post-Cold War) decisions over use of military force overseas</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Rationale

I have selected these six cases for theoretical, historical, and methodological reasons.

Most importantly, in accordance with established best practices in political science, I selected these cases based on the primary research objective of this study: to develop and test a theory to explain important variation in the military trajectories of rising powers in the modern era. All six cases are experiencing rapid economic growth and industrial development. Second, I selected these cases because they are widely acknowledged to be of great historical and theoretical importance. Understanding the causes of major shifts in the military policies of these rising powers is not only of intrinsic historical interest; the resulting policy decisions have had (or, in the case of contemporary China, have and will continue to have) profound impacts on the policy responses of other states, normative and material characteristics of the international

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132 Ibid., 83.
133 Van Evera contends that “intrinsic historical importance” is one of several important criteria upon which to base decisions about case selection. Stephen Van Evera, Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 86–7.
system (e.g., structure), and regional and global peace and stability. More generally, many of the real-world phenomena of greatest interest to security studies scholars and policymakers alike—including military spending and weapons procurement decisions, not to mention the outbreak of war between major powers—find their origins in these major shifts in force development and force employment policies.

Finally, there are several important methodological reasons for selecting these six cases of rapidly industrializing rising powers. Most importantly, key characteristics of these cases make them especially strong, or ‘most likely,’ cases to support the alternative explanations of rising power behavior delineated above. Conversely, they are poor, or ‘least likely,’ cases to provide empirical support for SAT. In other words, far from cherry-picking what some Realists might consider to be deviant, or ‘irrelevant’ cases, this study’s case selection directly challenges Realist and other materialist paradigms using cases that essentially ‘stack the deck’ in favor of their structural and materialist assumptions and against the primarily non-material factors posited by SAT. Accordingly, if the empirical analysis in subsequent chapters nevertheless reveals that the causal mechanisms posited in SAT in fact have independent and significant effects on outcomes—even in the allegedly anarchical, uncertain, hard-nose, and realpolitik world of rising and great powers and the ‘high-politics’ of military affairs—then it will provide especially powerful evidence in support of its posited causal mechanisms.

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134 Randall Schweller writes that “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.” Schweller, “Managing the Rise of Great Powers,” 25.

135 For an overview of the merits of choosing “least-likely” cases when testing theories, see Harry Eckstein, “Case Study and Theory in Political Science,” in *Handbook of Political Science* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975), 118.

136 A sizable literature already argues that because of international anarchy, institutions, identities, ideas, and norms will not exert independent effects on policy outcomes, particularly in the military domain. For example, see Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions.” Realists and other critics have often been dismissive of constructivist scholarship based on a general impression that constructivists often draw on deviant or “irrelevant” cases (i.e., cases not directly related to traditional security affairs, such as human rights, the emergence of the European Union, and humanitarian intervention) to support their arguments. Johnston, *Social States*, xix.
‘Stacking the Deck’ against Shadowing/Avoiding Theory

There are at least four reasons why this study’s case selection provides ‘most likely’ cases for the causal mechanisms posited by the most influential existing—almost exclusively structural Realist—theories of rising powers, and ‘least likely’ cases to support the causal mechanisms posited in SAT.

First, in all six cases this study focuses on explaining policy outcomes in a type of state—rising powers—and in a policy domain—the development and employment of ‘hard’ military power—where existing theory contends that structural and material factors will ‘reign supreme.’ Conversely, non-material factors are widely expected to be (at most) epiphenomenal in explaining outcomes. This focus allows SAT to challenge Realism directly on its home turf—rising/great powers and military affairs.

Second, all six cases are experiencing rapid industrialization and economic growth, i.e., acquiring the latent material capabilities that under international anarchy the alleged ‘self-help imperative’ central to mainstream Realist and materialist paradigms contends will inevitably compel leaders to exploit efficiently in pursuit of massive military power in order to survive and/or expand in a hostile world and to, inter alia, prepare efficiently for war with the hegemon. In other words, in contrast to a case selection say, focused exclusively on relatively poor, developing countries, in these six rising powers decisions not to conform to Realist expectations cannot be attributable to insufficient wealth, industrial strength, or technological capability. Rather, it must be the result of a choice. In other words, in all cases leaders enjoy sufficient latent material capabilities to behave in the manner expected by Realist paradigms if they choose to do so.
Third, and relatedly, rising powers are—by definition—significantly weaker in terms of material power than the leading, or dominant, state(s) in the international system. As discussed in Section 3, several major theories in IR—e.g., offensive realism, defensive realism, and power transition theory—all suggest that because of the existential threat posed by this more powerful state a desire to engage in a costly pursuit of non-material international prestige or to conform to global norms should therefore rank very low on the list of the rising power’s military policy priorities. In an anarchical world, this existential threat, coupled with the established power(s)’s clear incentives to try to prevent the emergence of a peer competitor, should give all rising powers particularly strong incentives to leverage surging latent material capabilities to develop and employ military power as much and as efficiently as possible in order to deter, and prepare for a preventive war with, this(ese) more powerful state(s). In other words, the rising power should be focused almost exclusively on confronting the existential threat posed by the great power(s), not just to survive, but also to ensure that it can force a revision of the extant international order—which it had no hand in creating—to better suit its narrow material self-interests.

Fourth, the military trajectories of the three pre-World War I cases in this study—imperial Germany, Japan, and the United States—are often explicitly cited by Realists to support their arguments about the primacy of structural and material factors in shaping outcomes, even ‘hegemonic war.’ In this sense, these cases are by definition ‘most likely’ cases for the leading alternative explanations.

Given the degree to which this study’s case selection strategy effectively ‘stacks the deck’ against SAT by focusing its analysis on ‘most likely’ cases for leading alternative explanations,
if the empirical analysis in subsequent chapters demonstrates that SAT provides superior explanatory power of military policy outcomes in even these cases (and specific military policy decisions) of historical significance, it suggests that widespread assumptions about the universal preeminence of structural and material factors in shaping state behavior under anarchy need to be reconsidered, or at least caveated significantly. Such a finding has implications not only for IR theory, but also for policy; in particular, the manner in which established powers can most effectively shape the emergence of rising powers in international order-sustaining ways.

**Differences in research design from those of existing studies**

This study’s research design modifies or improves on those of existing related studies in several important ways. This novel research design in turn contributes to its novel findings.

First, this study treats rising powers’ military policy choices as the outcomes to be explained, rather than as exogenous causal variables determined by ‘nature.’ In this regard, this study’s dependent variable differs from that found in the larger English-language literature examining the policy responses of great powers to emerging challengers, such as the scholarship on great power decline. In contrast, the focus of this study is decision-making among leaders in the rising power itself.

Second, in contrast to non-empirical or single case study-based research designs, this study is designed to make a causal argument that is empirically supported by a comparative analysis of a large number of diverse empirical observations (i.e., multiple SDPs per rising power case) drawn from multiple cases that vary across space (i.e., examining multiple countries) and across time and international context (i.e., examining the same country in different

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time periods). To the extent available data allow, my research design aims to shed light on the actual process by which leaders in rising powers decide specific military policies, rather than engaging in post-hoc rationalization based on preconceived assumptions about the factors driving state behavior. By zooming in on specific debates at strategic decision points this study avoids a weakness of some related studies, such as that found in those which contain multi-decade descriptive historical narratives that often do not propose or rigorously test, an explanatory theory, or those which propose a theory without testing it extensively against the empirical record. My focus on a series of military policy choices over time that may ultimately—but which do not necessarily—create conditions in which certain international outcomes of particular interest (e.g., hegemonic war) are possible also allows for a deeper exploration of the fundamental causes of the more disastrous phenomena that have tended to attract the attention of many security studies’ scholars. This in turn opens up the possibility of alternative outcomes.

Finally, this study is designed to mitigate the selection bias found in the research designs of several influential studies on related topics. It appears to be primarily because of related research design issues that existing theories fail to acknowledge, much less explain, the existence of important variation in rising powers’ military trajectories. A key consequence is that these studies make theoretical arguments that explicitly or implicitly claim that all rising powers will pursue the same path. The variation revealed by the empirical analysis in this study demonstrates that such deterministic claims are problematic.

Most importantly, this study explicitly avoids selecting cases on the dependent variable—a major research design issue in many existing studies of rising powers and related phenomena. Instead, I select cases based on the rapid expansion of industrial, economic, and technological wherewithal. These are the *enabling conditions* that provide leaders with the *option of*
implementing those military policies that scholars tend to associate with rising and great powers. But this approach also allows for the possibility that such outcomes are not inevitable. Choosing cases based on enabling conditions in which different values of the outcome variable manifest allows for a more robust test of causal mechanisms by not predetermining the outcome or restricting the extent of possible variation.\textsuperscript{138} In contrast, there is a tendency in many other studies to select cases based primarily on a particular sought-after realization of the dependent variable; e.g., aggressive military expansion. In these studies, ‘rising powers’ are effectively identified post-hoc—basically, rising powers are conceived of as great powers before they made the policy choice(s) that made them ‘great.’ Such selection bias restricts variation in outcome \textit{a priori}, which in turn leads some scholars to draw unwarranted and exaggerated conclusions about the inevitability of certain outcomes. Avoiding this bias allows for a reexamination and test of existing general claims about the primary causes of rising powers’ military trajectories—especially whether international anarchy compels all states experiencing rapid economic and industrial growth to become military great powers, to maximize security, and/or to maximize military power in the pursuit of hegemony.

A second way in which this study mitigates case selection bias (and allows for greater generalizability across time and space) is by explicitly adopting a comparative approach that incorporates a diverse sample of cases beyond pre-1914 Europe and North America—the chronological and geographical focus of many existing studies of rising powers. It thus avoids the tendency to generalize across time periods and international contexts based on analysis of a

single case or comparative studies of cases under almost identical temporal—and, consequently, structural (and normative)—conditions. Expanding the dataset to include cases of rising powers beyond exclusively ‘Western’ (esp. European) states and those unique historical moments that have received a disproportionate amount of attention in the English-language IR literature on related topics, such as the period immediately before World War I, allows for more complete evaluations of the generalizability of both SAT and its leading alternatives. This study’s diverse case selection allows for cross-country comparisons and cross-time comparisons within single countries and among several countries, many of which emerge in different cultural, political, normative, and strategic circumstances. Given such diverse contexts, the discovery of a generalizable pattern of cause and effect across cases would be especially significant for IR theory.

A third way in which this study’s research design mitigates the bias of other studies is through its extensive consideration of leading alternative explanations across paradigms/approaches. In contrast, influential studies in the existing literature on rising powers tend to privilege certain—usually structural or material—variables \textit{a priori}. They tend to essentially stack the deck in favor of realist arguments by giving no consideration to alternative explanations, or to consider only alternative strands of realist theory. This approach is especially puzzling in light of the fact that one of the most influential studies in the Realist tradition—Robert Gilpin’s “War and Change in World Politics”—in its preface explicitly

\footnote{For an example of a study that does this, see Zakaria’s 1998 study of America’s rise before 1908. Zakaria, \textit{FWTP}. Zakaria tests the generalizability of his theory through a three-paragraph overview of German foreign policy from 1866 to 1914, a case which also occurs during the same time period, in which both international structure and great power behavioral norms in the military domain were relatively constant.}

\footnote{For example, Kenneth Waltz dismisses the case of postwar Japan as a mere “structural anomaly”—irrelevant for IR theory and not worthy of consideration as a challenge to structural Realism. Waltz, “Emerging Structure,” 66. Fareed Zakaria’s seminal study of the United States’ rise to ‘great power’ status considers only three strands of realism in its analysis: defensive realism, classical realism, and Zakaria’s preferred modification of the latter—state-centered realism. Non-material factors are not considered as alternative explanations. Zakaria, \textit{FWTP}.}
identifies sociological theories as potentially important explanations of state behavior. Gilpin’s actual analysis, however, focuses exclusively on “economic [i.e., material rationalist] theories” and is largely non-empirical.  

**Data Sources**

In order to identify as accurately as possible the perceptions, beliefs, and interests that shape decision-makers’ thinking and, by extension, influence observed military policy outcomes in these six cases of rising powers, this study analyzes a diverse array of hundreds of Chinese-, Japanese-, and English-language primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include meetings with policymakers, military officers, legislators, diplomats, and government bureaucrats; notes and transcriptions of similar meetings and oral histories compiled by other scholars; testimony, speeches, and memoirs by leaders and other officials; parliamentary debates; and government and military reports. Secondary sources include academic journals and books, media reports, and additional meetings with defense analysts, researchers at government- and military-affiliated research institutes, think tanks, and universities. Many of these data were acquired during field research in mainland China, Japan, Taiwan, and the United States.

One standard, but important, caveat for the reader about the data sources used in this study is that the sensitive nature of the subject matter—military policy decision-making—in some instances limited my ability to identify with a high degree of confidence the specific drivers of policy outcomes through process-tracing and forced a greater reliance on congruence testing. The barriers to entry were especially high in the ‘case-in-progress’ of the People’s Republic of China, an authoritarian state in which military transparency is extremely low and

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where military policy decision-making is often referred to by both foreign and Chinese scholars as ‘the blackest of the black boxes.’

5. Conclusion

This study’s central aim is to contribute a mid-range theory—shadowing/avoiding theory (SAT)—to account for theoretically and practically significant, yet heretofore overlooked and unexplained, variation in the military trajectories of rising powers.

As discussed earlier, this study’s findings are not intended to deny that military policies are often shaped in response to uncertainty under international anarchy, perceived concrete external security threats, and/or in pursuit/defense of material interests. Indeed, a wealth of empirical evidence in the historical record suggests that these factors are also often important drivers of military policy decision-making. This study’s findings do, however, demonstrate that the existing literature on rising powers and associated phenomena in military affairs has inappropriately ignored two powerful, and theoretically and historically important, patterns of cause and effect that appear to be crucial to understanding the major factors shaping the military force development and employment policy choices of rising powers. Rather than cherry-picking uninteresting or theoretically or historically insignificant cases, this study bases these findings on the empirical record of decision-making in domains in which the assumptions of Realist and other exclusively materialist theories are widely expected to reign supreme: rising powers and military affairs. Given this, the strength of its findings suggest that scholars should recognize the independent and significant effects of status-seeking and status-avoiding drivers and, by extension, important limitations of structural and exclusively materialist factors in explaining state behavior.
The case studies that follow demonstrate that the interaction of perceived contemporaneous great power norms and national identity also can play a significant role in shaping leaders’ decisions about whether and how to invest surging latent material capabilities into developing and employing military power. Some of the resulting choices represent major military policy shifts away from longstanding past practices, while others, less conspicuous but no less consequential for international relations, constitute instances of remarkable restraint—i.e., choices by leaders not to implement major, potentially otherwise destabilizing, military policy shifts. All of these choices have had (or will have) significant consequences—positive or negative—for an issue of central concern to IR scholars and foreign policymakers alike: peace and stability in the international system. One important takeaway is that the rise of new potential military great powers does not always trigger disaster and, even when it does, it is often for reasons other than those privileged in the existing literature.

Any framework for thinking about rising powers that does not take into account the powerful role of socialization generally, and these two mechanisms specifically, seems to be missing an important part of story. In the policy domain, any strategy designed to shape a rising power’s military trajectory in a peaceful and order-sustaining direction that does not seek to actively exploit these powerful non-material drivers of state behavior is also neglecting a potentially potent tool by which to shape its leaders’ policy choices. Failure to do so responsibly may also unnecessarily and significantly increase the likelihood of a disastrous, yet potentially avoidable, clash.
Chapter 3: Meiji Japan

“From the start, the goal of our national policy has been to open ourselves to civilization, to become a nation of the world, and to join the ranks of the civilized countries of Europe and America [bunmei no chii wo shimuru oubei shokoku 文明の地位をしむる欧米諸国].”

-- Ito Hirobumi (1st, 5th, 7th, and 10th Prime Minister of Japan; 1st Resident-General of Korea), 1899

“[P]eople had said to them that their China campaign of 1894-1895 was a mere military promenade, and that they would never get their position as a nation recognized until they crossed swords with an European Power. That was a strong motive with them. Yes, he replied, the old samurai spirit. But war would ruin Japan. At the outside she had only £16,000,000 of gold, and the first result of a declaration of war would be the return to forced currency. The resources of Russia were so enormous. I agreed with him that in the long run the result must be disastrous for Japan.”

-- Ernest Satow (British Minister in Peking (1900-1906); Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in Japan (1895-1900)), December, 1903

Upon the death of the Meiji Emperor in 1912, the Western press was effusive with its praise for Japan’s accomplishment during the emperor’s forty-five year reign. On July 30, 1912, The Daily Telegraph wrote that Japan had “won its place among the Great Powers of the World. In the history of civilization there is nothing more wonderful than the evolution of this island kingdom.” The encomium in the Austrian Neue Freie Press crowed that the Japanese emperor “could say with pride that he had in one generation created a great power out of nothing.”

Indeed, based on the perverse great power mores and international status incentives of the day, during the Meiji era (1868-1912) Japan had accomplished much for which it deserved praise.

142 Quoted in Albert M Craig, Civilization and Enlightenment: The Early Thought of Fukuzawa Yukichi (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009), 150.
Take only the ten years prior to the Emperor’s death as an example: Japan had become the first ‘non-white’ nation to defeat a ‘white’ power in a modern war (the Russo-Japanese War); made a protectorate of, and five years later, formally annexed the Korean Peninsula while suppressing a 140,000-strong open rebellion with brutal force; and brought an end to the nearly half-century old Unequal Treaties (*fubyodo jyoyaku* 不平等条約) imposed upon it at gun point by every major Western power in the 1850s. On top of its achievements outside the military domain—e.g., rapid economic growth and industrial development, the establishment of a modern Western political system, promulgation of a Western constitution—these accomplishments earned Japan’s leaders and its people their long-coveted status as a modern, ‘civilized’ Great Power. To be sure, the praise for the accomplishments during the Meiji era was not universal. As one contemporary Chinese commentary stated upon the Emperor’s death, “fortunately Heaven has visited Japan with a scourge and killed her emperor.”\(^\text{145}\) Focused as they were on acquiring recognition from the leading states in the system and membership in the exclusive “Great Power club,” however, throughout the period of its rise—and for some time after—Japan’s leaders appeared to care little for what the ‘half-civilized’ and ‘barbarous’ lower-ranked, non-Western states thought of their military advance and ‘civilizing’ efforts. In this regard, they were far from an outlier among their self-identified Great Power peers.\(^\text{146}\)

The rise of Meiji Japan to great power status presents a hard-case for the status-seeking mechanism posited by shadowing/avoiding theory (SAT). As discussed in Chapter 2, existing theory suggests that international anarchy, the so-called self-help imperative and guns vs. butter tradeoff will compel all rising powers experiencing rapid increases in latent material power to

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\(^{145}\) Quoted in Ibid., 217.  
\(^{146}\) After all, even the world’s ostensible champion of democracy and freedom, the United States, abortively embraced colonialism and forced subjugation of ‘uncivilized’ peoples at the turn of the century (see Chapter 6).
invest heavily and efficiently in developing and employing military power for survival and in support of their expanding material interests overseas. Non-material forces should not have a significant or independent effect on military policy choices. A brief glance at the empirical record of outcomes also suggests several additional reasons specific to the case of Meiji Japan that suggest SAT should provide especially poor explanatory power of its military trajectory. Most importantly, the belligerent, expansionist, and ‘inherently conflictual’ nature of the policy outcomes that in large part defined its military trajectory between 1868 and 1912 appear to be the ‘bread-and-butter’ of influential structural Realist and materialist theories. In this sense, Meiji Japan is a ‘most-likely’ case for the leading alternative explanations.

Conversely, Meiji Japan is a ‘least likely’ case for SAT, which posits that non-material factors will function as primary drivers of major military policy shifts. First, under anarchy the latent threat from the higher-ranked powers was extremely high given a material power differential between agrarian, feudal Japan and the industrial (or rapidly industrializing) Western powers that was arguably larger than in any other case in modern history. Furthermore, as a thousand year-old, traditional Asian society that had (de facto, at least) been firmly ensconced in a Sino-centric Confucian world order for centuries, and as an island nation whose rulers had essentially shut themselves off from the outside world for 250 years, Meiji Japan seems a very unlikely candidate to be socialized to an entirely different, even ‘alien,’ Western culture and set of political and military values. From a more sociological perspective, the pervasive racism of the period provides another reason why we should expect the West and Japan to see each other as ‘other’ and to be at odds. The fifteen years of civil war over Japan’s future course following the arrival of U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry’s ‘black ships’ in 1853, followed by a decade of major rebellions and uprisings, are a testament to this ‘clash of civilizations.’
Nevertheless, it appears clear from the empirical record that once thrust abruptly into the Western international order upon Perry’s arrival, Meiji Japan’s new leaders were in fact rapidly socialized to an entirely new normative context—including a new conceptualization of international hierarchy based on entirely different values and patterns of interactions among states. So powerful were these socializing forces that within a few short years, even many of those most ardent Japanese nationalists concerned about Japan’s ‘honor’ and traditions changed their objectives from “repelling the barbarians” (joi攘夷) by force to a new national mission aimed at to “entering the ranks of the Great Powers” (rekkyo no nakamairi列強の仲間入り) and “taking [Japan’s] rightful place in the comity of nations” by essentially playing their game.147

After more than a decade of de facto civil war over how Japan should respond to this foreign threat, on January 3, 1868 the Japanese emperor formally declared the restoration of imperial power. In one fell swoop, this ‘Meiji Restoration’ brought an end to the 250-year rule of the Tokugawa Shogunate and, with it, the end of a more than two century-old policy of national seclusion (sakoku鎖国) from the outside world.148 Thenceforth, Meiji’s new leaders implemented a policy of “national opening” (kaikoku開国). Over the next half-century Japan would achieve one of the most rapid and remarkable political, cultural, economic, industrial, and military transformations in history. Driven by the overriding objective of attaining equal status with the Western great powers, Japan’s civilian and military leaders increasingly conformed to the norms defined by their American and European exemplars. In the contemporary discourse, Japan’s leaders judged that Japan needed to adapt to its environment—to “follow the trends of

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148 In 1635, the Tokugawa Shogunate forbade overseas travel, even to the extent that overseas Japanese were prohibited from returning to Japan. Three years later, it even banned construction of large merchant ships.
the times” (ji-sei ni shitagau 時勢に従う). As the leading intellectual and most influential intellectual of the era, Fukuzawa Yukichi, would argue, Japan’s ascension to the great power ranks was contingent on it adopting both the ‘internals’ and ‘externals of [Western] civilization’ and itself becoming an ‘enlightened, civilized’ (bunmei kaika 文明開化) great power.\footnote{This is a central argument of Fukuzawa’s most famous work. Yukichi Fukuzawa 福沢諭吉, Bunmeiron No Gairyaku 文明論之概略 [An Outline of a Theory of Civilization] (Iwanami Shoten, 1962).}

This basic strategy of policy mimesis as a means to status as a ‘first-rank’ great power extended to the military domain where, ironically, at the end of the 19th-century some of the constitutive characteristics of a so-called ‘civilized’ great power were to be found in extremely destructive and expansionist policies. The trappings and behaviors normatively associated with this coveted status were shaped in large part by prevailing ideology: in particular, Social Darwinist principles that effectively sanctioned categorizing states based on ‘stages of civilization’ and which advocated racialized colonialism and ‘civilizing missions’ abroad as a glorious, prestigious, and even ‘humanitarian’ course. Important major shifts to Japan’s military policy during this period were shaped in the first order by a desire to develop and employ military power in a manner that conformed to these constitutive and regulative norms. For inspiration, Meiji leaders looked to the leading Western powers with which they interacted most frequently—especially Great Britain and the United States.

In remarkable cases, the phrase ‘taking a page out of the [great power] playbook’ applied literally. In the case of the fledgling Japanese Navy’s first-ever overseas mission—‘gunboat diplomacy’ vis-à-vis Korea in 1876—planning was carried out based on the record of Commodore Perry’s mission to ‘open up’ Japan by force two decades earlier. In other cases,
Meiji leaders’ role models were directly behind the wheel, as when the U.S. minister in Tokyo and a U.S. general proposed and effectively masterminded Japan’s first operational employment of military power abroad in three centuries: the 1874 expedition to ‘civilize’ ‘savages’ in Taiwan. Over the next three decades, Great Britain and the United States would typically look on with pride as their star student defeated the ‘barbarous’ Qing Empire and the ‘half-civilized’ Russian empire in 1895 and 1905, respectively.

Given the perverse great power norms of the day, it was Japan’s first-ever military victory over a ‘white’ power in 1905 that finally won it widespread prestige and caused it to become almost universally recognized as having succeeded in its half-century quest to enter ‘the great power club.’ Although the shock of Japan’s remarkable victory over Russia began to make some U.S. leaders uneasy about Japan’s growing military power, this was on purely self-interested grounds and due primarily to concern about the security of America’s own recent colonial ‘trophy,’ the Philippines. Indeed, as a testament to the content of prevailing norms there was extremely little moral opposition from the leading states to Japan’s behavior during this period. Japan’s military operations and wars through 1905 were not only normatively sanctioned, in some cases they were even explicitly encouraged, by most Western observers. For example, no Western country opposed Japan’s acquisition of Taiwan as its first-ever colony in 1895. Nor did they oppose Tokyo’s decision to turn Korea into a protectorate ten years later, or to annex the entire Peninsula in 1910. In fact, the following year Japan was essentially rewarded for its actions with the formal overturning of the Unequal Treaties, a de facto recognition of its hard-won equal status. While both the literature and popular narrative of imperial Japan’s military trajectory tends to be disproportionately focused on the 1930s and 1940s, it is important

150 See Chapter 6 for a discussion of the United States’ own rise to great power status, including the puzzling decision to annex the Philippines, its first-ever overseas colony.
to recognize that to a significant degree, important aspects of the general thrust of this trajectory were planted much earlier—during the Meiji Period—and often for reasons divorced from the causal mechanisms generally assumed to determine rising power behavior in the military domain.

To make the argument that rising Meiji Japan’s trajectory was in large part shaped by the interaction between its status-seeking drive and perceived contemporaneous norms associated with great power status is by no means to ‘excuse’ Japan’s policies during its rise or after, which were in important cases widely popular on the home front yet undeniably disastrous for other peoples. The objective of this chapter is strictly to examine—not to defend—how Japanese leaders conceived of and shaped policies in response to what they perceived to be the necessary pathway to their coveted ‘great power’ status—i.e., to explore the manner in which the normative context into which Meiji Japan emerged shaped its subsequent military trajectory. Such an approach is essential to this study’s larger research objective: to assess the degree to and manner in which norms effectively promoted by the behavior and rhetoric of a rising power’s aspirational status referent can influence its leaders military policy choices.

The rise of Meiji Japan to great power status is one of the most significant historical developments in the modern era, yet it is rarely examined by international relations scholars. This is especially true in the literature on ‘rising powers,’ which tends to focus disproportionately on European and North American cases. Although the case of Imperial Japan during the 1930s and 1940s has received the attention of security studies scholars, the formative period of the Meiji era, during which much of the groundwork for Japan’s destructive expansionism during those later decades was laid, is often overlooked and therefore has not significantly informed the theoretical literature on rising powers. Rather than just assuming that all great powers will behave in a certain way, it is important to examine empirically how exactly
it is that Japan’s leaders came to adopt policies that ultimately caused it to emerge as an expansionist, colonizing power by the turn of the century.

What explains the major shifts in military policy after 1868 that, after 250 years of self-imposed isolation, set Meiji Japan on the path that would lead to the acquisition of Taiwan as a colony, its expansion onto the Asian mainland into Korea and beyond, wars with China, Russia, and ultimately the United States, and, most importantly, bring immense suffering to millions of people in East Asia and beyond, including eventually the Japanese homeland and its people? Even if for no other reason than the disastrous consequences of these shifts, it is of immense theoretical and practical importance to better understand how these shifts came about. Understanding the process of how Meiji Japan’s leaders understood and rationalized these shifts is indispensable to developing a more complete understanding of the factors that shape the military trajectories of rising powers.

As the analysis in this chapter will show, contrary to widespread conventional wisdom, Japan began developing and employing military power in pursuit of status as a ‘great power’ decades before the formulation of anything resembling a ‘grand plan’ for regional hegemony. Its military policies throughout the half-century of rapid growth and development after the 1868 Restoration evolved in fits and starts, and were largely mimetic of those of the peer group to which its leaders most sought recognition as a member—the Western ‘Great Powers’ (rekkyo 列強). Japan’s overseas expansionism and imperialism did not begin in 1931 or 1895. It began

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151 Though the international relations literature on rising powers generally overlooks the role of status-seeking and socialization in shaping rising powers’ military trajectories, even if the language of shadowing/avoiding theory is not used among historians and other experts of the Meiji era there appears to be a near-consensus that Japan’s push for recognition as a great power caused it in large part socialized to contemporaneous great power norms and to mimic them. Two seminal English-language histories by leading scholars of Meiji Japan are Akira Iriye, “Japan’s Drive to Great-Power Status,” in The Nineteenth Century, ed. Marius B. Jansen, 1st ed., vol. 5, The Cambridge History of Japan (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 721–82; Peter Duus, The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895-1910, Twentieth-Century Japan 4 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 96
in 1874, with Japan’s first overseas operation deployment of ground forces in three centuries. Significantly, throughout this period leaders were in most cases not only engaging in policies that had been legitimated by the behavior and rhetoric of their aspirational referents. They were in important cases actively encouraged by the leading states to ‘be more like them.’ The resulting desire to mimic was so powerful that it often functioned as the primary driver of major shifts to military policy. The independent effect of this driver is manifest strongly in those cases when leaders saw the associated policies as disconnected from, or even contrary to, more pressing strategic and economic interests, or domestic concerns. These shifts were also often implemented despite recognition of the huge associated risks and costs at home and abroad.

The content of the contemporaneous great power norms at the time of Meiji Japan’s emergence not only sanctioned policies that caused immeasurable suffering for the indigenous peoples of the so-called ‘uncivilized’ countries against which Japan employed its rapidly growing military power, the inherently conflictual nature of the norms promoted by the ‘Western’ great powers also, ironically, contributed significantly to the future clashes with the powers from which Japanese leaders originally primarily sought recognition as a member of ‘the club.’ This is of course not to categorically deny the role of threats or economic interests in shaping Japan’s

military policy decision-making. What is most striking, however, about the empirical record of policy decision-making during this period is the degree to which international prestige and status incentives distorted Japan’s military trajectory away from the expectations of existing theories focused on structural and material forces as the primary drivers of military policy choices. Especially in the immediate aftermath of Japan’s ‘opening up’ following the 1868 Restoration, Meiji Japan’s national interests themselves came to be categorically redefined in accordance with what its leaders identified as the contemporaneous great power norms in the world into which it was emerging—a mechanism and outcome largely absent in the existing literature on rising powers. In important cases its military trajectory was shaped primarily by non-structural, non-material rationales and status-seeking driven socialization.

Outline

This chapter is divided into four sections. First, I provide a brief overview of the disparate expectations of Meiji Japan’s military trajectory based on shadowing/avoiding theory and the leading alternative explanations introduced in Chapter 2. Second, I discuss Meiji Japan’s rapid industrialization and economic development, the leadership’s and public’s concomitantly increasingly strong desire for international prestige and status as a member of the great power club, and the contemporaneous social context that effectively mapped out for leaders the pathway to that status. The penultimate section, the bulk of the chapter, examines Tokyo’s military policy decision-making at several major strategic decision points, discusses Japan’s pursuit of status as a military great power during this period, and evaluates the explanatory power of shadowing/avoiding theory relative to leading alternatives. I then conclude.
1. Theoretical Expectations

Expectations of Shadowing/Avoiding Theory

Shadowing/avoiding theory (SAT) expects that as Meiji Japan’s identity as a rising power consolidates in response to both changing material realities (i.e., rapidly increasing economic and industrial wherewithal) and domestic and international social cues, its military trajectory will increasingly be shaped by a desire to acquire the socially-defined trappings of status as a ‘Great Power’ and to conform to what its leaders perceive to be norms defining role-appropriate great power behavior in the military sphere. Leaders will pursue these policies primarily in order to seek prestige and recognition from Japan’s self-identified, higher-ranked peer group as a ‘member of the club.’ The resulting force development and force employment policy decisions will be driven primarily by a desire to acquire international standing and will in important cases be distinct from efficient measures to mitigate material threats in what Japan’s leaders explicitly identify as its most likely conflict scenarios. The general military trajectory will be inefficient, defined by over-investment in the socially-defined trappings of status as a military great power. Policy outcomes will evince a general trend toward convergence with rising Meiji Japan’s aspirational referent(s): the contemporaneous great powers, especially Great Britain and the United States.

Expectations of the Leading Alternative Explanations

The first category of alternative explanations, the power-maximization/offensive realist hypothesis, expects that in order to survive structural factors will inevitably compel Meiji Japan’s leaders to maximize military power and regional influence by rapidly investing expanding latent material capabilities into ramping up military spending in order to project hard,
coercive military power overseas; to expand territorially, politically, and economically in support of its expanding interests and in pursuit of regional hegemony; and to prepare efficiently for an expected clash with the contemporaneous hegemon: Great Britain. Japan will increasingly seek to revise the international system in its favor, pursue its expanding interests by force and military expansion, and show little restraint militarily when other states get in its way. Its military policies will be increasingly predatory and will be immune to considerations of domestic politics, national identity, and/or domestic or international norms.

The second alternative explanation, the security maximization hypothesis, expects that the ‘guns vs. butter’ trade-off will lead Tokyo to invest as efficiently as possible in safeguarding and expanding its material interests and to use other scarce resources to help solve Tokyo’s remarkable assortment of severe economic, social, political, and environmental problems. Thus, in the military domain Meiji Japan will focus exclusively on mitigating its vulnerabilities to invasion and subjugation by the Great Powers, and preparing its military as efficiently as possible to fight a modern war against its most feared and most likely adversaries: above all, the British hegemon. Especially given the poor base from which its economic and industrial takeoff begins, major changes to Meiji Japan’s military policies will be attributable to straight-forward calculations of material interests and immune to considerations of domestic politics, national identity, or internal or external normative/socialization pressures. This alternative explanation is a particularly strong candidate in the case of Meiji Japan, as cultural differences exacerbated by 250 years of national isolation, coupled with the demonstration effects of the European powers’ (especially Great Britain’s) ‘carving up’ of China beginning in the 1840s should cause its leaders to perceive a direct and existential threat and rapidly develop military power aimed at deterring an invasion by those powers. For these and other reasons, Meiji Japan is a very unlikely
candidate to be socialized to conform to contemporaneous global norms or to enmesh itself in the extant Western international order.

The third category of alternative explanations, domestic interest groups, expects that one or more powerful interest groups or bureaucracy/ies will hijack policymaking and advance military policies aimed at enhancing its/their clout within the domestic polity and pursuing parochial interests, rather than by a decision at the pinnacle of state power (top-down).

2. Background

The Rise of Meiji Japan

The rapid modernization of Japan after the Meiji Restoration of 1868 is one of the most remarkable across-the-board transformations carried out by any state in the modern era. Far from being limited to the economic, industrial, or military realm, the Meiji-era transformation of Japanese culture, society, and domestic political institutions is also one for the history books. Given this study’s explicit focus on policy-making in the military domain, however, these latter developments are beyond the scope of this chapter.

Although reliable figures are difficult to come by, modern economists estimate that Japan’s period of rapid development began sometime during the 1860s or 1870s. The rate of Japan’s economic expansion between the Meiji Restoration in 1868 and the Meiji Emperor’s death in 1912 is believed to be among the highest in the world. A largely agrarian economy well into the late 19th-century, Japan’s industrial capitalism began to hit its stride by the 1890s as heavy industry, employment in the modern sector, and the rate of general industrialization all grew rapidly. During this period newly established Mitsubishi Shokai and Yasuda Zaibatsu

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purchased entire factories from Britain and had them shipped to Japan. Rail lines expanded from 245 miles of track to 4500 miles between 1883 and 1903.\textsuperscript{153} By 1893 Japan’s merchant steamer fleet totaled more than 100,000 tons. It more than doubled over the next decade, and reached 1.577 million tons by 1913.\textsuperscript{154} Total trade volume increased from 26,246,545 yen in 1868 to 1,212,217,515 yen the year of the Meiji Emperor’s death.\textsuperscript{155} Although Japan started from an extremely low base and therefore did not become a mature industrial power until the 1920s, the basic vector of Japan’s economic and industrial growth—and the social and economic dislocations it caused—is clear. Economic growth and industrialization enabled a rapid military buildup and overseas military operations. Capable of building only one naval vessel under the 1883 naval expansion plan, by the end of the Meiji era Japan was essentially self-sufficient in naval construction.\textsuperscript{156}

In sum, it is not surprising why the period 1868 to 1912 has been termed by leading historians “modern Japan’s formative period.”\textsuperscript{157} As The Times of London assessed in 1904,

\begin{quote}
“the transformation of Japan from a State of an Eastern type, with much of the prejudice, antipathy, and ignorant hatred of the outer world implied therein, into a modern and progressive State, has been rapid beyond all example. Stages which Western countries took centuries to traverse Japan has passed through in two or three decades. With singular aptitude, and, on the whole, with discrimination, she has seized upon and assimilated many of the best elements in Western civilization; and to-day we see her using them with energy and skill, and as much initiative as if they had been of indigenous growth.”\textsuperscript{158}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., 397–398.
\textsuperscript{156} Crawcour, “Industrialization & Technological Change,” 432–433.
\textsuperscript{158} “We Publish to-Day a Remarkable...,” The Times (London), January 18, 1904.
**Domestic unrest and nationalism as driving forces of policy decision-making**

During this period of rapid modernization, economic growth, and industrial development—not to mention assimilation of Western culture and mores—the new Meiji government faced major domestic problems, not the least of which was a social fabric ripped apart by modernization unprecedented in scope and speed. In the early years, the most severe domestic problems were caused by samurai, who were upset with cultural changes (‘Westernization’) and the economic dislocations (unemployment) caused by the imperial Restoration and the concomitant end of centuries of their status at the top of the feudal social hierarchy. This unrest was captured in the 1873 push to employ samurai by invading Korea (discussed below), and culminated most famously in the failed 1877 rebellion of Saigo Takamori of Satsuma and tens of thousands of his fellow samurai. As a leading Meiji statesman, Kido Takayoshi, said of the 1873 crisis, “The calamity is upon us today. Indeed, this is the greatest political upheaval since the Restoration.”\(^{159}\)

Even after the samurai rebellions had been finally repressed, rapid modernization, economic growth, and gradually improving industrial wherewithal continued to foment major problems on the home front. Heavy state financing of the development programs of the Meiji state imposed a large tax burden on the population, driving many of them into debt. Meanwhile, urbanization uprooted many erstwhile farmers. These farmers then struggled to find new jobs, while even those who were able to keep them now had to send their children to school and military service, and to pay taxes. Work conditions in factories and mines were abysmal.

An additional source of unrest was the massive and precipitous influx of extremely different social, cultural, and political values. What to the Western powers was seen as ‘progress’

had grave consequences for domestic and social stability within Japan. These rapid social changes bred contempt for the leadership for abandoning Japan’s traditions in the name of ‘civilization.’ This resentment was symbolized in the 1889 assassination of Education Minister Mori Arinori the morning of the day that Japan’s first-ever Western constitution was promulgated. Together with the samurai uprisings, hundreds of violent peasant and other rebellions throughout the country demonstrated clearly the tenuous hold the Meiji leaders had on their fledgling state.\(^\text{160}\)

Unfortunately for Japan’s leaders, the basic problem did not disappear as Japan modernized. While widely popular initially, military buildups and imperialist adventures indirectly led to further domestic instability by 1) requiring more taxes to finance in both peacetime and wartime; 2) keeping standards of living low by dominating government investments, and 3) by outraging the public when the fruits of the war were not seen as sufficient or belittling to Japan. In this context “first among equals” civilian/military leader Yamagata Aritomo stated in 1901, “in the future the source of the government’s difficulties will not be foreign, but domestic affairs.”\(^\text{161}\) The fact that this statement was made by the primary champion of preparation for war with Russia in the wake of the 1895 Tripartite Intervention and while Russia was expanding into Manchuria and ogling the Korean Peninsula illustrates how bad things had gotten on the home front.

In response to this domestic unrest, Meiji leaders turned to the cultivation of ‘patriotism’ (aikokushugi 爱国主義) and nationalism as tools with which to promote national cohesion and, more fundamentally, a ‘Japanese’ identity, a construct with which few commoners were familiar.\(^\text{162}\) The nationalist ideology of ‘expel the barbarians’ morphed into a nationalist ideology

\(^{160}\) Ibid., 75–78.  
\(^{161}\) Gluck, Modern Myths, 29.  
\(^{162}\) Huffman, Yankee, 111.
focused on the goal of gaining equality and overturning the so-called Unequal Treaties by mimicking the Great Powers. To this end, the Meiji leadership engaged in an active effort to eliminate *han* (feudal domain) loyalties and in their stead to cultivate a national identity as a modern nation and power. The Meiji emperor’s subjects came to be referred to as ‘citizens of the nation’ (*kokumin* 国民) and frequent references were made to the “state” (*kokka* 国家). The phrase “for the sake of the nation” (*kokka no tame* 国家の為) permeated the contemporary discourse, including the writings and speeches of leaders like Yamagata.\(^{163}\)

Concomitant with this effort to cultivate nationalism was another major change implemented in no small part as an effort to go along with international trends and to identify the imperialist hegemon as Japan’s aspirational referent: an embrace of the term “Great Empire of Japan” (*dai Nippon teikoku* 大日本帝国) to refer to Japan, *before* it even possessed any colonies.\(^{164}\) The term was plastered on Japan’s 1889 Constitution, at which point it spread like wildfire. It was used to refer to everything from insurance companies to schools for the next half-century.\(^{165}\) As with other rising powers during this period, the government also employed the symbols of the Army and Navy, as well as popular songs of encomium for Japan’s imperialistic adventures and its “fifty million countrymen” as tools with which to promote national cohesion and a “sense of nation” among the public.\(^{166}\) The Imperial Army and Navy’s flags effectively became a symbol of Japan’s coveted status as a “first-tier nation” (*ittokoku* 一等国) and a unifying, and widely popular, force for becoming a strong and wealthy nation. Iriye notes that popular movements in Japan became increasingly notable for an ideology of “patriotism and

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\(^{164}\) Great Britain was referred to as the “Great Empire of Britain” (大英帝国).
\(^{166}\) Ibid., 250.
national assertiveness.”167 The political exploitation of nationalism and status-seeking as a strategy for legitimating and strengthening the regime’s grip on power would have severe consequences for Japan’s military policy choices both during and after the Meiji period.168

Japan’s Pursuit of Status as a ‘Great Power’

Once thrust into the Western order, after a period of resistance and domestic contestation the transformation of Japan’s political and strategic objectives that resulted was remarkable. After the 1868 Restoration, the very leaders who had come to power calling on Japan to reinstitute a seclusionist policy and to ‘repel the barbarians’ for fear that they would, in Gordon’s words, “poison the souls of the Japanese people, convert them to Christianity, and demolish their true identity,” reversed course.169 As Suganami writes, they were soon refocusing the efforts of the newly unified nation on “restor[ing] the glory of Japan in the eyes of all nations,” undoing the insulting Unequal Treaties, and engaging in international affairs “in accordance with the law of [Western] nations.”170 While this course remained contested throughout Japan’s rise, the majority opinion coalesced around the goal of ‘joining the ranks of the [Western] great powers.’ As encapsulated in the Charter Oath upon the founding of the new Meiji State, the new leaders vowed to get rid of “[e]vil customs of the past” and to seek new knowledge from the West.171

167 Iriye, “JDTGPS,” 753.
168 For example, in the wake of riots and fierce criticism protesting the terms of the 1905 Treaty of Portsmouth, which ended the Russo-Japanese War, the Meiji leadership doubled down on promotion of nationalism and respect for authority by adding two years to compulsory education and changing the curriculum to place heavier stress on cultivating nationalism and emperor worship. Andrew Gordon, A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present, 2nd ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 136.
169 Ibid., 110.
This outcome to the Restoration is very ironic, as this goal was to be accomplished not by building military power to deter or challenge Great Britain and the other Great Powers but by adopting the trappings of a “civilized state,” including political and legal institutions, social mores, and even a modern military that engaged in “civilized,” and ‘civilizing,’ wars. The logic was fairly simple, but surprisingly brilliant and effective. Japan’s leaders had learned first-hand that Western leaders looked down on Japan for a number of reasons, not least of which was because it was ‘Asiatic,’ and not white and Christian (i.e., ‘civilized’). Japanese could not change their race, but their state could act like a ‘civilized’ state by ‘playing their game’ and conforming to their great power norms. And that is what its leaders chose to do, often with the active encouragement of and praise from the Great Powers themselves. Three of the defining principles that encapsulated this basic strategy were calls to build a “rich nation, strong army” (fukoku kyohei 富国强兵), to “abandon Asia, enter Europe” (datsua nyuo 脱亜入欧), and to pursue “[Western] civilization and enlightenment” (bunmei kaika 文明開化).

Revision of the ‘Unequal Treaties’

In the eyes of much of the Japanese public and its leaders, the single greatest obstacle to ‘equality’ with the Great Powers was the ‘Unequal Treaties’ that had been imposed on Japan by the Western powers at gunpoint in the 1850s. From that point on, and until the final condition of the Treaties was overturned in 1911 (on the eve of Emperor Meiji’s death and the year after Japan annexed Korea), revision of these treaties became the overriding priority of all Meiji diplomacy. On this point there appears to be a widespread agreement among historians.172 In the words of

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172 See, for example, Gong, Standard of “Civilization,” 175; Iriye, “JDTGPS”; E. Herbert Norman, Japan’s Emergence as a Modern State: Political and Economic Problems of the Meiji Period, 60th anniversary ed (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 198 fn 66.
the biographer of the foreign minister during the Sino-Japanese War, Mutsu Munemitsu, the Unequal Treaties were seen by the Japanese as an “odious stain on the honor of the country” and were the driving force behind nearly a half-century long “national crusade” of disruptive changes and reforms aimed at turning Japan into a modern, industrial power and “equal member of the brotherhood of nations.”

“As Mutsu himself wrote in 1893,

“Japan’s ancient treaties injuriously affect the dignity and standing of the Empire among the nations of the earth, because they impose upon Japan humiliating conditions [...] it must not be forgotten that in international affairs, sentiment is a factor that cannot and ought not to be ignored. A State in order to take and hold the position in the family of nations which its institutions; its population; its wealth and its strength entitle it to occupy, must be ever jealous of its dignity and honor and of the treatment accorded to it by the other powers.”

As historian Herbert Norman writes in his seminal study of the period, as part of this effort Meiji leaders judged that Japan had to prove itself to be able to enter into the race for empire and to “undertake the responsibilities and tasks expected of great power. Hence the struggle for the revision of treaties was an integral part of the struggle for recognition as a world power and for the fruits which such recognition brings.”

The Iwakura Mission (1871-1873) to the United States and Europe, which included most of the leaders of Meiji Japan, was originally tasked with negotiating the revision of the Unequal Treaties. As the delegation’s letter to U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant explained, “We expect and intend to reform and improve the Treaties so as to stand upon a similar footing with the most enlightened nations.” Yet as later generations of Japanese leaders would reflect, the mission

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174 Quoted in Ibid., 63.
175 Norman, Japan’s Emergence, 199.
176 Perez, Japan Comes of Age, 67.
to undo the “stigma of inferiority” imposed upon Japan by the treaties proved to be a “total failure.”

Since their Western interlocutors appeared to show no interest in revising the Treaties until Japan had emulated their modern institutions, the Mission effectively changed into a fact-finding mission aimed at identifying the institutions “of the most enlightened and powerful nations” for importation to Japan. In pursuit of this end, it appeared to be incumbent upon Japan’s new leaders to learn from the West the conditions for recognition as an equal status member of the Western ‘great power club.’ Although there were several strands of nationalism in Meiji Japan, the liberalist mainstream called for Japan to acquire “civilization,” and the international status, prestige and power that went with it. Eskildsen concisely summarizes the basic strategy when he writes, “the strategic appropriation of Western civilization offered a way of contesting Japan’s low status in a Western-dominated global order of nations.”

The desire to overturn this ‘odious stain’ on Japan’s honor and to gain recognition as an equal member among Japan’s self-identified peer group does not appear to have been limited to the ruling elite. As Perez argues, by the late 1880s the public appeared united in support of treaty revision and was “passionately opposed to any treaty provision that implied that Japan was inferior to the West.” Indeed, treaty revision—or lack thereof—had become so incendiary a domestic political issue that it was “the rock against which every government was destroyed.”

As a case-in-point, in 1889, a nationalist protester lobbed a bomb at Foreign Minister Okuma Shigenobu for his failure to undo the insulting Unequal Treaties—Okuma lost a leg, the government cut off negotiations, and the cabinet of Japan’s second prime minister, Kuroda

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178 Iriye, “JDTGPS,” 736.
180 Perez, *Japan Comes of Age*, 78.
Kiyotaka, collapsed. By the next decade, Japanese leaders explained unrest—including attacks on foreigners in Japan—as a direct result of the treaty powers’ unwillingness to recognize Japan’s “giant strides of progress and refusal to ‘treat Japan as an equal and allow her to take her rightful place in the comity of nations.’” The Meiji leadership even attempted to tackle domestic instability—especially antiforeigner attacks on foreigners in Japan—directly by appealing to the nationalistic impulse: such attacks were uncivilized and “went against the laws of the world.” By accepting these laws, historian Akira Iriye assesses, Japanese could “assert [Japan’s] prestige throughout the world.”

In short, in addition to what appears to have been their own private desire to gain recognition as a member of the ‘great power club,’ leaders were well aware that doing so had become a domestic political imperative. The nearly half-century push for a revision of the Unequal Treaties, reversing the “national shame that they represented,” and gaining status for Japan among the “civilized” and modern nations of the world had become a “national crusade.”

The Normative Context – ‘Stages of Civilization’ and Imperialism/Social Darwinism

‘Stages of Civilization’

Japan’s opening up to the outside world and subsequent rise coincided with a lively discussion in the Great Powers—especially leading state Great Britain—about the so-called “stages of civilization.” The concept referred to an idea that countries evolve through a progression of stages of civilization: from “savagery” to “barbarism” to “civilization” to...

181 Ibid., 123.
182 Iriye, “JDTGPS,” 735.
183 Perez, Japan Comes of Age, 10-11, 175.
“enlightenment.” As historian Albert Craig notes, based on this ideology, “Nations of the world were ranked according to their position on this ladder of progress, and Europe was at the top.”

It was into this social context, with the international hierarchy defined in large part by ‘level of civilization’ (measured solely on the values of the Western powers), that Japan emerged. Originally introduced in the year of the Meiji Restoration 1868, by the 1870s the terms “civilization” (bunmei 文明) and “enlightenment” (kaika 開化) evolved into catch-phrases for Japan’s mission to emulate Western ways, to enhance its national power and to gain the respect of the leading states in the system and, in doing so, to reverse the Unequal Treaties. In this way, the stages of civilization became an “ideology for radical change.”

To many, nearly across-the-board emulation appeared to be the objective. The liberals in particular concluded that the leading states would abuse any nation judged to be ‘backward,’ ‘half-civilized,’ or ‘barbarous’ and which did not adopt its political and military models. Accordingly, in this social context achieving status as a Western, ‘civilized’ state became the foundation of national prestige and power.

In Japan, the most influential intellectual writing in this field was Fukuzawa Yukichi, one-time translator for the shogun and the founder of both Keio University and Jiji Shinpo (a popular newspaper). Fukuzawa’s writings were read by hundreds of thousands, if not millions. His first exposure to the concept of ‘stages of civilization’ came through geography textbooks widely used by American schoolchildren. In the late 1860s, he published a three-volume set of

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184 Craig, Civilization & Enlightenment, 1.
185 For a parallel discussion, see Suzuki, Civilization & Empire, 141–146.
187 Craig, Civilization & Enlightenment, 1.
188 Kitahara, “Four Mottoes,” 60.
190 Craig, Civilization & Enlightenment, 33.
books called *Conditions in the West*, which introduced readers to Western customs, institutions, and culture. In 1875, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, which Craig in 2009 identified as “the most outstanding Japanese intellectual work of the past two centuries,” explicitly identified Western civilization as Japan’s ideal end state. Not one to mince words, Fukuzawa entitled his second chapter “Western civilization as our goal” (*seiyo no bunmei wo mokuteki to suru koto* 西洋の文明を目的とする事).\(^{191}\) He wrote of the existence of three levels of civilization—barbarous, half-civilized, and civilized—and identified these levels as incontrovertible “tru[ths]” “accepted by all the peoples of the world” and “supported by evidence that cannot be doubted.” To Fukuzawa, Japan was half-civilized, and relative to the West had “nothing in which we can take pride,” except for its natural beauty.\(^{192}\) As a testament to the extent to which this socialization caused Fukuzawa and other idea leaders to call on Japan to abandon longstanding military traditions, Fukuzawa lambasted the “samurai spirit” as a case-in-point of Japan’s backwardness.\(^{193}\) As a testament to the impact of Fukuzawa’s efforts, in an 1899 speech Ito Hirobumi referred explicitly to Western ‘civilization’ as Japan’s goal since the 1868 Restoration.

> “Japan's national policy of 'opening the country' is not solely a matter of opening the country [to foreign relations]. Many countries in the world at large [are open but] still continue to practice barbarous customs and are unable to reform and modify them so as to advance to the level of civilization. These countries are not admitted to the ranks of civilized nations but are dealt with as barbarians. From the start, the goal of our national policy has been to open ourselves to civilization, to become a nation of the world, and to join the company of the civilized countries of Europe and America. To "enter the company" means to 'become a member of the group.' We must consider carefully the rights and duties this entails. Civilized nations uphold certain rights; to do so is a requirement for acceptance to their ranks.”\(^{194}\)

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\(^{191}\) Fukuzawa, *Theory of Civilization*, chap. 2.  
\(^{192}\) Quoted in Craig, *Civilization & Enlightenment*, 104–105.  
\(^{193}\) Ibid., 111.  
\(^{194}\) Ibid., 149–150.
In other words, the Western exemplars were seen as providing a roadmap for how to achieve the equality and recognition Japan sought as member of the civilized, great power club. Japan’s leaders were quickly socialized to these norms. Ito, Fukuzawa, and others were clearly concerned about Japan’s standing relative to the other powers.\textsuperscript{195} Consistent with SAT’s argument about the socially-contingent and changeable nature of great power norms, Fukuzawa recognized that the norms associated at the time with Japan’s coveted status could change in the future—indeed, he once noted that one day in the future things could change so that the Western countries could be considered “barbarous.”\textsuperscript{196} Yet he understood that in order for Japan to attain status given the normative context into which Japan was emerging, Japan would need to conform to the policies of those states whose civilization status was perceived to be ‘highest’—i.e., the Western powers.\textsuperscript{197} Remarkably, this status-seeking driven socialization mechanism proved so powerful that it even overcame widespread recognition within Japan that for racial, cultural and other reasons, the Western powers and their peoples were fundamentally the ‘other’ (\textit{tokushu ibetsu})\textsuperscript{198}

In addition to domestic reforms, as part of this process Fukuzawa and others also called on Japan to transform its foreign policy. As Craig argues, in the post-Perry era for Japanese leaders military power had come to be seen as the “immediately comprehensible and visible face of Western civilization.”\textsuperscript{199} Indeed, by the 1870s, achieving civilization was often inextricably linked to calls for national strength and power.\textsuperscript{200} It also informed how force was supposed to be

\begin{flushleft}
\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., 153.
\item Ibid., 157.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid., 161.
\item Ibid., 82.
\item Gluck, \textit{Modern Myths}, 254.
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employed by ‘civilized’ powers, even on the battlefield. Indeed, by the time of Japan’s first modern war one requirement for non-Christian nations to gain status as a civilized state was strict adherence to the laws of war. International legal scholar, and advocate of “civilizational progress,” Ariga Nagao directly influenced the thinking of many political and military leaders as a professor at leading universities and war colleges. He and his contemporary, Western-trained legal scholar colleagues were even deployed to the battlefields of the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars to ensure that Japan’s army and naval forces fought in a ‘civilized’ manner befitting a nation of its coveted status. 201 In short, adherence to force employment norms had come to be seen as an explicit marker of a civilized state.

Another core component of associated foreign policies was proactive ‘introduction’ of modern institutions and ‘civilization’ to Japan’s Asian neighbors, especially Korea. By the mid-1880s, however, Korea’s reluctance to respond as they wished caused immense frustration among Fukuzawa and his liberal reformist colleagues (in both Japan and Korea). They grew frustrated with what they saw as the failures of reformers in Korea to place that country on the same path to reform, enlightenment, and “civilization” charted by Japan, as well as the Korean government’s apparent inability to abandon its traditional Confucianist, feudalistic, and corrupt ways (as well as their fealty to China). This frustration boiled over in a famous 1885 article, in which Fukuzawa called on Japan to “leave the ranks of Asian nations and cast our lot with civilized nations of the West” and to thenceforth deal with China and Korea as the Western Great

\[201\text{ Author meeting with Japanese military historian, Yokosuka, Japan. January 2012.}\]
Powers would. As Gordon summarizes, thenceforth “Japan would lead its benighted neighbors to modernization and equality with the West, whether they liked it or not.”

As a testament to the destructive norms contemporaneously associated with status as a civilized great power, this push would cause Fukuzawa himself to begin advocating a “civilizing mission” in Korea by force and war with China as a means to Japan’s coveted status. As a sign of its full embrace of Western notions of civilizational stages, during this period many Japanese began to abandon the traditional Japanese term for “China” based on Chinese characters (chugoku 中国) and instead appropriated the Western name “China” (shina シナ) as a condescending pejorative. From that point on, and in keeping with Fukuzawa’s call for Japan to “leave Asia,” Japan’s leaders came to largely identify with the leading states in the system—those Great Powers whose club it wished to join—and belittled its East Asian neighbors. The influence of these intellectuals transcended that of their contemporaries in other countries, as they not only imported new ideas from the West but also served as translators, advisors, and critics of government policies. Their influence, and that of the ideas they imported, on Japan’s military trajectory during this foundation period in the development of modern Japan was profound. As we shall see, this shift in identity and mindset, encouraged directly by the other powers, especially Great Britain and the United States, was to have profound consequences not only for Japan, but also for Korea, China, and Russia, each of which would soon find itself on the receiving end of Japan’s new-found national mission.

202 Yukichi Fukuzawa 福沢諭吉, “Datsuyaron 脫亜論 [Theory on Leaving Asia],” Jiji Shimpo 時事新報, March 16, 1885, http://www.jca.apc.org/kyoukasyo_saiiban/datua2.html. In other words, as a rising ‘Western’ power it was Japan’s responsibility to do for these backwards countries what the Western powers had done ‘for’ Japan.

203 Gordon, Modern History, 73.
Imperialism and Social Darwinism

Another defining characteristic of the social context into which Japan emerged, and paradoxically, which was also inextricably connected to measurement of one’s level of civilization, was Social Darwinist ideology and the imperialism it sanctioned. The popularity of these ideas in Europe and North America had direct consequences for Japan’s force employment policies. To put it simply, Japan’s leaders appear to have judged—correctly, arguably—that given prevailing norms Japan needed to become an imperialist power in order to attain its coveted recognition. Led by the Britain hegemon, the imperialist movement gained traction in most modernizing states of the age, which saw expansion overseas not only as prestigious and ‘invigorating’ adventure, but also as a kind of international noblesse oblige, a ‘burden’ or duty of the modern and civilized states to exercise ‘in the best interests of’ the less powerful, less developed, and ‘half-civilized’ or even ‘barbarous’ regions of the world. By the end of the 1800s, Great Britain had widely come to self-identify as an “imperialist” nation with, in Jansen’s terms, “a self-congratulatory awareness.”204 Far from being seen as a necessary evil or morally wrong, the Western powers generally conceived of colonial expansion as a noble pursuit, and a source of pride and status. Social Darwinist ideas prevalent in Europe, which held that a ‘vigorous and healthy’ power must compete in a zero-sum game of expansionism, came to be widely accepted in Japan by the turn of the century.205

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205 Ibid., 66. See also Chapter 6 of this study for an examination of how these ideas shaped military policy decisions in the United States and Germany during their respective rises.
Just like constitutions and steam locomotives, navies and colonies were also widely seen as status symbols. In the 1880s, colonial expansion and imperialism accelerated among the European powers. Over the next three decades, they carved up most of Africa and much of Asia. What is important to note, but what is often overlooked by those who focus exclusively on the 1930s and 1940s, or Europe exclusively, is that this is exactly the prevailing international normative context in which Japan emerged during the Meiji period. Both its leaders and the public became heavily socialized to these contemporaneous ‘great power’ norms, and mimicry became one of several measures aimed at gaining recognition as a great power. In other words, colonial expansionism came to be seen in large part as a means to a status end, not an end in itself. Key Japanese leaders understood quite well that status as a ‘colonial power’ and extraterritorial rights in other countries were necessary qualifications to successfully stake their claim to recognition as a ‘civilized’ Great Power. Leading historians of modern Japan in both America and Japan tend to recognize this fact. As Jansen argues, Japan was “explicitly modelling its international behavior” on those Western states it saw as its peer group. Japan was no exception, and political parties exploited growing expansionist sentiment on the home front to enhance their popular support, while leaders across the spectrum relied on imperialism to, as Iriye assesses, “ensure[] domestic order at the expense of international stability.”

3. Strategic Decision Points

The Course is Set: the 1870s

208 For example of scholars writing in English, see Iriye, “JDTGPS”; Jansen, “Japanese Imperialism.”
Although until the 1890s the focus of Japan’s military development was domestic—aimed primary at suppressing, or deterring, domestic rebellions—\(^{211}\) and despite being minor in scale relative to what was to come in subsequent decades, the debates in the mid-1870s over the employment of Japan’s growing military power overseas were of tremendous significance for Japan’s trajectory during and beyond the forty-five year-long Meiji era. These debates played an important role in defining for Meiji leaders contemporaneous great power norms—i.e., the ‘rules’ by which the ‘game’ of international great power politics was supposed to be played. In particular, two formative experiences appear to have effectively launched Japan on the path to overseas military expansion and, ultimately, its eventual annexation of Taiwan (1895) and Korea (1910) as colonies. They constituted unprecedented employments of military power overseas, major shifts from past practice, and were modeled explicitly on operations conducted in East Asia by the military of the state that opened Japan up to this new context—the United States—in the recent past. To a remarkable degree the subsequent military playbook of Meiji Japan was copied and translated—both literally and figuratively—from that of those Western states from which Japanese leaders most sought recognition as a member of the great power club: Great Britain and the United States. It would soon begin to engage in military deployments that its leaders saw as normatively expected of a ‘responsible, civilized, Western great power.’

\(^{211}\) For example, in 1871 the leadership created an imperial army of ten thousand samurai. During a visit to Europe, however, Yamagata Aritomo became convinced that mass conscription was necessary to build military strength and to discipline and cultivate nationalism within a very aggrieved and rebellious populace. Accordingly, in 1873 universal conscription was introduced. Unsurprisingly, the measure was extremely unpopular and numerous mass riots occurred the following year. Gordon, *Modern History*, 66.
Abortive mission: the failed agitation to ‘inflict righteous punishment’ on Korea

Prior to the Meiji Restoration, Japan and China had for centuries carried out diplomacy in accordance with hierarchical Confucian traditions. As a result of their exposure to Western norms, however, just a few years after the revolution, in addition to adopting a condescending attitude towards their Asian neighbors Japan’s leaders also came to seek to interact with them on an unprecedented and distinctly European ‘state-to-state’ basis. This approach was anathema to traditional diplomatic principles in East Asia. Accordingly, when the new Meiji government tried to establish a state-to-state relationship with Korea, it was rebuffed repeatedly, sometimes rudely. Still operating according to the rules of the Confucian international hierarchy, Korea refused to recognize the new Japanese government. In response to this perceived ‘humiliation,’ the interim Japanese government (the usual leaders were in absentia overseas as part of the Iwakura Mission), launched into a debate about whether to punish Korea for its ‘insolence.’ The sense of humiliation was captured in the actual term used to refer to the debate—seikanron (征韓論), which basically means the “debate about [whether to] inflict righteous punishment.”

In the spring and summer of 1873 widespread riots and other domestic disturbances made it appear as though Japan was on the verge of another revolution. Leaders considered the situation calamitous. Because key members of the aggrieved masses were displaced samurai, in order to both punish Korea for its insult and to mitigate discontent by giving samurai gainful employment, Saigo Takamori hatched a plot to provoke a war with Korea. Another interim

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212 Gong, *Standard of “Civilization,”* 166.
214 Huffman, *Yankee,* 75.
leader, Foreign Minister Soejima Taneomi, also agitated for the mission. Soejima, like the more moderate Iwakura, had as his key objective Japan’s recognition as an “equal” by both Western great powers. He was taught by a U.S. general hired by the Meiji leadership to advise the government, Charles LeGendre, about “national rights diplomacy” in support of aggression and colonization as a means to glory.\textsuperscript{215} LeGendre had resigned from the U.S. Consular Corps in 1872 and was appointed as a second-rank officer and advisor in the Japanese Foreign Office.\textsuperscript{216} Even the U.S. minister in Tokyo, an ardent expansionist himself, actively encouraged Meiji leaders to act against Korea.\textsuperscript{217} Significantly, the calls for an invasion of Korea were based primarily on the objectives of glory and prestige. Material concerns such as security, trade, and emigration, do not appear to have been major drivers of the agitation.\textsuperscript{218} On the contrary, key arguments \textit{against} the mission were based on sober-minded material cost-benefit calculation.

By the time Iwakura and his allies returned from their mission to America and Europe, Saigo and Soejima had already hatched a plan for 50,000 men to be deployed to Korea. Yet for a number of reasons, the relatively moderate members of the Iwakura mission opposed the proposed deployment to Korea. In a famous fall 1873 document delivered to Prince Sanjo, the leader of Japan’s Council of State, Okubo Toshimichi delineated seven reasons that he opposed the proposed Korean expedition, including the importance of focusing on state development at home and the unaffordability of overseas adventures. As he wrote, it would be a bad idea to “To launch a meaningless war now and waste the government’s efforts and attention needlessly, increase annual expenditures to enormous figures, suffer the loss of countless lives, and add to the sufferings of the people.” Presciently, he also noted that a move into Korea would invite a

\begin{footnotes}
\item[217] Ibid.
\item[218] Mayo, “Korean Crisis,” 798, 804.
\end{footnotes}
conflict with Russia. Noting that the primary rationale for a conflict promoted by the agitators was a perceived insult to the honor of Japan by Korea, Okubo identified such a rationale for war as “entirely beyond comprehension, as it completely disregards the safety of our nation and ignores the interests of the people.” For his part, Kido Takayoshi expressed concerns about the tax increases that would be necessary to finance the mission, which he feared could be so severe that they might foment a rebellion. He also worried that if the expenses of the war prevented Japan from paying its foreign debts it might invite Western intervention in Japan’s domestic affairs.

In short, the arguments against the mission were primarily economic and practical. In contrast, arguments in favor were concerned primarily with lost prestige in response to perceived slights from Korea, coupled with chauvinistic domestic agitation. Okubo and his allies won the argument. The agitators resigned and returned to their home prefectures. Their resentment toward the decision not to attack Korea would die hard—for his part, Saigo would lead the largest-ever rebellion against the Meiji government in 1877.

Although the efforts of the hardliners failed to convince moderates within the leadership to act, the first signs of socialization were clear. The irony of course, is that the samurai and other agitators were advocating exactly the same policies that they had resented of the Westerners, and which had inspired their two-decade effort to ‘expel the barbarians.’

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219 De Bary, Keene, and Tsunoda, Sources, 657–662.
220 Huffman, Yankee, 76.
1874 The “Taiwan Expedition”

The following year the Meiji leadership would authorize a military expedition to the island of Formosa (below, Taiwan).\(^{221}\) Ostensibly in response to the murder of a dozen Ryukyuan sailors shipwrecked in southern Taiwan three years earlier, in May 1874 Tokyo deployed 3600 soldiers under the leadership of General Saigo Tsugumichi (Takamori’s younger brother and the man who would become Japan’s fleet admiral in 1898) to punish and ‘civilize’ the ‘savages’ there. Constituting a landmark shift in Japan’s force employment policies, this mission was Japan’s first overseas operational deployment of ground forces in nearly three centuries, its first-ever ‘civilizing’ mission, its first de facto joint operation with foreign military personnel, and Japan’s first experience with that tried and true Western tactic—extracting indemnity from another country. In short, it was a formative event that marked Japan’s first step on the expansionist trajectory that would define the next three decades of Japanese military policy. To borrow a term from Eskildsen, the Taiwan Expedition was the beginning of Meiji Japan’s “mimetic imperialism.”\(^{222}\)

Remarkably, the idea for the mission itself was proposed by U.S. Minister in Tokyo Charles De Long and masterminded by U.S. General Charles LeGendre. It was also modeled on a similar mission by the U.S. military that LeGendre had led in 1867 after a similar shipwreck off the coast of Taiwan.\(^{223}\) Both De Long and LeGendre advised Japan to launch a similar mission.\(^{224}\) De Long argued that Japan should punish the aborigines even if it caused a war with China, and that it was incumbent upon ‘great powers’ to intervene with force when a country

\(^{221}\) The analysis in Suzuki’s recent study parallels and supports that presented in this section. See Suzuki, Civilization & Empire, 146–154.
\(^{222}\) Eskildsen, “Of Civilization and Savages.”
\(^{223}\) Thomson, “Filibustering to Formosa,” 456.
could not keep peace internally. Without checking with Washington, DeLong even told Japanese leaders that America would be happy if Japan acquired Taiwan. Out of an apparent desire to perform within normatively appropriate behavioral bounds, Japanese leaders even sought out the opinions of Western experts on international law to see if the mission would be justified. They were told by a former lawyer for the U.S. Department of State that as long as China did not subjugate the aborigines itself, Japan was within its rights to even annex part or all of Taiwan. For his part, LeGendre encouraged Japan to colonize not only Taiwan but also Amoy (Xiamen), and Korea and to ‘spread civilization’ to them. He supported Tokyo’s decision to use force against the Taiwanese ‘savages’ as “wise and humanitarian.” LeGendre actually advised Japan even to coerce China into surrendering Taiwan and to seize Korea “in order to uphold its prestige in the East.” He argued that Japan should do this “for the benefit of the whole civilized world,” and that the aboriginal part of Taiwan “should be annexed to the Empire of Japan.” LeGendre’s final expedition plan, submitted to Okuma on March 13, 1874, called for the government to “civilize the whole aboriginal population.”

Japan’s leaders appear to have decided to green-light this unprecedented use of military force overseas for two main reasons. First, it was widely believed that such a ‘civilizing mission’ would win Japan plaudits from its Western mentors. Second, it was believed that it would help to distract domestic audiences from their grievances with circumstances back home. For

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228 Mayo, “Korean Crisis,” 802.
230 Thomson, “Filibustering to Formosa,” 175.
232 The Japanese rationale for the mission—was fully consistent with that of U.S. Admiral Bell—that deploying forces to “establish a recognized authority” and control “barbarous misrule of the rude tribes would be universally welcomed.” Edward Howard House, The Japanese Expedition to Formosa (Tokio: s.n., 1875), 12.
example, the agitators that resigned following the decision not to invade Korea were thrilled at
the prospect of a military deployment to Taiwan. Both rationales are evident in a letter sent to
Iwakura by his friend Ohara. In the letter Ohara explains that the leadership needed to look for
“Ways to give vent to such anger outside of the country.” Recognizing the significance of the
unprecedented shift in policy, Ohara referred to the prospect of the deployment to Taiwan as “the
biggest event” in Japan’s military policy since the 16th century. He noted, however, that “Japan’s
reputation will be much affected by it. If we succeed, the Emperor’s glory will shine not only in
Asia but throughout the world.”

In accordance with these apparent normative expectations, Saigo’s official orders stated
that the purpose of the mission was “to lead the natives gradually to civilization” (yudo kaika
seshime). Japan hired two other American officers from the U.S. Navy to help and even rented an American ship. These two U.S. military advisers even directly advised Saigo how to carry out the subjugation tactically, and carried out the negotiations with the
aborigines on Japan’s behalf. Soldiers initially deployed on U.S. and British commercial ships,
which had been hired as troop and equipment carriers. Once on Taiwan, General Saigo
reportedly stated that he would like to invade with school teachers to “redeem the savages from
at least a portion of their utter ignorance.”

The Japanese media presented images, such as the woodblock prints of Ochiai Yoshiiku,
designed to emphasize to the Japanese public the ‘savagery’ of the Taiwanese aborigines and to

234 Ibid., 806.
238 Hilary Conroy, The Japanese Seizure of Korea, 1868-1910; a Study of Realism and Idealism in International
239 House, Japanese Expedition, 155.
explain how subjugating the savages would gain for Japan international prestige and national esteem. In doing so, the media was essentially differentiating Japanese from the savages.²⁴⁰ Interestingly, the woodblock prints illustrating the mission bore a striking resemblance to similar prints made of Perry’s arrival in Japan twenty years earlier. The difference, of course, was that now the Japanese were pictured in Western dress, while the Taiwanese aborigines were the ones submitting to them.²⁴¹ The message for the public was clear—Japan’s effort to turn itself into a ‘Western,’ civilizing and expansionist power would be a source of its international prestige and contribute to the effort to achieve equality.

Once the decision to deploy was made De Long’s successor, John Bingham, attempted to get the Americans to withdraw from the mission. Although Bingham was able to stop the U.S. ship and prevent LeGendre himself from taking part in the mission itself, the two U.S. military officers and American journalist Edward House went to Taiwan. It is important to note that Bingham’s opposition to the mission was based not on moral grounds or any opposition to the basic idea behind the mission—i.e., that ‘civilizing savages’ was a just cause sufficient to colonize territory. Rather, he (and Washington) appear to have been concerned only that if the Expedition led to a war between Japan and China news that Americans had been involved might damage U.S. relations with China.²⁴²

The mission was almost entirely mimetic. The explicitly stated goal of the mission was to ‘civilize’ the Taiwanese ‘savages.’²⁴³ Neither material nor strategic interests appear to have been significant drivers. In fact, key leaders opposed the mission because of the huge financial costs and the expected tax increases that risked rebellion in Japan. Leaders understandably wanted to

²⁴¹ Ibid., 415.
²⁴³ Gordon, Modern History, 74.
focus on development and modernization at home during a very sensitive period in Japan’s domestic political development. The estimated cost of the expedition—500,000 yen—was so high that Kido Takayoshi quit the government in protest.

The government was correct to be concerned about the costs. The mission left Japan in financial deficit (it cost seven times the original estimate that caused Kido to quit) and resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Japanese soldiers. Given the expected costs and lack of expected strategic or economic benefits, it is unsurprising that Meiji leaders had opposed the expedition in late 1873. What pushed them to change their minds appears to have been fears of losing their grip on power. When the decision to launch the expedition was made by Okubo and Iwakura in February 1874, there was shizoku [former samurai] unrest, including a major rebellion in Saga and an attempted assassination of Iwakura himself. As Iriye argues, after two years of debate, the moderates in power ultimately decided to deploy in order to “dissipate some of the dissidents’ unhappiness, coalesce national opinion, and reaffirm the regime’s prestige.”

What were the consequences of the mission? Seen from the perspective of Japan’s leaders, on the ‘positive’ side of the ledger they learned a clear lesson—that mimetic imperialism would elicit praise and prestige gains from the West. The mission also contributed to socializing Japanese leaders to the arguments of their American ‘mentors’—De Long, LeGendre, and the journalist House—about Western great power values and norms of ‘responsible’ great power behavior. Upon leaving Taiwan, House evaluated the Japanese deployment as “a mission that had done a good work, not only for the country which planned and performed it [Japan], but for

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244 Huffman, Yankee, 89, 98. Mayo, “Korean Crisis,” 813.
246 Iriye, “JDTGPS,” 742.
the whole community of nations.” He expressed sympathy for Japan’s frustrations at being seen as second-class, as a “toy nation; playing at progress and seeking to imitate the practices of genuine civilization simply as a diversion.” As noted above, in an effort to reverse this, and in a remarkable role reversal just two decades after Perry’s gunboat diplomacy vis-à-vis Japan, Japan’s own media coverage effectively presented Japan as a Western power civilizing ‘savages.’ As Eskildsen assesses, “the idea of exporting the Western civilizing impulse to the indigenous population of Taiwan helped justify, naturalize, and explain the concurrent effort to modernize Japan. Mimesis of Western imperialism, in other words, went hand in hand with mimesis of Western civilization.”

Given the normative context into which Japan was rising, in the minds of Japan’s leaders and public imperialism began to be normatively associated with their coveted status as an aspiring great power. As part of this effort, ‘civilizing’ its Asian neighbors through force would evolve into a core foreign policy goal and drive the formal annexation of Taiwan twenty-one years later, as well as that of Japan’s Korean neighbor fifteen years after that. The 1874 mission also resulted in the creation of new related domestic institutions. Planning for the expedition led to the creation of a Bureau of Savage Affairs//Colonization Office (banchi jimukyoku 蛮地事務局) in 1874, with Okuma appointed as Minister of Colonization. Although there were normative and institutional consequences to the mission, it is important to stress that this was not the starting point for any grand plan for regional conquest. At the time, the mission appears to

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247 House, Japanese Expedition, 184.
248 Ibid., 224–225.
250 Ibid., 397.
have been seen essentially as a ‘one-off’ driven by a desire to gain prestige and, in Ohara’s own words, as a “way to give vent to […] domestic unrest-based…] anger outside of the country”\textsuperscript{252}

In the final analysis, the Taiwan expedition proved hugely costly, leaving Japan in a deficit, and almost brought China and Japan to war.\textsuperscript{253} It did, however, appear to succeed in showing the intended audience—the Western Great Powers—Japan’s ‘humanitarian concern.’ The mission elicited negligible foreign or domestic opposition on moral or normative grounds, even from the U.S. minister who tried to stop the mission. As a testament to the manner in which Japan’s leaders appear to have learned that continued ‘civilized’ behavior like this would help it succeed in its overriding foreign policy goal of overturning the Unequal Treaties and gaining recognition as an equal of the Western great powers, after the mission’s completion Great Britain and France withdrew military forces from Yokohama.\textsuperscript{254} In addition to winning Japan praise from the Western powers, the mission’s perceived success also caused a fundamental change in how the Western press wrote about Japan.\textsuperscript{255} As case-in-point, the \textit{New York Times} wrote that the mission against the “semi-savages” of Taiwan was a sign that Japan was now “the youngest member of the family of civilized nations;” it also praised the mission as a “contribution to modern civilization.”\textsuperscript{256}

On the less ‘positive’ side of the ledger, in addition to the deaths in Taiwan, the expedition almost brought China and Japan to war. There is some evidence to suggest it provided a starting point for both Japan’s and China’s naval buildups.\textsuperscript{257} It also led to an upsurge in chauvinistic
nationalism in Japan, especially vis-à-vis China. According to House, the Japanese were especially infuriated by China’s “attempt[] to impede the sovereign progress of Japan” by creating problems for the mission, and wanted China to “be humbled.”

**Japan’s First Employment of Modern Naval Power: ‘Gunboat Diplomacy’ and The Treaty of Kanghwa (1876)**

After the ‘success’ of the U.S.-masterminded Taiwan expedition began to socialize them to employ military power in a manner befitting a modern Western Great Power, Japan’s leaders again turned their eyes to Korea, less than three years after the abortive agitation in favor of a punishing mission toward the Korean Peninsula during Seikanron had been decisively defeated based on a very rational, sober-minded material-interest, even ‘guns vs. butter’-esque trade-off-based calculation. Even after 1873, Japan continued its attempts to get Korea to recognize it as a sovereign state and to engage Japan on a state-by-state basis. As a testament to the role they were trying to play Japanese negotiators sent to Korea referred to Japan as “Great” Japan and even wore Western clothes. Viewing these developments through a traditional lens, and as a testament to this clash of civilizations, however, the Korean side misinterpreted these behaviors as suggesting that the Japanese side “lack[ed…] sincerity.” This proved to be a grave miscalculation, as the exact opposite was true.

In 1875 Japan deployed ships to waters near the Korean island of Kanghwa. They were fired upon. Early the following year, the Japanese government sent a mission—modeled explicitly on Commodore Perry’s own mission to open up Japan two decades earlier—to engage in gunboat diplomacy. The successful effort compelled Korea to negotiate with Japan as a

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sovereign country and to accept the terms of the Kanghwa Treaty (1876), which was modeled explicitly on the Unequal Treaties imposed on Japan in the 1850s. The Treaty established formal diplomatic relations between Korea and Japan along Western lines, opened up Korean ports for commerce, acquired extraterritoriality for Japanese citizens, and for the first time in its history referred to Korea as an “independent nation.”

This mission was unprecedented, and marked Japan’s first-ever employment of modern naval power against another country, as well as its first-ever exercise of Western-style gunboat diplomacy. The objective, the military tactics, and the negotiations were all modeled on the Perry expeditions of 1853 and 1854. The goal of mission was to open up Korea much as the United States had opened up Japan; not to conquer it. The push to conquer had been decisively defeated by moderates in Tokyo—at great domestic political cost—three years earlier during Seikanron. To this end, the Japanese foreign minister literally borrowed the U.S. great power playbook—an abridged history of Commodore Perry’s expedition to Japan—in order to know how to negotiate the Treaty. The American Minister gave him the book, warned against the cost of a war, but, in apparent approval of gunboat diplomacy said that “Korea should be made amenable to reason and justice.” To ensure that they were not violating any Western norms or laws, the Japanese government consulted with Western international lawyers to confirm the mission would be legal. Ironically, in effect, if not in design, the mission was an effort to compensate for the United States’ failure to open Korea up five years earlier and to show that Japan could play the West’s game. Japan compelled Korea to sign its first-ever unequal treaty, opening the door to similar

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262 In 1871, the United States sent a military expedition to Korea in support of a delegation aimed at establishing political and trade relations, as well as a treaty to ensure assistance to shipwreck victims, with Korea. Two U.S. warships were fired upon in the Kanghwa Straits. The following week, after a U.S. demand for an apology was
treaties with other Western powers. The Kanghwa Treaty would stay in effect until Japan formally annexed Korea 34 years later. (As noted below, at this time there was still anything approaching a grand plan for regional hegemony; Japan did not even decide to annex Korea until 1909.)

The significance of the 1876 mission transcended the terms of the Kanghwa Treaty itself. Up to that point both Japan and Korea had engaged exclusively based on Confucian concepts of international order and diplomacy. Now Japan was actively modeling itself on the Western powers and asserting herself as a sovereign nation based on Western norms of diplomacy.263 Although the phrase would not be coined by Fukuzawa for another decade, by the mid-1870s Japan had already begun to “Leave Asia” and to “Enter Europe,” as it began to adopt an entirely new set of foreign policy behaviors normatively-associated with its pursuit of status in this new Western hierarchy. This shift would have long-term consequences, as within a few years Japanese liberals would begin actively trying to remove Korea from China’s orbit and to promote modernization and ‘civilization’ within it, just as the Western powers had done ‘for’ Japan two decades earlier. This process was the starting point for Korean enmity toward Japan, which would worsen after 1895, 1905, and 1910; a legacy which arguably continues to this day.

**On the Home Front, Creating a Modern (Western) State and Military: The 1880s**

Having received its first hands-on lessons in what would be necessary for great power status and survival in this new international context, for the next two decades Japanese leaders ignored, five U.S. warships and 650 Americans assaulted Korean forts, killing 200 Korean troops. The U.S. failed to achieve its objectives, however, as the Korean side refused to negotiate treaties and the incident led the Korean side to strengthen its isolationist policy and even issue a formal proclamation against appeasing foreigners. Korea would not negotiate with the United States until 1882.

primarily focused on building a modern state and military and further developing the “internals” and “externals” of civilization. Given immense domestic challenges owing to the painful process of modernization, such as unprecedented land taxes, tax revolts, and rebellions, particularly among the villagers, Japan’s leaders primarily focused on domestic affairs. Despite making rapid progress modernizing, at several points during the 1880s Japanese leaders tried, and failed, to revise the Unequal Treaties. This failure caused them to double their efforts to adopt the trappings of a modern, Western, and civilized state, including modern legal institutions, a Constitutional government, and to modernize Japan’s military along Western lines. Overseas, however, the “new age of imperialism” was gaining steam as Social Darwinist ideology became increasingly influential. European imperialist adventures in Asia and elsewhere accelerated, and overseas colonies came to be seen as tokens of ‘great power prestige.’

In a remarkable symbolic shift, the most ‘Japanese’ of institutions, the imperial household, began to gradually Westernize. During this period the Japanese emperor and empress began wearing Western clothes. This was part of an apparent effort to transform the image of the monarchy to conform to international norms and present Japan as a "modern, civilized nation" to the world. In 1884 the Peers’ Decree created five ranks of aristocracy modeled on those found in Europe: prince, marquis, count, viscount, baron. The following year, Japan introduced a modern cabinet system, and Ito Hirobumi became Japan’s first prime minister. Four years later, Ito spearheaded the creation of Japan’s first-ever constitution, which was promulgated in 1889. The following year, Japan convened the first-ever meeting of the Japanese Diet (parliament), a development that Fukuzawa praised as a major milestone in Japan’s progress.

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264 Gordon, Modern History, 68.
265 Ibid., 104.
266 Ibid., 105.
toward status as a civilized nation. In conformance with the times, on November 29, 1890, the Meiji government’s new constitution came into force and the “Great Empire of Japan” (dai Nippon teikoku 大日本帝国) was born. Japan’s new name for itself—used formally for the first time at this moment and modeled on the “Great Empire of Britain” (dai ei teikoku 大英帝国) —appears to have been in large part aspirational; Japan had no colonial possessions in 1890. The addition of the character “dai” (大), which means ‘big’ or in this context ‘Great,’ struck the constitution’s drafter as excessively self-important. His criticism, however, was overruled by Prime Minister Ito. Given surging nationalism during this period, use of the term spread like wildfire, and came to be used to refer to everything from insurance companies to schools. In the span of a few short years, Japan had become the first country in Asia to have a national legislature, a constitution, an independent judiciary, and at least nominal status as an ‘empire.’

For at least the first two decades after the 1868 Restoration, Japan’s military development also appears to have been driven in large part by the bigger picture objective of creating a modern, ‘civilized’ state. Until the 1890s the overriding focus of Japan’s military buildup was domestic. Efforts to develop a national army and to institute conscription do not appear to have been aimed at deterring potential Western aggression against Japan so much as to basically serve as a counterrevolutionary force to maintain domestic stability. Indeed, as noted previously, during this period of rapid modernization the government faced a very dissatisfied populace—above all samurai—and numerous uprisings.

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267 Craig, Civilization & Enlightenment, 129.
268 Gluck, Modern Myths, 23.
269 Huffman, Yankee, 195.
270 Gordon, Modern History, 67.
In 1870 the government announced that its army would be modeled on that of France and hired French advisors. The following year, it even created a military band that played Western-style military music. In 1873 Yamagata Aritomo introduced universal conscription as a means to discipline and instill patriotic spirit into the public. Eight years after France’s defeat at the hands of the Prussian army, Japan adopted a Prussian system with an independent General Staff responsible for military planning and command, intelligence, etc. Major Jakob Meckel was hired to teach Japanese soldiers. An 1870 imperial decree designated Great Britain as the model for Japan’s navy. As a sign of the apparently low perceived risk of invasion by Western powers, which would have to come from the sea, the Navy was not treated as a priority during this period. Domestic rebellion remained the focus of military development. Army and navy general staffs were not established until 1889.

Although this was a relatively calm period in Japan’s foreign policy, especially in the military domain, during the 1880s, as Japan’s material power continued to grow and the new age of imperialism arrived, nationalism and popular support for expansion onto the Asian continent begin to gather steam. In 1886, key leaders called on Japan to develop the ability to fight overseas, arguing that capabilities only sufficient for territorial defense were “the goal of second-rate nations.” Even ertswhile internationalist Tokutomi Soho read the trends of the time as toward “imperialism” and called on Japan to “embark upon great adventures abroad.”

The major development of significance to Japan’s long-term military trajectory to occur in the 1880s took place when liberal reformers within Korea, advised by none other than Fukuzawa himself to promote nationalism and modernize Korea with Japan as their model,

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272 Ibid., 29.
273 Gordon, Modern History, 106.
274 Tsuzuki, Pursuit of Power, 124.
275 Iriye, “JDTGPS,” 753.
276 Huffman, Yankee, 197–198.
attempted a coup in 1884. Chinese troops intervened to suppress the coup. Infuriated at this apparent violation of Korea’s ‘independence,’ many Japanese called for war.\textsuperscript{277} Cooler minds prevailed, and China and Japan were able to negotiate an 1885 agreement that called on both sides to withdraw troops from the Peninsula. Nevertheless, Japanese frustration with the failure of liberal reformers in China and Korea, and these countries’ apparent lack of willingness, or inability, to follow Japan’s example and progress toward ‘civilization’ was boiling over. Most significantly, it caused Fukuzawa to pen his famous 1885 article “On Leaving Asia” (\textit{datsuaron 脫亜論}), in which he called for Japan to “leave the ranks of Asian nations and cast our lot with civilized nations of the West.”\textsuperscript{278} In other words, Fukuzawa called on his compatriots to summarily transform their identity from that of a member of Asia to that of a member of ‘the West.’ In the language of SAT, subsequent calls for Japan to conform to norms seen as ‘role-appropriate’ for this new national self-concept would follow.

After the events of 1884-1885, for the next two decades Korea would be the scene of competition between Japan and China, followed by competition between Japan and Russia. An 1894 rebellion led by traditionalists within Korea, coupled with Japan’s desire to ‘civilize’ the Peninsula and to take it out of China’s Confucian orbit once and for all, would catalyze the 1894-1895 Sino-Japanese War. The discriminatory response of Russia, France and Germany to Japan’s victory over China, known as the Tripartite Intervention, coupled with Russia’s expansion into the Far East would subsequently pave the way to the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War. It is to these two conflicts—Japan’s first two modern wars—that we now turn.

\textbf{Expansion Enters a New Stage: On the Fast Track to Great Power Status (1894-1911)}

\textsuperscript{277} Gordon, \textit{Modern History}, 114.
\textsuperscript{278} Ibid., 115.
Japan’s First Modern War (and First International Conflict in Three Centuries): The Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895)

As Japan’s first war in 300 years, not to mention its first-ever modern war, the 1894-1895 conflict with China represents another important inflection point in Japan’s military trajectory. Japan’s performance in the war impressed most Western observers, many of whom did not expect Japan to win. Its victory in this war ‘on behalf of Western civilization’ resulted in widespread praise from and enhanced standing among the Western powers, including major revisions of aspects of the Unequal Treaties. Furthermore, the importance of the Treaty of Shimonoseki was also extremely significant and long-lasting. It effectively ousted China from the Korean Peninsula and established Korea as an ‘independent’ nation, ending its longstanding suzerain relationship with China. The Treaty also led to the annexation of Taiwan—Japan’s first-ever colony. Its effects remain important to this day.279

A discussion of the causes of the war must begin with some historical background of Japan’s role on the Korean Peninsula. As mentioned in the previous section, throughout the 1880s Japanese liberal reformers had become increasingly meddlesome in Korean domestic politics. Fukuzawa Yukichi was a major player. Frustrated with what they perceived to be China’s stubborn ‘traditionalism’ and explicitly drawing parallels to what America had done ‘for’ Japan three decades earlier, Fukuzawa and his reformist colleagues eventually came to support an effort to spread civilization in Korea by force.280 He was even involved in planning for a coup

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279 Not only did the war and terms of China’s surrender create significant antipathy toward Japan in that country which persists to this day, disparate interpretations of the 1895 treaty are a driving force between an increasingly volatile territorial dispute between Japan and China in the East China Sea.
280 Conroy, Seizure of Korea, 138.
d’état in Korea in 1884. In Fukuzawa’s view, as an example of a modernizing and aspiring civilized great power, Japan’s role was to be for Korea “a doctor, responsible as a teacher of civilization. Korea is like a sick person whose limbs are paralysed. Japanese interference in Korea should not be made in a retiring manner, but strongly and swiftly to bring Korean entrance into civilization.”

The proximal ‘spark’ for the war occurred in 1894, after anger within Korea at economic conditions and the foreign presence boiled over in the form of the Tonghak Rebellion. The Korean government asked China to send troops to suppress the uprising. China told Japan it was sending troops to aid “our dependency.” In light of the 1885 Li-Ito convention, which required both China and Japan to remove troops from Korea and to give advance notification of any deployments, Japan responded with a deployment of thousands of its own troops to “protect Japanese residents” and asked for equal influence in administering Korea’s affairs. At a June 1894 Cabinet meeting Japan’s leaders decided to propose a joint commission of China and Japan to introduce measures to reform the Korean government, including a loan and a Korean peacekeeping force to suppress domestic discontent. After China refused, Japan installed a pro-Japanese administration, forced an end to Korea’s traditional tributary relationship with China, and demanded the withdrawal of China’s military forces.

As exemplified by the actions of Fukuzawa and others throughout the 1880s, a fundamental cause of the Sino-Japanese War was a paradoxical clash of civilizations between a would-be ‘Western’ power—Japan—and a traditional ‘Eastern’, or ‘Confucian’ power—China.

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282 Quoted in Ibid., 447.
283 Tsuzuki, Pursuit of Power, 125.
285 Tsuzuki, Pursuit of Power, 125.
In particular, Japan took issue with the fact that China continued to see Korea as its traditional “dependency,” rather than as a sovereign nation, a state of affairs that was fundamentally incompatible with Japan’s recently appropriated ‘Western’ view of international politics. Seen from Tokyo, Beijing’s deployment of troops to suppress the Tonghak Rebellion not only was a violation of the 1885 agreement between China and Japan but also augured the possible end of hope for Korean independence and the internal Korean reform movement. There does not seem to be evidence to suggest that the war was part of a hegemonic or other kind of plot years in the making. In fact, a review of debates and meetings among top decision-makers suggests that Japan’s response was essentially improvised. It was not until July 1894, two weeks before the first shot was fired, that Japanese leaders decided to go to war and to effectively oust China from Korea.287

In short, and paradoxically, given that the two antagonists were both Asian countries, the war between China and Japan became a de facto conflict between ‘East’ and ‘West.’ The conflict over Korea appears to have been much less about material interests than about incompatible visions for Korea’s future. Seen from Tokyo, China clung to what Japanese reformers saw as ‘backwards’ and ‘uncivilized’ notions of suzerainty. Consistent with the support by Fukuzawa and others of Korean reformers in the 1880s, Japan was taking a page out of the Western playbook: the war appears to have been driven in large part by a desire to create circumstances to turn Korea into a modern, civilized state modeled on Japan’s own experiences on the receiving

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end. In doing so, it was thought, Japan could further stake its claim to recognition from the leading states as a de facto ‘Western, civilized’ Great Power.\(^{288}\)

Japan’s identity shift had by this point progressed to such a degree that China became a kind of ideological foil and encapsulated what in effect became a direct rejection by Tokyo of what Japan had been only a few years before. Remarkably, given Japan’s own recent history and traditional culture, commentaries during this period referred to China disparagingly as an “enemy of civilization,” and as “pigtails land.”\(^{289}\) With its new identity as an aspiring, Western ‘civilized power came new ‘responsibilities.’ As Fukuzawa wrote, the war with China was a conflict “between civilization and barbarism.” He continued “It is necessary for the Japanese to fight against China until she surrenders herself to civilization.”\(^{290}\) Other contemporary Japanese commentators saw the war as “a historical necessity” and a “holy war.”\(^{291}\)

Far from being limited to intellectuals, the extent to which Japan’s leaders had also effectively come to self-identify as leaders of a de facto would-be ‘Western’ power is remarkable. The Diet reportedly declared China “the enemy of civilization” and stated that the war’s objective was to “destroy the barbarous obstinacy of that power.”\(^{292}\) Foreign Minister Mutsu Munemitsu described the war as a ‘war of civilization’ between the old Eastern civilization and the Western civilization, evincing Japan’s recently-adopted identity as a member of the latter.\(^{293}\) He wrote that the “origins of the tragic war lay fundamentally in a diplomatic controversy over

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\(^{288}\) Similar points appear frequently in the historical literature. More recently, Markey and Suzuki also attribute Japan’s increasing tensions with China and, ultimately, the Sino-Japanese War, to similar factors. Markey, “Prestige Motive,” 433–438; Suzuki, Civilization & Empire, chap. 6.

\(^{289}\) Gluck, Modern Myths, 135–136.


\(^{291}\) Ibid.

\(^{292}\) Quoted in “An Extraordinary Session of the Japanese,” The Times (London), October 20, 1894.

\(^{293}\) Kitahara, “Four Mottoes,” 63.
the suzerain-tributary relationship of China and Korea.”

In his view, the roles were clear: “Japan represents western civilization and China keeps Asian traditionalism…We despise China as an extremely conservative State, obstinate and ignorant. China looked down on Japan as a small island of fickle and frivolous nature imitating superficially European civilization…Therefore, it was obvious that one day a conflict would appear and its cause would be the collision between the new western civilization and the old Asian civilization.” As Iriye argues, the war was seen as “eminently justifiable in view of Korea’s need for reform and China’s alleged refusal to promote it.” In short, as an aspiring member of the Great Power club, Japan believed it had a ‘duty’ to expel from the Peninsula the Chinese, who were widely seen in Japan to be refusing to promote civilization.

These objectives proved widely popular on the home front. Indeed, prior to the declaration of war the Japanese press had criticized Ito and Mutsu for an “effeminate” foreign policy. In 1894, Mutsu noted that “domestic sentiments in Japan” had reached a “fever pitch.” As he later noted of the public reaction to the 1894 declaration of war, they “danced wildly in bravado and fierce determination, intoxicated with joy and inflated with pride.” As testament to the absence of sober-minded calculation, Mutsu noted “If any thoughtful and farsighted man had advocated a more balanced and temperate viewpoint, he would have been denounced as an unpatriotic coward as well as shunned and silenced by society.” Mutsu wrote that “our victories now at last freed [the Europeans] for the first time from the delusion that

295 Quoted in Yamauchi, “Civilization and International Law,” 11.
296 Iriye, “JDTGPS,” 765.
297 Ibid.
298 Perez, *Japan Comes of Age*, 169.
299 Ibid., 160.
300 Ibid., 170.
European-style civilization could survive only in Christian lands” and noted how the war would cause the West to give Japan “so much praise and commendation.”

The idea that this was in large part a war fought with an external (Western) audience in mind was manifest in the way that Japan prosecuted the war, which was designed to conform to Western force employment norms. By the turn of the century, one normatively-defined requirement for non-Christian nations to gain status as a civilized state was judged to be strict adherence to the ‘laws’ of war. In other words, adherence to certain force employment norms was seen as an explicit marker of a civilized state. Accordingly, the imperial rescript proclaimed at the outset of hostilities with China announced to the public and the world that Japan would fight “consistently with the law of nations.”

To ensure that this objective was achieved, Tokyo deployed distinguished Japanese international lawyers, who had been trained in England, to the battlefields. Their task was to advise the army and navy on how to carry out the battles without violating Western laws of war. The goal was to appeal to Western powers and to show that Japan was civilized and fighting a war on behalf of civilization. In this regard, Ariga Nagao, an international legal scholar and well-known advocate of “civilizational progress,” directly influenced the thinking of many political and military leaders as a professor at leading universities and war colleges. He was deployed to the battlefields to decide what specific actions were sanctioned by international law and to demonstrate to the Great Powers that Japan was fighting wars of civilization. Another British-trained lawyer, Takahashi Sakuye, was deployed by a Japanese naval college to advise Japan’s fleet commander on how to fight in accordance

301 Quoted in Tsuzuki, Pursuit of Power, 127.
302 Gong, Standard of “Civilization,” 18.
303 Ibid., 184–185.
304 Author meeting with Japanese military historian, Yokosuka, Japan. January 2012.
with “the law of nations.” Meanwhile, Mutsu personally impressed upon Japanese troops the importance of observing rules of international law, reiterating that this was a war for civilization. Overall, this strategy of conforming to force employment norms appeared effective in achieving Japan’s goals. While Western scholars praised Japan for fighting in a “civilized” manner, they criticized China for being semi-civilized because it had not adopted the rules of war of a ‘civilized’ great power.

Given the objectives driving and the manner in which Japan carried out the war, it is perhaps not surprising that its mission was widely praised in the West. As a September 1894 editorial in *The Times* (London) crowed, Japan’s fight showed that “A new State has taken her rank in the hierarchy of nations.” As Gordon argues, Japan’s victory over China attained for it “vastly increased prestige as the model modernizer of the non-Western world.” As a testament to the improvement in status as a result of war against China, key aspects of the Unequal Treaties were revised after the war and ceased to exist by 1899. The United States, Germany, France, and Russia, all revised their treaties during the year after the war. Defeating China in a ‘war of civilization’ appeared to have accomplished more to launch Japan toward recognition as a member of the great power club than decades of failed negotiations. Rewarded for their de facto expansionist policies with international prestige, Iriye notes that the major takeaway for Japan from the experience of 1894-1895 was that Japan learned directly what agitators had argued in advance of the war—that imperialist expansion was a necessary condition for recognition as

308 “In the Absence of Fresh News of Importance,” *The Times (London)*, September 24, 1894.
ranking among the ‘great powers.’

This lesson would have significant consequences in the years that followed.

In the end, as Mutsu writes, “Victory would enable us to raise the position of our country in the eyes of the nations of the world. The Western Powers would now be compelled to amend their ill-disposed view that our civilization was a mere skin-deep imitation [of Western civilization.] With this victory Japan could no longer be regarded as a mere Far Eastern park known only for its beautiful mountains and rivers; she would now be reckoned with as a definite world power.”

Japan’s defeat of the country that had exercised Sinocentric hegemony in Asia for centuries was a symbolic final testament to Fukuzawa’s call ten years earlier to “Quit Asia.”

Japan came away from the war with more than just praise and enhanced status. The Treaty of Shimonoseki that ended the war compelled China to cede to Japan Taiwan and the Liaodong Peninsula, though the latter would be relinquished following the Tripartite Intervention by Russia, France, and Germany (see below). It also opened up four treaty ports for trade, afforded Japan most-favored nation status, and resulted in a large indemnity paid to Tokyo. China also recognized Korean ‘independence.’

On the home front, the war was immensely popular, and Japan’s victory resulted in a large increase in the government’s public and Diet support. The Japanese press widely praised the leadership for a war ‘on behalf of ‘civilization.’ The war also proved to be a turning point in widespread views about international politics as well as leaders’ understanding of the potential domestic political benefits of efforts to enhance Japan’s status as a great power through

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310 Iriye, “JDTGPS,” 765.
311 Chen, “Japan’s Decision,” 71.
expansionism. Combined with the discriminatory Tripartite Intervention, discussed below, the war also caused a sea change in public opinion toward the ‘game’ of great power politics. As a case-in-point, the influential journalist Tokutomi Sohō, an erstwhile pacifist and internationalist, wrote that the Sino-Japanese War was “the great turning-point” in his life, noting that “as a result of the Triple Intervention I was baptized to the gospel of power.” The war also created further interests on the Continent, and the Japanese press reported that the war “was but an opening chapter in Japan’s new status as an empire.”

**Japan Becomes a Colonial Power: The Decision to Annex Taiwan (1895)**

As part of the spoils of the Sino-Japanese War, Japan acquired its first-ever colony: Taiwan. Yet puzzlingly, as an authoritative English-language history of the decision argues, the annexation of Taiwan was not carried out primarily for strategic or material considerations.

Had economic and strategic concerns been a major driver of the decision to annex Taiwan, the government would have made preparations for what to do with Taiwan after annexation. Yet as Chen argues, there does not appear to be evidence to suggest that such preparations were made. Focused on Korea, Ito and Mutsu had not even thought about Taiwan at the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. Nor does there appear to be even a basic awareness of what kind of commitment would be necessary to render the island into an economically and/or strategically beneficiary colonial holding. Because of this lack of planning it is unsurprising that Japan’s colonial government later proved incapable of controlling, much less administering the

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312 As Gordon points out, “The unifying effect of expansionism was a lesson not lost upon the government, which indeed went into the war in part to shore up support at home.” Gordon, *Modern History*, 117.
315 Chen, “Japan’s Decision,” 61.
316 Ibid., 62.
indigenous population.\footnote{Chen, “Japan’s Decision,” 71. Chen does note that several months into the war the navy did point out to the leadership that Taiwan could be strategically worthwhile, but this was at most one factor among several and certainly was not an initial cause of the conflict. Ibid., 62, 64.} Japan annexed Taiwan with no plan for how to administer it.\footnote{Ibid.} Its first several governors were completely unprepared and ill-equipped to administer Taiwan.

As Chen concludes his study,

“I have found no evidence to indicate that, in reaching that decision [to acquire Taiwan three months after war broke out], Ito and Mutsu were influenced either by the notion of using the island as a military base for future expansion into south China and southeast Asia or by any expectation to provide ‘Japanese capitalism with new markets and raw materials.’ If they were ever influenced by military considerations, it was more likely to be by their fear of an eventual conquest of the island by the West—as the navy so well pointed out—than by any design for future aggression. We can thus safely reject the suggestion that Japan’s decision to annex Taiwan was based on any long-range planning.”\footnote{Tsuzuki, Pursuit of Power, 131.}

Making the decision to annex Taiwan still more puzzling was the fact that colonizing Taiwan was immensely costly. In addition to huge administrative costs of administering such a distant colony, Japan had to deploy 60,000 troops to suppress fierce resistance to the initial occupation.\footnote{Gordon, Modern History, 116.} Goto Shinpei, the first civilian administrator of Taiwan, who was trained in Europe and widely read in European thought on colonial policy, saw his main task as ‘civilizing’ the island.\footnote{Mark R. Peattie, “Japanese Attitudes Toward Colonialism, 1895-1945,” in The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945, ed. Ramon Hawley Myers, Mark R Peattie, and Ching-chih Chen (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1984), 84–85.} The ‘pacification’ effort lasted seven years, during which almost as many Japanese soldiers died as during the entire Sino-Japanese War itself: over 8300.\footnote{Gordan, Modern History, 116.}
proved so overwhelming that Tokyo tried to convince France to buy Taiwan. It did not succeed.

So why did Japan decide to annex Taiwan? It appears that the primary driver was a push for prestige as part of Japan’s push for recognition as a member of the great power club. As Peattie notes, from the perspective of Japan’s leaders “Taiwan was an imperial accessory, a laboratory where the ‘new boy’ among the colonial powers could show off his modernizing skills.” Socialized to contemporaneous norms in the age of the ‘new imperialism’ Japanese nationalists during this period came to identify colonies as valuable status symbols. Imperialism, Iriye writes, was “a prerequisite” for status as a modern state. Significantly, but unsurprisingly, no Western power disputed the transfer of ‘ownership’ of Taiwan to Japan.

Why would Japan’s relatively moderate, pragmatic leaders agree to such a materially costly and strategically dubious exercise? From their perspective, beyond their decades-old effort to enhance Japan’s international prestige by conforming to these norms they also appear to have been partially driven by political opportunism: The annexation was undertaken in large part to placate domestic agitation for an expansion of the Empire. Mutsu described the Japanese public as having an “appetite for Chinese territory [that] grows larger every day [and which makes them…] tone deaf to any voice other than the voice for an invasion of the Chinese capital.” Japan’s leaders appeared to make a judgment that for domestic political reasons they needed to take some Chinese territory, regardless of its value. Of crucial importance to Ito’s and Mutsu’s decision were a (correct) belief that Western powers were unlikely to oppose annexation of Taiwan and a conviction that acquiring Japan’s first colony as a symbol of prestige that would

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323 Chen, “Japan’s Decision,” 62.  
325 Iriye, “JDTGPS,” 767.  
326 Ibid., 768.
gain Japan entry into the exclusive “colonial club,” and consequently, contribute to the effort to stake Japan’s claim to equal status with the Western great powers. In the end, Chen writes, “Taiwan became the only tangible booty that Ito and Mutsu could present to the Japanese people.”

The expected domestic political benefits were clear: In the words of Iriye, “expansionism provided a new national objective for the Japanese people. Instead of being preoccupied with internal squabbles and domestic concerns, they would be driven by a vision of boundless opportunities overseas.”

Despite the clear costs in material and Japanese lives (to say nothing of the immense suffering of the indigenous people on the island of Taiwan) this first taste of colonialism appeared to prove sweet to domestic audiences. A dangerous precedent had been set, as colonial acquisition came to be symbolically associated with equality with the Western powers. This realization would have major implications for Japan’s subsequent trajectory. As a case-in-point of the shift in perspective, the political parties that had resisted increased military spending just a few years earlier no longer did so. As Iriye notes, imperialism had effectively come to be widely seen as a “necessary and desirable attribute” of Japan as a modern power. Political leaders recognized the extreme costs of empire, but generally judged that reversing gains would elicit unacceptable domestic political costs. As a Japanese politician and journalist would write in a book on Taiwan in 1907, three years before Japan’s annexation of Korea, “Western nations have long believed that on their shoulders alone rested the responsibility of colonizing the yet unopened portions of the globe and extending to the inhabitants the benefits of civilization; but

327 Chen, “Japan’s Decision,” 72.
328 Iriye, “JDTGPS,” 762.
329 Ibid., 770.
330 Ibid.
now we Japanese, rising from the ocean in the extreme Orient, wish as a nation to take part in this great and glorious work.”

**First Taste of Discrimination and Exclusion: The Tripartite Intervention (1895)**

Beyond the annexation of Taiwan and the effective establishment of Korea’s ‘independence,’ the third major consequence of Japan’s victory in the Sino-Japanese War was not by design. Yet it would have major implications for Japan’s military development and contribute directly to creating the enmity and conditions that led to the Russo-Japanese War a decade later. The Tripartite Intervention (*sangoku kansho* 三国干涉) by Russia, Germany, and France effectively compelled Japan to abandon a key spoil of its victory over China—the Liaodong Peninsula. From the perspective of Japan’s leaders and the Japanese public, it appears that this act was seen as egregiously offensive act and was interpreted as blatant discrimination of three white powers against Japan. It would have major consequences for Japan’s future trajectory.

The Tripartite Intervention was widely seen as an unprecedented humiliation, the consequence of which was far greater than any perceived material loss as a result of the loss of the territory. Kajima refers to the Triple intervention as a painful experience that caused Japan to “shed bitter tears in grief” (*hitsuna ketsurui* 悲痛な血涙; literally, “shed bloody tears in

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grief”). The *Osaka Asahi Shimbun*’s headline the day after the government announced that it had given up the Liaodong Peninsula seemed to capture it all: “Whole Nation in Mourning.”

As Storry notes, one cannot understand the nationalism of the first half of the 20th century without understanding the contempt and humiliation that the Tripartite Intervention caused in Japan. As he wrote, “the psychological effect […] lasted for decades […] Western nations have been feared usually, and disliked very often. But on the whole they had been respected by Japan. Now they were distrusted, despised even, as hypocrites.”

It effectively socialized Japan to the purely self-interested side of contemporaneous great power politics and, in what would become more prevalent a decade later, a widespread—and to some extent, justifiable—belief that given the extreme racism of the period, as a non-white nation Japan would never truly be fully treated as an equal by the Western powers. This view would gain traction over the coming decades.

Two direct consequences of the Intervention on the home front were the growing influence of extreme right-wing groups, and a military buildup referred to as ‘accept the humiliation now; revenge will come later’ (*Gashinshotan*). Widely seen as the mastermind of the Intervention, Russia became the primary target of Japanese resentment. Most notable among the right wing groups was the Black Dragon Society (*Kokuryukai*), founded by Uchida Ryohei in response to the Intervention. The group began agitating for war with Russia. Over the next seven years, the Imperial Navy would nearly quadruple its

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334 Huffman, *Yankee*, 231.
335 Cited in Gong, *Standard of “Civilization,”* 197.
The military budget increased from 24 million yen prior to the war to 110 million (half the entire General Account budget) by 1897. 

**Japan’s First Participation in a Multinational Military Operation: Response to the Boxer Rebellion (1900)**

In 1900, developments within China presented Japan with its first opportunity to participate in a multinational military force, the goal of which was to suppress an uprising in China known as the ‘Boxer Rebellion.’ Significantly, the rebellion itself was explicitly anti-Western, and involved months of violence against Western legations in China, especially in Beijing.

After an extended debate, Japan’s leaders chose to deploy 10,000 troops to a multinational force of Western militaries (the Eight-Nation Alliance) tasked with suppressing the rebellion. Not only was Japan’s contingent the largest among the powers, but its performance earned it plaudits from Britain and the United States, a seat at the subsequent Great Power peace conference as a full member for the first time in its history, and the right to forward-deploy a “peace-keeping force” near Beijing as one of the “Boxer Protocol Powers.” The U.S. War Department’s official report assessed that “the Japanese did about all the fighting, and the credit for the victory is freely and cheerfully accorded to them by the American and British.” The Times of London praised Japan for “play[ing] her part as a Civilized Power” and the intervention of this “Eastern and non-Christian Power which has regenerated herself by the

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339 Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army.*
342 “The Telegrams from China This Morning Confirm,” *The Times (London)*, June 11, 1900.
successful adoption of Western civilization in this contest with the unyielding barbarism of China [...] and the] common effort by all civilized peoples [...] to enforce the rudimentary principles of international law.” Combined with its remarkable success in the Sino-Japanese War, the Boxer Rebellion made clear that Japan had emerged as a major player in international affairs in East Asia.

Japan’s decision to deploy troops to mainland China and to participate in a multinational military mission represented a radical departure from its past practice. It is not a shift that Japanese leaders implemented lightly. In fact, at every stage of the crisis Japan appears to have sought full sanction from the other powers and refused to act without it. The entire episode evinces restraint on the side of the Japanese, even top military leaders, and suggests that Japan was in fact not chomping at the bit to advance onto the Chinese mainland in 1900.

The first multinational contingent of troops was small—350 men—and proved insufficient. Naval commanders then deployed all hands from the available warships—increasing the total to 2000—but that number also proved insufficient. When a Japanese naval commander made an urgent request for reinforcements, the Foreign Office demurred, seeking the sanction of the Western powers first. Remarkably, even War Minister General Katsura Taro recommended to the prime minister that Japan should not act without a request for support from the powers. Lord Salisbury, the British prime minister, personally requested the approval of 20,000-30,000 Japanese reinforcements. The U.S. concurred, but Russia and Germany opposed. Not wanting to act without full approval, Japan opted not to send its troops. It was not until the British made a concerted effort to persuade Japan that Tokyo ultimately agreed to deploy 8000

343 “We Are Still without Trustworthy News,” The Times (London), June 21, 1900.
troops.\textsuperscript{347} As a testament to its desire to be seen as a civilized power, and in stark contrast to the behavior of Japan’s military personnel on Chinese territory beginning three decades later, troops were informed by their superiors that they would be punished severely for any violence, arson or theft against civilians. Rape would bring immediate decapitation.\textsuperscript{348} Again behaving against stereotype, after the mission concluded successfully again it was General Katsura who recommended a prompt withdrawal lest Japan invite the suspicions of the other powers.\textsuperscript{349} The Japanese forces withdrew to Hiroshima in October.

In light of its apparent reluctance to deploy and the fact that the Boxer Rebellion targeted Western legations in China, Japan’s significant involvement in the Eight-Nation Alliance is rather surprising. Yet it becomes less so once one realizes that Japanese leaders believed that Japan’s involvement in the “relief expedition” would lead to it being rewarded with a lifting of core aspects of the demeaning Unequal Treaties.\textsuperscript{350} While they were wrong on this specific point, Japan was rewarded for its contribution with its first-ever seat at a ‘great power council’ in 1901 and permission to quarter troops in Beijing. Its behavior in defense of alleged Western norms (and interests) through the overseas deployment of military force would be a major factor in Britain’s decision to conclude with it a formal alliance the following year. This development gave Japan the distinction of being the first Asian nation to sign an equal security arrangement with a European power, something its leaders welcomed as “added confirmation of their status in

\textsuperscript{347} Nish, “Japan’s Indecision,” 449–450.
\textsuperscript{348} Drea, \textit{Japan’s Imperial Army}, 98–99.
\textsuperscript{349} Nish, “Japan’s Indecision,” 440.
the world.” The alliance would be upgraded further following the next major decision point—Japan’s decision to fight a war against Russia.

_Japan’s First War With a (‘White’) Power: The Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905)_

As Ernest Satow, then British Minister in Peking and former Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Japan, suggests in the 1903 diary entry quoted at the outset of this chapter, by the turn of the century war with a white power seemed to be a logical end point to rising Japan’s status-seeking trajectory. Given the mores of the time, not to mention the fact that as an Asian nation Japan was a racial outlier among its coveted peer group of Western powers during an extremely racist period in history, the war with Russia was widely seen as necessary to get the status Japan had sought for the past several decades. The Sino-Japanese War, which entailed ‘only’ a victory over another Asian power, appeared to be insufficient for its coveted recognition. Coupled with the perceived humiliation of the Tripartite Intervention, Meiji leaders judged, correctly it seems, that Japan had yet to ‘arrive’ as a great power.

Although it is clear that status concerns played an important role in both the decision to fight Russia and even _how_ to fight Russia, the debate over the military buildup leading to the war and the war itself presents a far more mixed picture of causal factors at play. Beyond the insult of the Triple Intervention, which catalyzed a major military buildup beginning in 1895, within a few years more concrete concerns about Russian expansionism into East Asia also were perceived by Meiji leaders as posing a very clear threat to Japan’s security, especially by threatening the continued ‘independence’ of Korea. In other words, decisions made during this

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351 Iriye, “JDTGPS,” 774.
period suggest that the factors posited by the security-maximizing hypothesis were also major
drivers of the ultimate decision to go to war with Russia in 1904.

Although the evidence about the primary cause of the war is admittedly mixed, its result
was far less ambiguous. Much like America’s victory over Spain in 1898 (see Chapter 6),
Japan’s victory over Russia succeeded in finally attaining for Japan the international status it had
sought for nearly half a century. The impressiveness of Japan’s military performance in what
some historians consider to be the first truly modern war and its attempts to conform to
‘civilized’ force employment norms in carrying out the fighting, inter alia, meant that in the eyes
of most the signing of the Treaty of Portsmouth signaled Japan’s arrival as a ‘civilized, great
power.’

Beginning with the Tripartite Intervention, by the last decade of the 19th century Russia
had begun to emerge as a clear challenge to Japan’s position in Korea and on the Continent. As
discussed earlier, Japan continued to seek primacy in Korea, both as a buffer and to continue its
‘civilizing’ mission. In response to the Intervention, in 1895 Japan launched a ten-year naval
buildup program with the goal of six battleships and six armored cruisers. In 1898, after
Russia received a lease for Port Arthur, which it had forced Japan to relinquish just three years
ek Atlantis, bilateral tensions worsened precipitously. Next, Russia refused to remove its troops from
Manchuria after the Boxer Rebellion in an effort to extract further concessions from China. Japanese leaders began to grow concerned that Russia might use the Korean Peninsula as a
springboard to an invasion of Japan, especially once the Trans-Siberian Railroad, still under

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353 The Russo-Japanese War, sometimes referred to as ‘World War Zero’ given its costs and the amount of death and
destruction involved machine guns, heavy artillery, telephones, inter alia, and required the mobilization of over one
million men.
355 Tsuzuki, Pursuit of Power, 170.
construction, was completed.\textsuperscript{356} As a testament to the growing sense of threat, in 1902 Japan signed a security treaty with Great Britain that recognized Japan’s ‘special interests’ in Korea and entailed a pledge to defend the other if either were attacked by Russia and a fourth party.\textsuperscript{357}

Despite Japan’s clear concerns about Russia, however, war was not a foregone conclusion. Indeed, despite the Tripartite Intervention five years earlier it was not until 1900 that Japan’s general staff for the first time engaged in substantive operational planning for a war with Russia.\textsuperscript{358} Furthermore, from 1903 to 1904 Japanese leaders tried to work out a deal: Japan offered to grant Russia primacy in Manchuria if Russia agreed to leave Korea alone—the so-called “Manchukuo-Korea Exchange” (\textit{man kan kokan} 滿韓交換). Negotiations dragged on for five months. Ultimately, however, convinced that Russia was not negotiating in good faith, as Russian counteroffers made no mention of Manchuria but asked for Japanese concessions on Korea, Tokyo eventually gave up and notified Russia that it was breaking off diplomatic relations. Two days later, Japan launched an attack.

As noted above, a key cause of the war was clearly strategic: namely, a desire to ensure continued Korean ‘independence,’ for a number of reasons, not the least of which was by that point a strategic desire to maintain it as a de facto buffer state against possible further Russian advances. This driver is reflected in an Imperial conference, which had determined that Korea was a vital national interest and therefore not negotiable.\textsuperscript{359} It was also reflected in the February 10 imperial edict declaring war, which stated that Korea is directly relevant to Japan’s security and that Russian occupation of Manchuria posed a direct threat to Korea.\textsuperscript{360}

\textsuperscript{356} Drea, \textit{Japan’s Imperial Army}, 75.
\textsuperscript{357} Gordon, \textit{Modern History}, 119.
\textsuperscript{358} Drea, \textit{Japan’s Imperial Army}, 100.
\textsuperscript{359} Ibid., 101.
\textsuperscript{360} Tsuzuki, \textit{Pursuit of Power}, 172.
Yet, as Iriye points out, the Russo-Japanese War was a quintessentially imperialist war, fought by two countries over territory that was a part of neither. It was also driven in large part by a widespread desire, or “sentiment,” within Japan to effectively stay the course as an aspiring great power. Economic interests do not appear to have been a driving force, as interests in Manchuria were an extremely small portion of Japan’s trade. Nor was there significant Japanese investment overseas.\(^{361}\) Japan did not have major trade or investment with Korea. Furthermore, Japanese leaders launched the war despite clear awareness of the risks and the costs. In this sense, it seems that from a *strictly* materialist perspective that takes into account only expected material costs and benefits, as well as the likelihood of winning, the war might not have occurred.

First, Japanese civilian and military leaders launched the war knowing they could not fight long. Indeed, few in Japan were optimistic that Japan could afford to fight Russia at all, much less win.\(^{362}\) The general impression of the likely outcome—shared, significantly, by most of the Western powers and Russia itself—was, in the words of Satow, that fighting Russia “must [would] be disastrous for Japan.”\(^{363}\) To finance war preparations and the war itself, the government had to increase Japan’s military budget eight-fold between 1902 and 1904; it constituted more than 80-percent of the general account in the latter year.\(^{364}\) Japan also had to borrow more than 100 million dollars from London and New York.\(^{365}\) Reliance on foreign loans to finance the war was very high risk and marked a major reversal of Meiji policy for the previous three decades, during which time leaders avoided foreign loans out of a belief—based on the track record of some Western states—that if Japan defaulted on its debts its European

\(^{361}\) Iriye, “JDTGPS,” 776–777.
\(^{362}\) Ibid., 775.
creditors might invade. 366 Overseas borrowing surged fourteen-fold between 1903 and 1907. 367 Furthermore, Japan did not have good reason to think that the economic benefits of victory would even be a net-positive. Indeed, recent history suggested otherwise, as a massive depression had followed the Sino-Japanese War. 368 Similarly, the Russo-Japanese War caused huge damage to the Japanese economy for a decade. It cost two billion yen, ten times the cost of the Sino-Japanese War, and left Japan’s economy in recession and with dangerous levels of international debt. 369)

Beyond widespread concerns about the financial cost of the war, there were also pervasive doubts about Japan’s military capabilities. Russia’s Far Eastern fleet possessed the Russian Navy’s best ships, and was far larger than that of the entire Japanese fleet. Additionally, Russia could replace any ships it lost with reinforcements, while Japan could not. 370 As a testament to the expected outcome of the war, after the decision to declare war was made the emperor himself, fearing defeat, reportedly could not eat or sleep for days. 371

As discussed above, it would be a gross oversimplification to say by 1904 war with Russia was driven solely by status concerns, but it is also apparent that a clearly expressed desire to stay the course on its path to great power status also played an important role, encouraging leaders to fight the war despite the apparently widely expected costs and immense risks.

In a 1904 speech before the Korean emperor, channeling both Fukuzawa’s civilization and Social Darwinism, Ito Hirobumi reiterated a call for China and Korea to adopt the cause of independence and Western civilization, and even offered Japanese ‘assistance.’ Ito also argued

366 Garon class
367 Crawcour, “Industrialization & Technological Change,” 436.
368 Ibid.
369 Ibid.
371 Drea, Japan’s Imperial Army, 102.
that Russia represented a “falsified” version of Western civilization that “carried out selfish acts of aggression, oppression, and injustice.” He called nations such as Russia “enemies of civilization. They are barbarians, and we should drive out the barbarians.”  

Japanese contemporaries derided Russia as an “uncivilized country still sunk in barbarism” in advance of the Russo-Japanese War.  

As a testament to how much ‘progress’ Japan had made by this point, these views were shared to a remarkable degree in Western Europe and America, where Japan was compared favorably against Russia. To a remarkable degree, many Westerners identified Japan as “civilized and modern” power, while Russia remained “semi-barbarous and medieval.”  

Japan’s battle with Russia was seen in Britain, even by Asquith, as “in the common cause of all civilized nations.”  

As a professor of history from Yale University argued at the time, Japan was “doing the world’s work” not only vis-à-vis Russia but also by potentially removing China “from the list of those derelict states whose present decrepitude offers such deplorable temptation to the military nations of the West.”  

The implication, of course, appears to be that he believed it had been China’s own fault for what happened to it. As the professor wrote in a case of encomium, “Confident in their understanding of their great mission, we of America may rightfully bid the dazed Asiatic seek his salvation from the children of the Rising Sun, and declare in the Sibylline utterance of the Psalmist, ‘The dew of thy birth is of the womb of the morning.’”  

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372 Tsuzuki, Pursuit of Power, 177.  
373 Gong, Standard of “Civilization,” 183.  
374 George Kennan, “Which Is the Civilized Power?”,” Outlook, October 29, 1904.  
375 “There Is No News of the War This Morning so,” The Times (London), February 20, 1904; “The Emphatic Endorsement by Mr. ASQUITH of,” The Times (London), September 4, 1905.  
377 Ibid., viii.
Russian racism against and condescension toward Japan as a non-white power (which, incidentally, had played a role in the Tripartite Intervention) also appear to play an important role in bringing about the war. As Kowner argues, Nicholas II viewed Japan as “feminine, weak, and racially inferior.” This view contributed to Russia’s underestimation of Japan’s ‘character’ and the capabilities of the Japanese military, leading Nicholas to commit disastrous strategic errors.\(^\text{378}\)

Under these circumstances—factors distinct from the (also significant) strategic drivers of the conflict—and despite the fact that few observers, including most Japanese, seemed to think Japan could win, the war appears to have been very popular. As Iriye argues, Japan entered into a war few thought it could actually win in order to “further enhance Japan’s prestige and standing among the community of great powers.” For status purposes, Japan appeared to have little choice. In an imperialist age, even if Japan lost it would have shown the world that like a great power Japan was willing to fight for its imperial interests instead of giving in to bullying as only a “second-rate nation” would do. In his view, it was “sentiment,” not specific objectives, that lead Tokyo to war with Russia.\(^\text{379}\) In other words, given the inherently conflictual contemporaneous great power norms of the day, Japan’s leaders appear to have faced a dilemma as it pursued its own ‘place in the sun.’ This dilemma was captured presciently by a poet at the time of the Russo-Japanese War:

> “\textit{Win the war,}  
> \textit{And Japan will be denounced as yellow peril,}  
> \textit{Lose it,}  

\(^{379}\) Iriye, “JDTGPS,” 776.
As a testament to the war’s popularity, public opinion in Japan appeared to be overwhelmingly in favor of a war of revenge with Russia after the insult of the Triple Intervention. Political parties, journalists and even professors from the prestigious University of Tokyo began agitating for war. While a number of reasonable practical arguments against the war existed, only the Socialists opposed it in any organized manner. In a well-known editorial published after the war began, the socialist newspaper *Heimin Shimbun* argued that “Patriotism and militarism are our common foes.”

As was the case during the Sino-Japanese War, an apparently powerful desire to conform to Western, ‘civilized’ force employment norms again shaped the manner in which Japan’s military prosecuted the war. The military deployed international legal scholars to both the Army and Navy to ensure that Japan behaved as a “civilized power” and did not violate international law. Japanese soldiers even took pains to provide medical care to their enemies. They even buried Russian dead and placed flowers on their graves.

The 1905 Treaty of Portsmouth, negotiated in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, after President Theodore Roosevelt offered the good offices of the United States, gave Japan a long-term lease on the Liaodong Peninsula, now renamed the Kwantung Leased Territory; the southern half of Sakhalin (Karafuto) and all Russian rights and privileges in Southern Manchuria. It also recognized Japan’s ‘right’ to “guide, protect, and control” Korea. Despite Japan’s victory, enhanced security, and these beneficial terms of the Treaty, an imperial hysteria overtook the

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383 Quoted in Iriye, “JDTGPS,” 776.
Japanese public and massive riots nationwide protested the lack of an indemnity or outright territorial gains.\textsuperscript{386} Most Japanese newspapers considered the Treaty “disgraceful.” More than 10,000 demonstrators rioted in Hibiya Park (Tokyo), resulting in seventeen deaths, hundreds of arrests, and the imposition of martial law.\textsuperscript{387}

Like the Spanish-American War for the U.S. (see Chapter 6), Japan’s defeat of Russia afforded it unprecedented levels of international praise and prestige. Among contemporary observers and Japanese and Western histories of Japan, there appears to be a near-consensus that Japan finally achieved its goal of entering the great power ranks in 1905, the culmination of nearly half-a-century of efforts.\textsuperscript{388} As Norman wrote in 1940, on the eve of Pearl Harbor:

\begin{quote}
\textit{“The Treaty of Portsmouth signalized the entry of Japan into the ranks of the Great Powers. For our purpose this symbolic milestone in Japan’s progress makes a convenient point at which to conclude. We leave a Japan flushed with victory, yet wary of difficulties ahead; sensitive of past humiliations such as the Tripartite Intervention, but a Japan conscious for the first time of her role as a Great Power. The same nation scarcely half a century earlier was racked by the factional strife of feudal jealousies; poor in all forms of material wealth; threatened and even attacked by the gunboats of Western Powers. This rapid transformation has earned for Japan the ungrudging praise of an astonished world and, for obvious reasons, of the Asiatic world in particular. Much has been written to express the delighted amazement of Western traveler, journalist, or diplomat, as he warms to the spectacle of a nation so quick in learning the industrial arts of the Occident, so precocious in mastering the diplomacy of the Christian powers.”}\textsuperscript{389}
\end{quote}

In keeping with this tone, significantly, not a single Western power protested the war, the peace settlement, or Japan’s subsequent establishment of a protectorate in Korea (see next

\textsuperscript{386} Tsuzuki, \textit{Pursuit of Power}, 173.
\textsuperscript{388} Jansen, “Japanese Imperialism,” 87; Iriye, “JDTGPS,” 777. Norman, \textit{Japan’s Emergence}, 207. As the JMSDF museum in Sasebo summarizes concisely, with its victory over Russia, Japan “became a member of the great powers and strengthened its voice in international affairs.” 「列強の一員となって、国際的発言力を強めていきました」Kaijo Jieitai Sasebo Shiryokan.
\textsuperscript{389} Norman, \textit{Japan’s Emergence}, 207.
section). Even Roosevelt, who would later become concerned about Japan’s growing military power posing a threat to the United States’ own fledgling empire in East Asia, praised Japan’s attack at Port Arthur as “bully!” As Matsuo writes, within Japan “there was no consciousness of guilt at having set chains on the feet of another nation, the Koreans. The poison of imperialism had already corrupted the mind of the general public.” At the cost of 87,000 Japanese lives, it appears that the period of socialization was complete. Japan had largely achieved its status goals.

Japan’s First Formal Continental Expansion: Establishing a ‘Protectorate’ in Korea (1905) and Formal Annexation (1910)

After defeating Russia, Japan moved to tighten its control over the Korean Peninsula. In October 1905 Japan took control of Korea’s diplomatic rights, thereby making it a protectorate and no longer an independent state. The following year, Ito Hirobumi, former prime minister and the father of Japan’s Meiji Constitution, became Japan’s first resident-general in Korea. In 1907, Japan forced the Korean emperor to abdicate and dissolved the Korean army. Three years later, Japan formally annexed the Korean Peninsula. Despite a brutal suppression of an open rebellion of 140,000 Korean volunteers against Japan’s actions on the Peninsula, numerous atrocities such as military forces burning villages, by 1910 there appears to have been minimal opposition within Japan to annexation.

393 Tsuzuki, Pursuit of Power, 178.
394 Ibid., 180.Ibid., 181. Conroy writes of three camps vis-à-vis Korea throughout the half-century prior to annexation: Liberals (Fukuzawa), Realists (Ito, Yamagata), and reactionaries (Uchida Ryōhei). By the time of annexation in 1910, all three groups had reached a basic consensus in favor. Conroy, “Chōsen Mondai,” 452.
Although the chronology of policies vis-à-vis Korea in the thirty-five years prior to annexation appear to suggest a grand plan from early on to gradually increase influence and ultimately annex the Peninsula, it is important to stress that this view does not appear to be supported by the facts. Even after Japan turned Korea into a protectorate in 1905 strong opposition to annexation still existed within Japan. Furthermore, this opposition appears to be largely on material grounds. Trade with Korea had declined in the three years prior to annexation in 1910.\textsuperscript{395} Japanese newspapers opposed annexation at the time because it was seen as unaffordable, unendurable economic burden.\textsuperscript{396} For his part, from 1907 to 1909 Ito repeatedly resisted pressures to annex Korea, (despite the massive uprisings that were brutally suppressed).\textsuperscript{397} It was not until an April 1909 meeting of Ito, Prime Minister Katsura, and Foreign Minister Komura Jutaro that the formal decision to annex Korea was made. The decision was approved by the Cabinet on July 6.\textsuperscript{398} The following May, Japan’s new Resident-General, former Army Minister General Terauchi, implemented a ‘reign of terror’ and ‘unproclaimed martial law’ began in Korea. Three months later Japan formally annexed it.\textsuperscript{399}

How did the Western powers respond to Japan’s tightening of its grip over Korea and the violent oppression that occurred, especially after 1907? With encouragement at best, apathy at worst. Importantly, there was no clear moral or normative opposition. A retired professor of Harvard and Yale universities in 1912 defended Japan’s decision to turn Korea into a

\textsuperscript{395} Conroy, Seizure of Korea, 489.
\textsuperscript{396} Ibid., 388.
\textsuperscript{397} Ibid., 371–372.
\textsuperscript{398} David Brudnoy, “Japan’s Experiment in Korea,” Monumenta Nipponica 25, no. 1/2 (January 1, 1970): 162–163. To be sure, there is some debate among historians about when the annexation plan was hatched; yet the debate is between 1904 and 1909; 1876, 1885, or 1895 are not candidates. Ibid., 161. In short, a desire to expand territorially onto the Korean Peninsula was, at earliest, influential thirty years after Japan first engaged in gunboat diplomacy, two decades after Fukuzawa and others driven to turn Korea into a ‘civilized’ power modeled on Japan’s own experience, and nine years after the Sino-Japanese War.
\textsuperscript{399} Tsuzuki, Pursuit of Power, 181.
protectorate as designed to “relieve the people of the oppressions of their own government and to confer upon them all the benefits of modern civilization.” In his view, Ito—who had been assassinated by a Korean independence activist in 1909—was a “martyr” whose failure he blamed on the Koreans, who were “unwilling” to “inaugurate or accept good government.” Japan’s goal on the (since annexed) Peninsula, he wrote, is “benevolent assimilation.”\(^{400}\) Political leaders did not appear to feel much differently. Roosevelt, who despite praising Japan’s victory over Russia would later grow concerned about the potential threat Japan’s growing military power posed to the U.S.’ new colony in the Philippines (see Chapter 6) as early as 1900 had reportedly come to share the view of many in Japan that Korea could not govern herself, and thought it best for Japan to govern her instead.\(^{401}\) After the Treaty of Portsmouth U.S. Secretary of War William Howard Taft signed an agreement with Tokyo stipulating that Japan would recognize America’s possession of the Philippines, which Washington had annexed in 1898 and subjugated in 1902 after a three-year war with Filipino nationalists, in exchange for the U.S. recognizing Japan’s right to “protect” Korea.\(^{402}\) For its part, Britain’s 1905 revised treaty with Japan explicitly recognized Japan’s ‘special interests’ in Korea.\(^{403}\) Although Britain opposed formal annexation temporarily because of concern that it would lose its commercial privileges, once Tokyo assuaged London’s (purely self-interested) concerns Grey accepted Japan’s annexation of Korea.\(^{404}\)

\(^{401}\) Brudnoy, “Japan’s Experiment,” 158.
\(^{402}\) Tsuzuki, \textit{Pursuit of Power}, 178.
\(^{403}\) Ibid., 175–176.
Reversion of the Unequal Treaties (1911)

On the eve of Emperor Meiji’s death, and the year after Japan annexed the Korean Peninsula, the last condition of the Unequal Treaties—Japan’s lack of tariff autonomy—was removed. After more than half a century of efforts to acquire the trappings and behaving in a manner they perceived to befit a Western, ‘civilized’ Great Power, Japan’s leaders appeared to have achieved their status-seeking objective.

Alternative Explanations

Power-maximization Hypothesis

On first glance, key aspects of military policy outcomes during the Meiji period appear to be consistent with a structural power-maximization hypothesis, and especially offensive realist, explanation of rising power behavior. Indeed, even offensive realists have embraced Japan’s trajectory as providing “strong support” for their theory.\textsuperscript{405} It is therefore difficult to debunk this alternative explanation on theoretical grounds or based on a survey of policy outcomes, since much of the scholarship promoting it is derived based on the very outcomes from this specific period of history. Given this equifinality, we must turn to the empirical record of decision-making to weigh the explanatory power of the causal mechanism posited by this alternative explanation relative to SAT. If the power-maximization hypothesis is to have superior explanatory power we should see Meiji leaders identifying structural imperatives, material interests, and/or security concerns as primary drivers of their decisions to adopt expansionary policies during the Meiji period. Non-material factors, such as norms, identity, or prevailing ideas, should be largely

\textsuperscript{405} For example, John Mearsheimer claims that Japan’s foreign policy after 1868 is a case that provides “strong support” for offensive realism as Japan was “almost always looking for opportunities to expand through conquest, and when they saw an opening, they usually jumped at it.” Mearsheimer, \textit{TToGPP}, 169.
irrelevant. There should also be evidence relatively early in Japan’s rise of a grand plan for territorial expansion leading to regional hegemony.

When tested against the empirical record of Japan’s decision-making during the 1868-1912 period, and especially during the formative 1868-1900 period, the power-maximization hypothesis does not appear to offer superior explanatory power. On the contrary, it appears to have several major weaknesses.

As a baseline, the fact that Japan had not fought a war or attempted to expand in the slightest for 250 years prior to the arrival of Commodore Perry’s black ships in 1853 poses a clear challenge to the core assumptions of this hypothesis, which contends that the natural inclination and the structural imperative of states under international anarchy is to expand territorially. Yet Tokugawa Japan’s leaders chose not to be aggressive or expansionist for two and a half centuries prior to Perry’s arrival. Furthermore, they made this choice despite the fact that the Shogunate’s predecessors had effectively proven in the 1590s, just a few years before the Tokugawa rulers took power in 1603, that the Korean Peninsula might be conquerable. This precedent suggests that Meiji Japan’s status-seeking driven socialization into contemporaneous Western imperialist norms after 1868 provides a far more compelling explanation of Japan’s expansionist policies during this period. Absent the arrival of the Western powers and the subsequent socialization into prevailing imperialist and Social Darwinist ideology and ‘great power politics’ that resulted, it is likely that Japan would have remained inward-focused.

Second, while the patterns of Japanese behavior during the Meiji period appear to suggest a grand plan to pursue hegemony through gradual expansion, the historical record provides
relatively little empirical support for this claim.\textsuperscript{406} There does not appear to be a document or strategy resembling a grand plan for regional hegemony until, at earliest, 1907.\textsuperscript{407} Japan’s policies toward the Korean Peninsula, the most geographically proximate candidate for the beginning of a grand expansion, serve as a case-in-point. Despite years of efforts to partner with Korean liberal reformers to stage coups in an attempt to effectively remake Korea in Japan’s nascent ‘civilized’ image, and even after defeating China in 1895, Japan’s leaders appear to still have had no plans to annex the Peninsula.\textsuperscript{408} Even military leader Yamagata Aritomo’s famous 1890 memorial, which identified Korea as an important buffer for Japan’s security, still called for a diplomatic solution to the issue of Korea.\textsuperscript{409} Despite the Tripartite Intervention, Japan’s military appears to not have started planning for a military conflict with Russia for five more years. Lastly, the formal decision to annex Korea was not made until April 1909, thirty-three years after the Treaty of Kanghwa, twenty-five years after Fukuzawa and his Korean counterparts attempted to carry out a coup and overthrow the Chinese-backed Korean regime, and fourteen years after Japan effectively expelled China from Korea and asserted the Peninsula’s ‘independence.’\textsuperscript{410}

The major shifts and departures from past practice examined in this chapter, at least until 1905, appear to be primarily attributable to choices of leaders to conform to what they perceived to be contemporaneous ‘great power’ norms. This does not mean that material interests or security concerns were irrelevant. Rather, the question explored here is which factors appear to

\textsuperscript{406} Assumptions of a grand plan from early on are implicit or explicit in the claims of many studies that focus on the 1930s and 1940s. For example, Mearsheimer claims that by the mid-1890s Japan “was bent on controlling large portions of the Asian continent.” Ibid., 172–173. Yet it is unclear from the text what the empirical basis of this claim is.


\textsuperscript{408} Peattie, “Introduction,” 16.

\textsuperscript{409} Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword*, 64.

\textsuperscript{410} For an argument against the 1910 annexation as part of a decades-old grand “plot,” see Conroy, *Seizure of Korea*. 167
have been the most influential in Meiji Japan’s military policy decision-making at these major strategic decision points. In important cases, and in keeping with the great power mores of the time, primary motivations of Japan’s leaders appear not to be a desire to gain new territory for material purposes so much as they were to promote ‘civilization’ and to reshape other areas in a manner consistent with Japan’s own identity as an aspiring ‘civilized’ great power. Major and unprecedented shifts in military policy—such as Japan’s first deployment of military forces overseas in three centuries in 1874, the acquisition of its first-ever colony twenty-one years later, and its first-ever involvement in a multinational military force in 1900 appear to all have been driven in the first-order by non-material calculations and a desire to role-play with potential status gains foremost in leaders’ minds. In 1895, although the navy did express some interest in Taiwan, Japan’s first-ever colony, the civilian leadership appears to have chosen to annex it primarily as a symbolic trophy colony—one which proved so costly to administer in terms of blood and treasure that Japan tried to sell it to France. Even decisions made concerning Japan’s major wars during this period—not to mention the specific manner in which they employed their military—were also shaped in large part with a Western audience in mind, and were part of a push to gain recognition as a Western, ‘civilized(ing)’ Great Power.

Security-maximizing Hypothesis

The security-maximizing hypothesis performs relatively well as one of two major factors in explaining the outcome at the most costly and destructive decision point during this period: the Russo-Japanese War, thirty-six years after the 1868 Meiji Restoration. Particularly after the 1895 Tripartite Intervention, a perceived threat from Russia drove Japan’s leaders to commence a major military buildup. Russian activities in Manchuria, coupled with concerns that Russian
leaders were beginning to eye the Korean Peninsula, clearly played an important role in bringing about the Russo-Japanese War.

More generally, an argument can be made that avoiding subjugation from the Great Powers was also an important driver of Japan’s military policies throughout the Meiji period. Nevertheless, beyond the case of Russian encroachment into East Asia, the empirical record suggests that this alternative explanation does not provide an explanation superior to that of SAT. First, as Mayo argues, early on, from the perspective of key leaders such as Iwakura the overriding objective of policies aimed at creating a ‘rich nation, strong army’ was to “create an enlightened state and society and not a military juggernaut.”

During the first few decades after the Meiji Restoration, when Japan was most vulnerable to invasion, its leaders focused primarily on raising a conscript army whose primary task was suppressing domestic insurrection; not deterring invasion. Furthermore, given that any major invasion would have to come by sea, if a major sense of threat from the Western powers during the period when it was weakest was driving Japan’s military policies, it is unlikely that Japan would have waited to begin a significant naval buildup until the 1890s.

In contrast to the core assumptions of the security-maximizing hypothesis, to the extent perceptions of external threats vis-à-vis the Western powers were a major driver of Japan’s military policy decision-making during this period it seems to have paradoxically driven conformity to prevailing norms, rather than a military buildup aimed at deterring an attack through coercive threats of force—an explanation incompatible with the kind of Neorealist ‘socialization’ central to the security-maximizing hypothesis. Although the initial reflexive

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412 Kublin, “‘Modern’ Army,” 22.
response to Perry’s gunboat diplomacy was to “repel the barbarians,” increased exposure (socialization) caused the views of key leaders to change rapidly. Japan’s leaders began to identify with the West, as encapsulated in Fukuzawa’s call for Japan to “leave Asia” and to push for “civilization and enlightenment” at home. Paradoxically, Japan avoided subjugation and attained great power status during this period not by developing the capabilities necessary to militarily threaten Great Britain or the United States, but by mimicking their military and other policies and behaving like them for reasons distinct from external threats.\textsuperscript{414}

In important cases, such as the Taiwan Expedition, leaders even adopted major policy shifts despite the fact that these policies were largely disconnected from perceived territorial security or even material interests overseas. Furthermore, leaders implemented these policies despite clear recognition of severe costs and risks. Together, these two observations appear to challenge the assumptions underpinning the rationalist guns vs. butter trade-off central to the security-maximizing hypothesis. For example, the Sino-Japanese War was hugely costly, especially for a relatively poor country like Japan, and placed an immense burden on the Japanese people. After 1868 the overriding goal of Japan’s military policy shifts appears to have been to gain coveted status by developing a modern state, becoming a ‘civilized’ power, and developing and employing military power in accordance with contemporaneous great power norms.

For their part, far from wanting to keep Japan weak, the two most important established powers, Great Britain and the United States, appeared to want Japan to develop a strong modern

\textsuperscript{414} Suzuki presents a nuanced argument along these lines, arguing that a desire to survive caused Meiji Japan’s leaders to effectively become socialized--though not by a causal mechanism similar to that posited by Neorealists. Suzuki, \textit{Civilization\&Empire}. This line of mixed argument has appears to have much to commend it. In the context of the present study, however, the important point to stress here is that even this insightful argument is incompatible with the security-maximizing hypothesis—a point which seems compatible with Suzuki’s argument, which draws heavily on the English School of IR.
military and prosperous economy. These two characteristics, after all, were two of the primary conditions for the partial revision of the Unequal Treaties in the 1890s and were widely considered by the Great Powers to be necessary trappings of status as a ‘civilized’ and modern state. Accordingly, both these countries contributed directly to helping Japan achieve this goal. Great Britain became Japan’s primary supplier of modern naval ships and eventually its first ally, while in at least two of the most foundational cases of mimetic expansionism in Meiji Japan’s rise—one direct, one indirect—the primary designers of major expansionist shifts were Americans.

Meiji Japan rose to great power status during the period 1868-1905 in large part not because it rapidly developed a military deterrent capable so fearsome that the West was deterred but because it adapted to the ‘trend of the times,’ adopting the ‘internals’ and ‘externals’ of first rank "civilized" leading states, and largely patterning itself in their image. Furthermore, it appears to have done so largely with their encouragement.

**Domestic Institutions/Interest Groups Hypothesis**

Excessive influence of interest groups within the Japanese polity does not appear to be a convincing explanation of Japan’s military trajectory during this period.

Throughout the period of Meiji Japan’s rise, Japan engaged in imperial expansion before it had become a mature capitalist or industrial power. Financial motives appear to have played a negligible role, as Japan’s lack of capital was a major issue for Japan during this period. It did not have significant savings that needed to be invested abroad. Even at the time of the Sino-

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415 Perez, *Japan Comes of Age*, 88.
Japanese War, Japan had still not become a mature capitalist economy. As Peattie argues, private economic interests followed after imperial expansion—they did not drive it. This appears to be especially true early in the period of Japan’s development.

After 1900, there still does not appear to be much support for this alternative explanation. A poll of Japanese business leaders after the Boxer Rebellion broke out thought the disturbance would be beneficial for Japan by increasing demand for Japanese products and believed it would not have a negative impact on trade or business conditions. One would therefore expect these interests to have opposed the deployment of Japanese troops to suppress the Rebellion. Yet the troops deployed, anyway. As for the Russo-Japanese War, economic interests do not appear to have been a significant driver. Japan had no significant economic investment in Korea in 1904. A massive depression had followed the Sino-Japanese War, so there was no clear obvious economic benefit to fighting another one—especially one that most observers thought that Japan would lose. Japan relied on Britain to help it raise funding for the war, economic interests in Manchuria did not constitute a major amount of Japan’s trade, and Japan had no major investments there. As Iriye argues, economic pressures did not cause Japan’s leaders to decide to fight Russia. Even if some business interest groups had wanted the war, they would have been disappointed with the consequences. The War caused immense damage to the Japanese economy for a decade. It cost two billion yen, ten times the cost of the Sino-Japanese War, and left the economy in recession and with huge international debts.

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421 Conroy, Seizure of Korea, 489.  
423 Crawcour, “Industrialization&Technological Change,” 436.
As for Japan’s gradual expansion onto, and ultimate annexation of, the Korean Peninsula, which would appear to be the most likely candidate for this alternative explanation, there is also relatively little support. Conroy argues that economic interest in Korea prior to 1900 were “negligible, insufficient, unimportant.” The Sino-Japanese War was not caused by trade rivalry or capitalist agitation back home. Economic interests in Korea were small. On this point even Marxist Japanese historians appear to agree. Even a study by Peter Duus, the primary objective of which appears to be to argue that economic advantage mattered in explaining Japan’s interest in Korea, concedes that political, not economic factors, were still the primary driver of decision-making. On the eve of annexation, Korea was Japan’s fourth largest trading partner. Even this low ranking was primarily a consequence of Japan’s push into Korea, not the cause of it. Trade with Korea remained relatively small, and no strong evidence exists that advocates of increasing trade had significant sway over policymaking. Japanese newspapers opposed annexation at the time because it was seen as unaffordable and as an unendurable economic burden.

4. Conclusion

In a 1909 article, an American writer presented a contemporary, and apparently widely-held, Western perspective on Japan’s actions in Korea on the eve of annexation and two years into a violent ‘pacification’ campaign on the Peninsula. His words evince the permissive, if not outright encouraging, normative context into which Japan emerged and evolved as a colonial, expansionist power.

424 Conroy, Seizure of Korea, 484–485.
426 Conroy, Seizure of Korea, chap. IX.
427 Ibid., 388.
The “racial prejudice,” he wrote, that the Japanese show the Korean people “is no stronger than that with which the English regard the natives of India.” The “acts of injustice” are no worse than those committed by American “plunderers” during the U.S. occupation of the Philippines. The Koreans “are in nearly every material way better off today than they were under the old regime [...] there is no inherent reason why Japan may not assimilate the Koreans, if she wishes to do so. Her work in Korea [...] has unlimited possibilities.”

The above series of statements is undoubtedly offensive to most readers today. Yet it did not come from some fringe extremist publication. In fact, it appeared in the 1909 Proceedings of the American Political Science Association. The author was George Blakeslee, who would, among other pursuits, go on to found the first American scholarly journal devoted to international relations—interestingly named the *Journal of Race Development*, which would ultimately merge into another major publication—*Foreign Affairs*—upon that journal’s creation in 1922. Far from being an outlier, Blakeslee appears to have been in good company. In a 1912 *Yale Review* article entitled “The annexation of Korea: an essay in benevolent assimilation,” G. Trumbull Ladd, a Yale professor who was also the co-founder and second president of the American Psychological Association, criticized the “unwillingness and inability of the Koreans themselves to inaugurate or accept good government” and called (recently-assassinated) former Governor-General Ito Hirobumi a martyr. As historian (and later U.S. ambassador to Japan) Edwin Reischauer argues, “In this age of rampant imperialism, the Westerners, far from condemning the Japanese for their aggressions, applauded them as being apt pupils.”

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430 Quoted in Markey, “Prestige Motive,” 441.
To point out the extent to which contemporary Western observers appear to have seen Japan’s colonialism as ‘doing good work’ is by no means to excuse Japan’s behavior. After all, these policies were widely popular at home, and despite the foreseeable disaster sober-minded critiques were rare.\textsuperscript{431} Rather, the point is only to show the manner in which the prevailing normative context into which a rising power emerges can have powerful effects on the foreign policy choices its leaders make, even in the military domain. As discussed in Chapter 7, to the extent this remains true today there would appear to be important implications for how the United States and other leading states engage China and other emerging powers.

A key argument of the empirical analysis in this case study is that Japan’s imperialist expansion does not appear to have begun in 1931 or even 1895. Rather, it traces its roots to 1874. Yet rather than being a case of long-held machinations in pursuit of regional hegemony, Japan’s imperialist expansion during the Meiji era evolved in fits and starts over more than forty years. As in other domains in important cases the first-order objective of major shifts to Japan’s military policies was also to gain recognition from the established Western Great Powers as a member of the ‘great power club’—in large part through mimesis. This status-seeking mechanism essentially drove Japan’s socialization to contemporaneous great power norms. As Meiji leaders put it, as a rising power the name of the game was “following the trend of the times.”\textsuperscript{432} During this period, core features of modern Japan, its very identity, became inextricably tied to its development as a colonial power.\textsuperscript{433}

To be sure, as in the case of the Russo-Japanese War, it is also clear that strategic interests were at times also major drivers of Tokyo’s military policy decision-making. Many of these

\textsuperscript{431} Jansen, “Japanese Imperialism,” 75.
strategic interests, however, were heavily influenced by imperialist policies that began based on a desire to conform to normative expectations associated with Japan’s coveted status in a context that, inter alia, glorified military power, racialized imperialism, and subjugation and subsequent ‘civilization’ of ‘half-civilized’ or ‘barbarous’ peoples. The inherently conflictual nature of these norms that shaped Japan’s pursuit of great power status led to policies that fomented or exacerbated tensions with other powers, in important cases leading to disastrous outcomes. These norms not only contributed to shaping policies that resulted in immense suffering for the peoples on the receiving end of Japan’s imperialism; although generally praised by the leading states at the time, the policies that flowed from them also lay the groundwork for later clashes with Korea, China, Russia, and ultimately, even the United States. As Iriye writes in his seminal history of this period of Japan’s position at the end of the Meiji Emperor’s reign,

“It is one of the ironies of modern Japanese diplomatic history that at the very moment when the country had gained recognition as a formidable power, its sense of isolation, insecurity, and lack of direction were also enhanced.”434 “The more the Japanese expanded, and the more they talked of further expansion, the greater appeared to be the obstacles in the way. Diplomatic complications, naval rivalries, and racial disputes mounted. These were inevitable by-products of expansionism, but few were willing to question the premise that expansion was vital to the country’s development as a modern state.”435

434 Iriye, “JDTGPS,” 778.
435 Ibid., 780.
Chapter 4: Late 20th-Century Japan

“Japan, paying for her desperate throw of the dice at Pearl Harbor, passed from the ranks of the major powers at 9:05 A.M. today.”

-- Homer Bigart, on the Battleship Missouri, Tokyo Bay, September 2, 1945

“Japan, a nation committed to peace, rejects the role of a military great power, and on that basis is resolved to contribute to the peace and prosperity of Southeast Asia, and of the world community.”

-- The “Fukuda Doctrine” of Takeo Fukuda, Prime Minister of Japan (1976–1978)

“Japan is haunted by a powerful historical trauma. The memory of the Pacific War has instilled in the Japanese psyche a deep-rooted aversion toward war and toward international politics, in which the use and threat of force remain accepted norms.”

-- Tamamoto Masaru

On May 17, 1981, as the Soviet military buildup in the Far East was cresting and the external threat to Japan’s security was reaching a postwar peak, Ito Masayoshi, Japan’s foreign minister, was abruptly sacked. His egregious offense? Allowing the insertion of the term “alliance” as a descriptor of the U.S.-Japan relationship into the landmark joint communique between then Prime Minister Suzuki Zenko (Liberal Democratic Party; 1980-1982) and U.S. President Ronald Reagan. This unprecedented application of the label “alliance” to describe the relationship between Japan and America, seen as taboo in Japan in light of the term’s allegedly


‘military’ implications, set off an uproar in the Japanese Diet and almost caused Suzuki’s government to collapse. In an effort to control the domestic political fallout, in addition to firing Ito and his deputy, Suzuki also took the unprecedented step of publicly distancing himself from the diplomatic communique he had just signed with President Reagan.

Foreign Minister Ito’s 1981 resignation was but one manifestation of the remarkable sensitivities regarding military affairs in late 20th-century Japan, a country which self-imposed strict limits on the development and employment of its Self-defense Forces (JSDF). After 1945, Japan’s historical experience as an erstwhile military great power whose past choices had brought catastrophic suffering upon the nation eventually caused the consolidation of a national identity as a ‘peace nation’ ( heiwa kokka 平和国家). In effect, this widely-held, though domestically contested, national identity presented Japan’s post-war leaders with powerful domestic political incentives to pursue a military trajectory that in important aspects ran directly counter to the expectations of both existing international relations theory and many contemporary observers. After all, conventional wisdom held (and holds) that international anarchy would compel a rising power like late 20th-century Japan to leverage its copious, and rapidly expanding, latent material capabilities to acquire independent military power commensurate with its international standing as a global economic power. Furthermore, in

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439 The term “peace nation” can be traced back to progressive intellectuals involved in the Peace Issues Association Group ( heiwa mondai danwakai 平和問題談話会), which opposed the use of force in international affairs. Glenn D Hook, Militarization and Demilitarization in Contemporary Japan (New York: Routledge, 1996), chap. 2; Samuels, Securing Japan, 30.

440 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 predicted that because of its economic and industrial growth, Japan’s emergence as a military great power was “inevitable.” Nixon, “Asia after Viet Nam,” 120; Zhou quoted in Christensen, WTAM, 213. Influential 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.” Kahn, Superstate, vii, ix, 237. Even into the 1990s and beyond four decades of false positives had not prevented structural realists from continuing to predict that Japan would inevitably emerge as an independent, even
Japan’s own experience prior to 1945 and dating back to the Meiji period (see Chapter 3) military force had been widely seen as a key means by which to stake Japan’s claim to great power status. Yet after World War II, in a series of high-risk and theoretically puzzling strategic decisions of historic consequence, it was precisely during the period when Japan’s rates of industrial expansion and economic growth were peaking and the external threats to its security were cresting that its conservative leaders effectively chose to double-down on a “low-posture” (tei shisei 低姿勢) foreign policy and to pledge, repeatedly, that Japan would eschew both international status as a “military great power” (gunji taikoku to naranai 軍事大国とならない) and involvement in ‘the great power game.’\textsuperscript{441} In the (slightly-hyperbolic) words of Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei (LDP; 1972-1974), Japan’s basic foreign policy posture would be to “stake its fate on world peace.”\textsuperscript{442}

The net result of the interaction between national identity and perceived great power norms in the military domain was to distort, or to ‘bend the curve’ of, Japan’s military trajectory sharply away from that of either a security- or power-maximizing rising power and toward inefficient under-investment—at least from a Realist or materialist perspective—in military power. In important cases, the effects of the interaction of these two non-material variables proved so powerful that Japan’s leaders were effectively compelled by domestic political incentives to avoid even those military policies which they privately saw as necessary to deter pressing, even existential, external threats to Japan’s territory and to safeguard its rapidly nuclear-armed, military great power.\textsuperscript{441}\textsuperscript{442}

\textsuperscript{441} As will be discussed below, explicit references to this identity, which coalesced in the early post-war period, and explicit vows to “never become a military great power” appear frequently in leaders’ speeches, Cabinet resolutions, and official documents that describe Japan’s post-war military trajectory. For example, see Gaimusho 外務省 [MOFA], “Heiwa Kokka Toshite No 60nen No Ayumi 平和国家としての 60 年の歩み [Sixty Years’ of Progress as a Peace Nation],” July 2005, http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/taisen/ayumi.html.

\textsuperscript{442} Quoted in Kei Wakaizumi, “Japan’s Role in a New World Order,” \textit{Foreign Affairs} 51, no. 2 (January 1973): 316.
expanding global economic interests. Paradoxically, during the peak growth rates of Japan’s rapid rise, conservative Japanese leaders imposed severe, and purely normative, limitations on Japan’s military policy profile, often against their own wishes. Included among these limitations were de facto or explicit self-imposed bans on a nuclear deterrent (indigenous or foreign) on Japanese territory, offensive-strike capabilities, the (UN Charter-sanctioned) right to exercise collective self-defense, annual defense budgets above an arbitrary ceiling of one-percent of GNP, amphibious warfare capabilities (despite territory consisting of 6800 islands), a blue-water navy (despite greater reliance on maritime commerce as an economic lifeline than any other major economy), and the use, or even threat of use, of military force as a tool of coercive diplomacy. The result was a relatively high-risk military policy profile that essentially outsourced significant portions of Japan’s defense to a security benefactor—the U.S. military—despite the fact that the resulting asymmetric security arrangement was seen domestically as risking Japan’s entrapment in a military conflict (e.g., the Vietnam War or a superpower conflict with the Soviet Union) and doubts about America’s willingness to actually come to Japan’s defense in the event of an actual crisis or military conflict.

Late 20th-century Japan’s decision essentially to opt out of ‘the great power game’ and to attempt an exclusively non-military pathway to great power status contravenes widely-held assumptions in international relations theory about the fundamental drivers of state behavior under anarchy. It not only represented a stark departure from the circumstances in Meiji Japan (see Chapter 3). It also constituted a categorical about-face from the militarism and destructive and destabilizing trajectory of Japan in the decades prior to 1945. As with other rising powers, Japan’s leaders did not eschew the pursuit of status or prestige categorically. Based off the notion

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443 The same basic point is also made in Katzenstein, *CN&NS*, 54–55. See also Berger, *Cultures*, 1.
(discussed in Chapter 2) that identity and social status are domain-specific, the argument here is only that Japan avoided status as a great power in the military domain. Nor were Japan’s leaders unresponsive to external threats to Japan’s territory. Indeed, despite the normative, legal, and domestic political constraints they faced Japan’s leaders were able to develop some important and robust military capabilities designed to enhance territorial defense. Nevertheless, one need only briefly consider a counterfactual world in which Japan had conformed to expectations and emerged by the 1970s as an independent, nuclear-armed military superpower to appreciate the huge implications of the military policy choices of Japan’s leaders for the international relations of the second half of the 20th century in East Asia and beyond.

Seminal studies on Japan’s post-war identity and security policy have already shed important light on the weaknesses of structural realism and material rationalism in explaining key aspects of Japan’s military policy since 1945. This existing literature points to the constraining effects on Japan’s security policy of domestic norms or ‘cultures of anti-militarism’ or ‘pacifism.’ The analysis in this chapter draws on, and builds upon, this existing literature in several ways. First, and most generally, it examines the influence of national identity on military policy decision-making in states experiencing rapid economic growth and industrial development—including post-war Japan—in the context of a comparative study that does not select on the dependent variable. Second, the focus of existing studies of Japan’s post-war path

is on the role of *domestic* antimilitarism or norms on its policy choices. In contrast, this study analyzes the manner in and extent to which the *interaction* between Japan’s widely-held identity as a ‘peace nation’ and perceived contemporaneous *external* norms defining the force development and employment policies associated with international status as a ‘military great power’ shaped key aspects of its military trajectory. From the perspective of shadowing/avoiding theory, during its period of rapid growth Japan’s national identity was effectively defined both by what it self-identified as—a ‘peace nation’—and by the external social group in which that national identity made membership anathema—that of the de facto ‘club’ of ‘military great powers.’ To be clear, the argument presented here is not meant to contradict the scholarship cited above, with which it is largely complementary. Nevertheless, SAT posits a novel causal mechanism—status-avoidance resulting from an interaction between perceived ‘great power’ norms and national identity—absent from existing studies. Furthermore, this mechanism appears to in important cases provide greater precision in explaining some otherwise puzzling policy choices of Japan’s leaders. After all, some effectively non-prestigious force development or employment policies (e.g., significant enhancements to anti-submarine warfare capabilities during the 1980s) were generally considered acceptable (or largely ignored) by the public, while others (e.g., nuclear weapons; aircraft carriers; defense spending over one-percent of GNP) were eschewed because of their perceived, and extremely controversial, normative associations with status as member of the club of ‘military great powers’—a group to which a critical mass of the public appeared to feel strongly that this self-identified ‘peace nation’ should not belong.\(^{445}\)

**Outline**

\(^{445}\) In contrast, the independent variables posited in existing studies—e.g., a domestic norm of ‘anti-militarism,’ and especially ‘pacifism’—appear to connote far more categorical opposition to military power. Thus they have difficulty accounting for some of the significant investments in military power that Japan *did* make during this period.
This chapter is divided into four sections. First, I provide an overview of the disparate expectations of Japan’s military trajectory based on shadowing/avoiding theory (SAT) and the leading alternative explanations. I then provide background on the formation of Japan’s national identity concerning military power, its rapid economic and industrial expansion during the late 20th-century, and the territorial and material concerns that shaped its leaders’ threat perceptions. The penultimate empirical section, the bulk of the chapter, analyzes military policy decision-making at several major strategic decision points, discusses Japan’s alternative path to great power status, and evaluates the explanatory power of SAT relative to leading alternatives. I then conclude.

1. Theoretical Expectations

Expectations of Shadowing/Avoiding Theory

Shadowing/avoiding theory (SAT) expects that despite late 20th-century Japan’s surging economic and industrial wherewithal, widely-shared historical memories of the self-initiated suffering caused by its pursuit of status as a military great power prior to 1945 will effectively cause the consolidation of a national identity for which another attempt is considered anathema. This widely-held, though contested, national identity will effectively shape the domestic political incentives of leaders in a manner consistent with the expectations of a Type B, status-avoiding rising power (see Chapter 2). It will cause military policies normatively associated with status as a ‘military great power’ to be effectively taken ‘off the menu’ of choices available to Japan’s postwar leaders, in important cases despite leaders’ recognition of the resulting risks and costs. In this sense, Japan’s national identity will function effectively as a potent obstacle to policymaking in the military domain, blocking not only those inefficient policies the primary objective of which is greater international prestige but also even those otherwise efficient
policies that its leaders identify as necessary to safeguard Japan’s territory and global interests from pressing strategic threats. In short, leaders will eschew even otherwise materially beneficial military capabilities and missions simply because of their normative association with status as a ‘military great power,’ and regardless of leaders’ own judgments about the expected material and/or prestige benefits of those policies. The summary result will be a military trajectory defined to a significant extent by inefficient allocation of scarce resources and ‘under-investment’ in military power—concomitant with a proactive search for domestically acceptable, and strictly non-military, pathways to enhance Japan’s international standing.

**Expectations of the Leading Alternative Explanations**

The first category of alternative explanations, the power-maximization/offensive realist hypothesis, expects that Japan’s military policies during its period of record-breaking economic growth and industrial expansion will map closely to the expansionist trajectory of past rising powers. Its leaders will invest rapidly expanding economic and industrial capabilities to acquire status as a military great power, pursue wealth primarily for the purpose of developing its autarkic military capabilities, and project power abroad in support of its rapidly expanding regional and global economic interests. Because of international anarchy, Japan will increasingly seek to revise the international system in its favor by force, have no interest in relying on others for security except for reasons of material necessity, seek to achieve superiority in the dominant form of military power, show little restraint militarily when other states threaten its territory or other material interests or otherwise get in its way, and pursue regional, and ultimately, hegemony. Military policy decisions should be largely immune to considerations of domestic politics, national identity, and/or domestic or international norms.
A second leading alternative explanation to SAT, the security-maximizing hypothesis, expects that international anarchy, coupled with the guns vs. butter tradeoff, will compel Japan’s leaders to invest its rapidly growing latent material capabilities into developing and employing military power as efficiently as possible in response to external threats to Japan’s territory and in order to be able to project power in order to safeguard its rapidly expanding economic interests abroad. The ‘self-help’ imperative will compel Japan to become socialized (in a ‘Waltzian,’ Neorealist sense) and to emulate the military capabilities of the most powerful states in the system as a means of internally balancing and in order to survive. Together with uncertainty under anarchy, this imperative will cause it to leverage growing economic and industrial strength to emerge inevitably as a military great power. Although Japan may form alliances in order to balance externally against strategic threats, these alliances will serve merely as a supplement to indigenous capabilities. The limited credibility of alliance commitments under anarchy, coupled with fears of entrapment, will cause its leaders to develop autonomous defense capabilities (e.g., a nuclear deterrent) to the extent its material resources will allow as a hedge against abandonment and, in a worst case scenario, the possibility of a preventive war.

Because throughout the period of its rise Japan’s leaders perceived the Soviet Union and mainland China as major threats, Japan will implement force development and force employment strategies aimed at deterring these states from aggression and enhancing its ability to assert its claims to territories disputed with these and other nations. Further afield, because of its extreme dependence on maritime commerce as an economic lifeline, Japan will exploit its economic, industrial, and technological capabilities to develop a blue-water navy and power projection capabilities—as it did prior to 1945. In short, during the period of its rise Japan’s policies in the military domain will be attributable primarily to straight-forward calculations of
the most efficient ways to deter pressing strategic threats to its territory and to enhance its ability to safeguard and promote its rapidly expanding global economic interests. Military policy decisions should be largely immune to considerations of domestic politics, national identity, and/or domestic or international norms.

The third alternative explanation expects that powerful domestic institutions or interest groups—or in the case of late 20th-century Japan, powerful domestic institutions set up during the U.S.-led foreign occupation—will prevent political leaders from pursuing rational, efficient, and contingency-driven military policies. The leading candidates most frequently mentioned as explaining Japan’s puzzling military trajectory after 1945 are the institutions set up during and immediately after the U.S.-led Occupation (1945-1952), especially Article Nine of Japan’s Constitution (1946/7); the Japan Defense Agency (JDA; established 1954), given its subordination relative to the bureaucratic ministries; and Cabinet and Diet resolutions setting limits on Japan’s military policy options. In this view, the inertial effects of these institutions should explain military policy decisions during the period of Japan’s rapid rise.

2. Background

National Identity Formation

What are the sources of post-1945 Japan’s national identity as it concerns military power? A particularly salient factor was Japan’s experience during the Pacific War with the

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446 To be sure, there was not, nor is there now, a consensus within Japan on either national identity or the most appropriate military trajectory for Japan. Both were contested throughout the period of Japan’s rise. As noted in Chapter 2, the term ‘national identity’ is employed in this study as a useful label and heuristic shortcut. It is not intended to gloss over the domestic contestation of national identity itself nor to minimize the disparate policy preferences among domestic political actors, especially during the intense debates between political parties on the Left and Right during the 1950s. The explicit focus of the analysis in this chapter is on the effects of this identity on Japan’s policy decision-making during the subsequent high-growth period, not on the formation of the identity itself. In other words, shadowing/avoiding theory treats national identity strictly as an independent variable. Following
United States, which destroyed the Japanese state and brought immeasurable suffering on the Japanese people. In his memoirs, post-war Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru (Liberal Party, 1946-1947; Liberal Party/Democratic Liberal Party, 1948-1954) powerfully captured the physical and psychological impact of the wartime experience:

“The course of action to which [the militarist cliques] finally committed the nation drove Japan into the Axis camp and precipitated the greatest disaster ever suffered by the nation. For this—and the defeat and universal misery which their policies visited upon my nation—they must be held responsible.”

So traumatic was the suffering that resulted from Japan’s pre-1945 past pursuit of “its proper station in the world” and prestige by “entering the great power club” (rekkyo no nakamairi 列強の仲間入り)—the first decades of which is examined in Chapter 3—that the vast majority of the Japanese population had no appetite for another try. In short, defeat had discredited for a critical mass of the public the development and employment of military power as a means for gaining enhanced prestige and reentry into the great power ranks. The failure of

Andrew Oros, the term is used here to refer to the ‘hegemonic,’ or dominant, security identity within Japan during this period. It does not imply that the identity is not constantly under contestation domestically; merely that it sufficiently stable to affect policymaking over multi-year periods. Oros, Normalizing, 42. In addition to the theoretical rationale given above, space limitations also prevent a lengthy account of the process of contestation by which the basic contours of identity in the military domain emerged, which has already been examined in several excellent English-language studies. For reference, see Berger, “From Sword to Chrysanthemum”; Berger, Cultures esp. chapters 2 and 3; Katzenstein, CN&NS; see also Hook, Militarization&Demilitarization; Oros, Normalizing, chap. 2; Takao, Remilitarising?, chap. 2.

448 This phrase, which bears a striking resemblance to the phrase “a place in the sun” used in Wilhelmine Germany, appears repeatedly in pre-1945 Japan. For examples, see Kahn, Superstate, 33.
449 Various labels have been proposed to describe the ideology that resulted from the wartime experience, the most popular of which include “anti-militarism” and “pacifism.” For an excellent discussion of these terms, see, Berger, “From Sword to Chrysanthemum”; Berger, Cultures. See also Katzenstein, CN&NS; Hook, Militarization&Demilitarization. Following Berger, Oros argues that the idea that Japan is pacifist is a “double fiction.” Not only did those believing in pacifist principles not determine policy choices at any point after 1945, they are also not the dominant intellectual force today. It is also not strictly antimilitarist in that it is accepting of other states’ use of military force; just not Japan’s. Oros, Normalizing, 5.
Japan’s earlier nationalism-infused pursuit of status as a military great power created an opening for the consolidation of a new national identity after 1945.450 The term “military” (guntai 軍隊) became associated in the minds of many Japanese with subjugation and destruction. The cumulative effects of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki intensified anti-militarist sentiment and a pervasive discourse on Japan’s victimization (higaisha ishiki 被害者意識). A half-century later, a leading Japanese scholar observed that “the word guntai (military) does not exist in Japan’s official vocabulary.”451 Significantly, this was true despite recognition that Japan’s defeat had made it a “fourth- or fifth-rate country” in the international social hierarchy.452

Although in the first fifteen years of the postwar period conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) leaders such as Prime Ministers Hatoyama Ichiro (Liberal/LDP; 1954-1956) and Kishi Nobusuke (LDP; 1957-1960) worked hard to set Japan back on a more traditional path by attempting to revise Japan’s so-called “Pacifist” Constitution, acquire nuclear weapons, and push Japan toward remilitarization and reemergence as an independent, military power, inter alia, they soon realized that this was a losing proposition on the home front. More than a decade after the war, even mere “rearmament” was supported by less than one in three Japanese.453

The roles of national identity and popular resistance to those military policies normatively associated with traditional great power status are captured in the dispute over the 1960 revision to the U.S.-Japan security treaty. Despite widespread opposition to the proposed

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revisions to the treaty, \textsuperscript{454} conservative leaders such as then Prime Minister Kishi saw the 1960 revision as an opportunity to make a clean break with the past and to set Japanese military policy on a more ‘normal’ trajectory. Yet the effort backfired. The domestic unrest that their efforts to revise the 1951 treaty fomented made 1960 what one leading historian has called “the most tumultuous year in postwar history.” \textsuperscript{455} During 1959 and 1960, roughly 16 million Japanese took to the streets to protest treaty revision. \textsuperscript{456} Determined to force the treaty through the Diet, the Kishi government abruptly called a vote in the middle of the night in an attempt to bypass the opposition entirely. This tactic failed, and LDP Dietmembers were confronted with such powerful physical resistance from members of the leading opposition Japan Socialist Party that security personnel had to step in to protect them as they \textit{literally} rammed the legislation through the Diet: Diet police had to carry the speaker of the House of Representatives through a throng of opposition party politicians sideways, like a “human ramrod.” \textsuperscript{457}

After this tactic succeeded and the Diet approved revision, the anti-treaty protests grew significantly more intense. In June, during a visit to arrange U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower’s upcoming trip to Japan to celebrate the treaty revision—which would have been the first-ever visit to Japan by a sitting U.S. president—the U.S. press secretary was attacked by an angry mob. The melee that ensued forced a daring rescue by a U.S. military helicopter. When a female university student was killed at a protest five days later Eisenhower’s trip was cancelled and Kishi’s government (and prime-ministership) collapsed.

\textsuperscript{454} Reasons for widespread opposition to the revision of the Security Treaty varied among. Many objected to the perceived “subordinate independence” and reliance on the U.S. nuclear umbrella that the treaty would effectively institutionalize. Others, such as the main opposition Japan Socialist Party (JSP), called for Japan’s security posture to be “unarmed neutrality,” wanted nothing to do with the U.S. “imperialists,” and/or feared entrapment in a larger war as a result of the Treaty.
\textsuperscript{455} Gordon, \textit{Modern History}, 273.
\textsuperscript{457} Gordon, \textit{Modern History}, 274–75.
This widespread domestic unrest, the pandemonium in the Diet at the moment of the May 1960 vote on treaty revision, and the cancellation of President Eisenhower’s trip all left a lasting impression on Japan’s future leaders. The unprecedented domestic chaos of 1960 effectively cemented military affairs’ ignoble status as the ‘third rail’ of Japanese politics and sent a clear message to Japan’s political leaders. LDP leaders subsequently feared mass, radical anti-government movements and widespread social instability.458 They worried that flirtation with controversial military affairs risked a loss of power and the emergence of a Socialist Party majority, which in turn risked abrogation of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and a basic defense posture for Japan of unarmed neutrality (hibuso churitsu 非武装中立).459 These fears shaped the domestic political calculus of LDP rulers throughout postwar Japan’s high-growth period, making them reluctant to risk antagonizing opposition parties—not to mention liberal/pacifist factions inside the LDP itself—by moving too close to the rail.

Taking to heart the political lessons of May and June 1960, Kishi’s successor, Prime Minister Ikeda Hayato (LDP; 1960-1964) made an explicit decision to set politically volatile military affairs aside and instead to focus the government’s and public’s attention on economic growth and other domestic affairs.460 The events of earlier that year had made defense policy “nearly untouchable,” and Ikeda wisely avoided it.461 Ikeda’s politically expedient strategy appears to have paid immediate dividends: the LDP was rewarded at the ballot box with a resounding victory (61-percent of seats) in the 1963 general election. As in other rising powers, public anger about the common problems associated with rapid economic and industrial growth,

461 Samuels, Securing Japan, 34.
such as environmental damage, labor conditions, consumer protections, public safety, and other bread-and-butter issues surged during this period, as change accelerated and became increasingly disruptive. Even foreign scholars—including one future U.S. national security advisor—wrote of Japan’s increasingly “fragile” society.462

Rather than fomenting the kind of assertive nationalism seen in other rising powers that leaders have often attempted to exploit, however, given Japan’s national identity the socially disruptive forces unleashed by these domestic externalities provided Japan’s leaders with additional political incentives to avoid extremely sensitive military affairs.463 Years after the 1960 riots, the rhetoric and policy proposals of would-be revisionist politicians continued to be shaped by fears of popular antipathy toward any perceived attempts to pursue status as a military great power and of widespread domestic instability and electoral defeat if certain normatively-associated “taboos” (tabu タブー) on military affairs were broken. The result was a military trajectory that was in stark contrast to its experience during the Meiji period, to say nothing of the 1930s and 1940s. Although not ‘pacifist’ or ‘anti-military’ in a strict sense given the existence of a de facto Japanese military after 1954 focused exclusively on territorial defense and asymmetric reliance on a security patron, the United States military, was shaped to a remarkable degree by an explicit, albeit abstract, desire to avoid international status as a ‘military great power’—an objective encapsulated in repeated vows by leaders to “never become a military great power” (gunji taikoku to naranai 軍事大国とならない).464

463 Koichi Hamada, Japan 1968: A Reflection Point During the Era of the Economic Miracle, Center Discussion Paper (Yale University: Economic Growth Center, August 1996).
The Rise of Late 20th-century Japan

An extensive treatment of the causes and consequences of Japan’s post-war “economic miracle” is beyond the scope of this chapter.465 Suffice it to say that the rate of Japan’s economic growth and industrial development during the first several decades of the postwar era was record-setting and, in the words of one special envoy to a Japanese prime minister, “scarcely believable.”466 So remarkable was Japan’s economic surge that in May 1960 even the U.S. National Security Council expressed a sense of wonder at Japan’s rapid growth.467 Between 1955 and 1973, Japan’s GNP increased thirteen-fold.468 The sixth most economically productive country in the world by 1964, a mere three years later Japan’s economy had leapfrogged those of West Germany, Great Britain and France to trail only those of the United States and the Soviet Union in size.469 As a testament to its rising power status, Japan was selected to host the Olympics in 1964 and the World Expo in 1970. In the 1970s, Japan’s nominal GNP (USD) quintupled and industrial productivity increased at the fastest rates in the world.470 Within roughly a decade, its economy had surpassed that of the Soviet Union as well as the combined GDP of France and Great Britain. During the 1980s, Japan’s per-capita GNP surpassed that of the United States, it became the world’s second-largest exporter of high-technology, the third-largest manufacturer with 15 percent of world product, the top foreign aid donor, and the largest creditor nation in history.471 A particularly illuminating data point when considering alternative

468 Gordon, Modern History, 244.
470 Gordon, Modern History, 244, 297.
military trajectories that Japan could have taken is the fact that by the 1980s its economy was larger relative to that of the U.S. than the combined economies of Germany and Japan had been in 1939.

Because of this rapid economic and industrial expansion throughout Japan’s rise a wide array of contemporary observers, including world leaders such as Richard Nixon and Zhou Enlai, all believed it was “inevitable” and “natural” that Japan would translate this growing economic and industrial wherewithal into developing autarkic military might and attaining status as a military great power. Yet, contrary to widespread contemporary and theoretical expectations, and in stark contrast to contemporary China, Meiji Japan, and numerous other examples (see Chapter 6), Japan’s rapid economic and industrial development at no point led to a widely-supported push for prestige, status, or respect based on pursuit of the trappings and behaviors associated with status as a great power in the military domain. This was true despite the widely-recognized costs—material and nonmaterial—of not doing so. Consequently, throughout most of its rapid rise, Japan was consistently seen as on the cusp of great power status; but never quite reaching it because of its explicit avoidance of the normatively associated military force development and employment decisions. Given the prevailing norms of the system into which it emerged its remarkable economic, industrial, and technological accomplishments alone were apparently insufficient to be afforded this recognition.

**Baselines: Security Threats during Late 20th-century Japan’s Rise**

Late 20th-century Japan’s avoidance of the expected, or “natural,” course toward greater prestige and independence as a military great power was certainly not due to a lack of acknowledged security threats. In order to lay the groundwork for the examination of alternative

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472 Cited above.
explanations at the end of this chapter, this section provides a brief overview of the major material factors that shaped Japan’s military policy choices.

Throughout the second half of the 20th century Japan faced a highly volatile strategic environment in East Asia. This fact became abundantly clear less than five years after the end of the World War II, when Stalin and Mao signed the Sino-Soviet Alliance (February 1950) and a few months later gave (“tacit”) approval of North Korea’s invasion of anti-Communist South Korea. In the eyes of Washington and Tokyo, these developments crystallized the threat posed by Communist expansionism in East Asia. Even after the 1953 armistice ending the Korean War, the prospect of renewed conflict on the Korean Peninsula—located a little more than 100 miles from Japan’s main islands—remained a major security concern throughout this period. Japan may have lost the Second World War, but geography remained the same as it was a half-century earlier, when Meiji Japan’s leaders had identified the Korean Peninsula as a “dagger pointing at the heart of Japan.” If anything, East-West tensions during the Cold War—which had already exploded in 1950-1953 and persisted long after—and technological change in the weapons of war made such a proximal threat even more severe after 1950.

Other concerns during the first three post-war decades included two major crises in the Taiwan Strait, during which the United States threatened nuclear attacks on the Chinese mainland, making a war over Taiwan not only possible but likely during the 1950s; unprecedented Chinese nuclear and thermonuclear tests in 1964 and 1967, respectively; U.S. tribulations in the Vietnam War, a conflict that U.S. leaders stated was driven at least in part by a desire to protect Japan and one which the Japanese public feared would entrap Japan, as it had all other U.S. treaty allies in the region; and a military clash between China and the Soviet Union in 1969. Entrapment fears during the Taiwan Straits crises and the Vietnam War were soon
complemented by intense fears of abandonment. Major catalysts for abandonment fears included the July 1969 Nixon (Guam) Doctrine, which called on U.S. security treaty partners in East Asia to “assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense” and led to a major reduction in U.S. forces in Japan by 1971, and the first so-called “Nixon Shock” (*Nikuson shokku*, ニクソン・ショック), when President Nixon made his historic visit to Beijing without first stopping in Japan.

Concrete military threats to Japan’s territory and material interests worsened significantly during the 1970s and 1980s, when the scope of security concerns expanded to include nuclear proliferation beyond China, especially following India’s 1974 nuclear test. Most important, however, was the severe threat posed by Soviet expansionism in Asia, including Moscow’s massive buildup of military forces in the Far East and its 1979 invasion of Afghanistan, an act which was Moscow’s first instance of military aggression since 1945 outside its *de facto* sphere of influence. Coupled with extremely provocative actions on the land, waters, and airspace near Japan’s northern islands (including Hokkaido) and vital Japanese sea lanes seen as strategic lifelines in Tokyo, these developments posed major—even existential—threats to Japan’s territory and material interests. Coupled with widespread doubts throughout this period about the willingness and even the ability of the U.S. military to defend Japan against the Soviet Union, these developments appeared to severely weaken the perceived credibility of U.S. extended deterrence.

In addition to the vagaries of the aforementioned threats, Japan’s long-standing territorial disputes with all its neighbors (USSR/Russia, the Koreas, Taipei, and Beijing) were also a source of security concern throughout this period. Perhaps most egregiously, the Soviet Union annexed

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473 Lafeber, “Decline,” 104.
four islands off Hokkaido in the three weeks after Japan’s August 1945 surrender. In 1954, South Korea stationed a coastguard detachment on the disputed Takeshima/Dokdo islands. And in 1971, both Taipei and Beijing began pressing claims to the uninhabited Senkaku (Diaoyutai in Chinese) Islands in the East China Sea.

In terms of economic interests, as an island nation separated entirely from the Eurasian landmass, Japan’s severe vulnerability to interruptions in maritime commerce has been written about extensively and will be discussed here only briefly. One need only look to the role that U.S. trade embargoes against Japan played in leading to the decision of Japan’s leaders to attack Pearl Harbor in 1941, or the (horrifically-named) ‘Operation Starvation’ conducted by the U.S. Navy during the War, for evidence of Japan’s vulnerability to disruptions in critical resource imports and maritime commerce and the effect that vulnerability has on its leaders’ threat perceptions. In the post-war era, this vulnerability persisted. A case in point is Japan’s dependence on oil and gas imports. Oil-hungry Japan possesses very few natural resources and is dependent on imports for almost all of its oil supplies (e.g., 99.7% in 1978—the midpoint of its rise), which provided the vast majority of its primary power during this period (e.g., 72.2% in 1978). The risks and costs of Japan’s reliance on oil imports from the Middle East was brought into sharp relief during the 1970s’ oil crises, the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), and the First Gulf War (1990-1991). As a case in point, the year following the 1973 oil crisis Japan’s annual GDP growth rate collapsed from over 8% to below zero. It should also be noted that Japan’s territorial disputes with its neighbors also involve access to huge potential reserves of oil and natural gas.
3. **Strategic Decision Points**

The following sections examine the factors driving Japan’s military policy decision-making at major strategic decision points during the period of its rapid (miracle) industrialization and economic growth. The analysis begins in 1967, the first year of the ‘Izanami Boom’ of thirteen-percent annual GDP growth, which itself immediately followed double-digit GDP growth throughout the 1960s. It was also the year that Japan’s economy became the world’s third-largest (after those of the United States and Soviet Union), the year that China first tested a thermonuclear weapon, and only two years before President Nixon’s ‘Guam Doctrine’ calling on U.S. allies to be responsible for their own security.

The SDPs appear in chronological order. To the extent space allows, in addition to examining the characteristics of each specific military policy outcome, in each case an effort is also made to isolate the primary causal mechanism(s) at play; i.e., the rationale(s) upon which leaders decided to formulate the policy in question. At the end of this section, consideration of alternative explanations tests whether the causal mechanisms posited by SAT are demonstrably superior to leading alternative theories in explaining late 20th-century Japan’s puzzling military trajectory.

**Arms-Export Ban**

On April 21, 1967, Prime Minister Sato Eisaku (LDP; 1964-1972) declared the Three Principles of Arms Exports (*buki yushutsu sangensoku* 武器輸出三原則). In their original form,

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474 For a book-length overview of Japan’s policies toward arms exports, see Masamitsu Morimoto 森本正崇, *Buki Yushutsu Sangensoku 武器輸出三原則* [*Three Arms-Export Principles*] (Tōkyō: Shinzansha, 2011). Oros also presents an argument about the effects of security identity on Japan’s arms export policy. Oros, *Normalizing*, chap. 4. This section draws on and supplements Oros’ analysis.
the Principles, commonly referred to in aggregate as the Arms Export Ban (AEB), prohibited arms exports to Communist countries, countries under United Nations’ arms export sanctions, and countries “involved or likely to be involved in international conflicts.” Despite Japan’s rapidly worsening strategic environment, the opposition to the AEB from its top trading partner and security benefactor—the United States—and domestic business/industrial interests, and Japan’s growing economic, industrial, and technological competitiveness, the AEB was strengthened significantly in 1976. That year, Prime Minister Takeo Miki (LDP; 1974-1976) announced the unified government view on arms exports (buki yushutsu ni kan suru seifu toitsu kenkai 武器輸出に関する政府統一見解). This view imposed further restrictions on arms exports, including an expansion of the scope of the ban to apply explicitly to all equipment related to arms production.

The Puzzle: Why the AEB went directly against Japan’s material interests

The decision to impose the AEB was puzzling for a number of reasons. It was a ban self-imposed two decades after the War that ran directly counter to Japan’s economic and security interests.

Economic costs and interest group opposition

475 Prime Minister Sato 佐藤内閣総理大臣, “Kokkai Kaigiroku Joho Dai55kai Kokkai Kessan linkai Dai5go 国会会議録情報第 55 回国会決算委員会第 5 号 [Minutes of the House of Representatives, 55th Diet, Audit Committee, No. 5],” April 21, 1967. In the case of the AEB, the government defined “arms” as “things used by militaries, and employed in direct battle,” while the JSDF law defined “arms” as “firearms, explosives, swords and other machines, equipment and devices for the purpose of killing and injuring people or destroying things as means of armed struggle.” Jieitai Nenkan 自衛隊年鑑 [JSDF Annual] (Tokyo: Boei Nipposha, 2012), 67. 476 Prime Minister Miki 三木内閣総理大臣, “Kokkai Kaigiroku Joho Dai77kai Kokkai Yosan linkai Dai18go 国会会議録情報第 77 回国会予算委員会第 18 号 [Minutes of the House of Representatives, 77th Diet, Budget Committee, No. 18],” February 27, 1976. As Oros notes, some ships, aircraft, and small arms had been exported to developing states until this point. And U.S. forces based in Japan were offered exclusions. Oros, Normalizing, 98, 107.
In the 1950s Japan’s business community supported remilitarization in order to improve the technological foundation not only of Japan’s military but also of domestic industry writ-large through ‘spin-offs.’ Pressure on the political leadership to allow arms sales abroad came from both the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) and industry leaders throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In 1962 the defense industry lobbied Prime Minister Ikeda to allow foreign military sales. But Ikeda—concerned about public opinion in the wake of the 1960 riots—refused, allowing only nonlethal equipment (e.g., uniforms and medicine) to be exported. The 1967 AEB prevented domestic firms from cooperating with foreign companies on defense technology, which weakened the competitiveness of Japanese companies by limiting opportunities for international cooperation in research and development and access to the associated “spin-off” technologies. The ban also denied domestic firms access to international arms markets, in which they were expected to be extremely competitive given Japan’s by then widely-recognized industrial and technological prowess.

The AEB also appears to have run counter to the interests of the business and industrial sectors that accounted for most of the ruling LDP’s political funds. Unsurprisingly, industry protested the ban and called for it to be overturned. Furthermore, leaders had learned from past experience what arms exports could do for the economy. During and after World War I, arms and munitions exports had caused an economic boom by providing major stimulus to Japanese

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477 For an overview of defense industrial indigenization (産化), see Richard J. Samuels, “Rich Nation, Strong Army”: National Security and the Technological Transformation of Japan (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994) esp. chapter 5; Michael J. Green, Arming Japan (Columbia University Press, 1998). This ‘technonationalism’ could potentially explain why Japan would be opposed to arms imports, but it cannot account for the arms export ban, which reduces opportunities for subsidies and greater independence, or for the huge defense inefficiencies that result from either. For a similar argument, see Oros, Normalizing, 92.

478 Samuels, RNSA, chap. 5.


480 Ibid.
industry. During the Occupation era and into the mid-1950s “special procurement” (tokuju 特需) by the U.S. military was a primary force behind the rehabilitation of Japan’s economy and provided enormous technological benefits to Japanese industry. Arms sales to America surged from seven million yen in 1952 to fifteen billion yen two years later. After the outbreak of the Korean War and continuing after the 1953 armistice top leaders in the U.S. government supported Japanese rearmament and revitalization of the arms industry. In fact, the U.S. Mutual Security Assistance Program required Japan to rearm in order to receive benefits. In 1953 Japanese industrial leaders published a report calling on Japan to rebuild the military to 1940 levels by the end of the decade.

During the 1960s the support for arms exports from business and industry lobby continued. In 1965, a 500-page defense industry report commissioned by MITI explicitly called for the promotion of arms exports to expand Japan’s defense production base. Unsurprisingly, the Japan Defense Agency (JDA) seconded these recommendations. Yet two years later, fears of public anger as a result of the publicly divisive, yet immensely profitable, cooperation with the U.S. military during the Vietnam War, caused the Sato Administration to explicitly prohibit arms exports. Industry renewed its push again soon after in the 1970s and repeatedly tested the ban. The Miki government’s response was the 1976 unified statement, which extended the scope of the ban to include all equipment related to arms production. Again, industry continued

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481 Samuels, RNSA, 94.
482 Ibid., 133–137.
483 Samuels, Securing Japan, 33.
484 Samuels, RNSA, 138.
486 Samuels, RNSA, 145.
487 Ibid., 169.
489 Samuels, RNSA, 174–176.
its lobbying effort, in 1978 going so far as to ask for permission to build warships for foreign navies to address issues of overcapacity. It even proposed constructing aircraft carriers for the U.S. Navy as a way to fight domestic recession and to master new technologies.\textsuperscript{490}

Although it is impossible to calculate the immense costs of the AEB for Japan’s economy and industrial competitiveness, not to mention severe reductions in international political influence, some basic comparative statistics on arms sales are illuminating, at least with regard to the former point. Whereas in the 1950-2012 period the governments of the United States, United Kingdom, and France generated 628-, 133- and 113- billion USD (in constant 1990 dollars) for their respective economies from arms sales, Japan’s arms exports during this 63-year period generated a paltry, and cumulative, total of only 1.9-billion USD.\textsuperscript{491}

\textbf{Military development inefficiencies}

Beyond self-inflicted economic and industrial costs, the AEB also went against Japan’s own security interests. It effectively prohibited joint development and production of weapons technologies with the United States, Japan’s sole security partner and a superpower with the world’s most advanced military. It also limited the JSDF’s access to the most advanced weapons and defense technologies from other countries, severely hamstringing the efficiency and efficacy of Japan’s force development. In addition to denying Japanese firms access to the most advanced technologies, the ban also caused gross inefficiencies and high weapons costs because Japanese firms were denied the benefits of the economies of scale upon which defense industries of major military powers (and arms exporters) such as the United States, Soviet Union/Russia, Britain, France, etc., rely. The relatively small size of Japan’s domestic arms market—a direct result of

\textsuperscript{490} Ibid., 180.
Tokyo’s low defense spending and the fact that the JSDF’s exceptionally high personnel costs accounted for more than half of the defense budget—made this policy especially deleterious.

In short, the AEB significantly decreased the ‘bang for the buck’ of each (limited) yen the Japanese government allocated to defense spending.\textsuperscript{492} It also had significant diplomatic costs; including not only a negative impact on Tokyo’s relationship with Washington but also a significant reduction in Japan’s global political influence, especially in the Middle East, a rapidly expanding arms market and a highly volatile region upon which Japan depended for roughly 80 percent of its oil imports.\textsuperscript{493}

\textit{Reasons for the AEB and its persistence (and subsequent strengthening)}

Given the aforementioned material costs of this government policy, as well as widespread opposition from the two outside actors often cited as having significant influence over the LDP—business and industrial lobbyists on the one hand and the United States on the other—why did the Japanese government impose such an extensive ban on arms exports?

The 1967 AEB came immediately following the first-ever election in which the LDP garnered less than 50-percent of the popular vote, and was a response to growing public opposition to Japan’s (mostly indirect) involvement in the conflict in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{494} For its part, the 1976 strengthening of the AEB was an effort to court middle voters and occurred in a domestic political context in which many LDP leaders feared that the party’s grip on power was directly threatened by the opposition—indeed, the LDP lost its majority that December.\textsuperscript{495} In an effort to appeal to public opinion, Miki’s February 1976 statement announcing the expansion of the AEB

\textsuperscript{492} “Exports.”
\textsuperscript{493} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{494} Oros, \textit{Normalizing}, 104–106.
\textsuperscript{495} Ibid., 109.
drew an explicit link between Japan’s national identity as a “peace nation” and its associated desire to avoid support for international conflicts—even those in direct support of its U.S. security benefactor.\footnote{The 1976 statement explicitly links the expansion of the AEB to “Japan’s standpoint as a peace nation” and accordingly, “in order to avoid supporting international disputes” (平和国家としてのわが国の立場からそれによって国際紛争等を助長することを回避するため). Prime Minister Miki 三木内閣総理大臣, “Kokkai Kaigiroku Joho Dai77kai Kokkai Yosan linkai Dai18go 国会会議録情報第 77 回国会予算委員会第 18 号 [Minutes of the House of Representatives, 77th Diet, Budget Committee, No. 18],” February 27, 1976.} In stark contrast to the behavior of every other U.S. security partner in East Asia, all of which contributed troops to the Vietnam War, widespread antipathy within Japan to any involvement in any overseas disputes, coupled with concerns that Japan’s leaders would embark on a path to military great power status, appears to have effectively compelled Japan’s leaders to reverse course and abandon arms exports—at the peak of its rapid economic and industrial expansion.

Japan’s leaders implemented the AEB despite recognizing the material costs of the policy. For example, in 1976 Miki pushed the resolution through despite public protests from his own cabinet’s MITI minister.\footnote{“Exports.”} Consistent as it was with a widely-held identity as a “peace nation,” despite these material costs in subsequent years the AEB proved widely popular among the general public. In March 1981 both houses of the Diet passed a resolution reaffirming the ban and demanding its effective implementation.\footnote{Tsuneo Akaha, “Japan’s Nonnuclear Policy,” \textit{Asian Survey} 24, no. 8 (1984): 861.}

Under immense pressure from Washington to create an exemption for limited exchange of defense-related technologies with the United States, the AEB was modified in 1983. However, the “fundamental objective” upon which the AEB was originally based, i.e., “refraining from aggravating international disputes,” remained in place.\footnote{Oros, \textit{Normalizing}, sec. Appendix 5.} Furthermore, the government’s official position was that weapons technology transfer to the United States was governed by a different

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496 The 1976 statement explicitly links the expansion of the AEB to “Japan’s standpoint as a peace nation” and accordingly, “in order to avoid supporting international disputes” (平和国家としてのわが国の立場からそれによって国際紛争等を助長することを回避するため). Prime Minister Miki 三木内閣総理大臣, “Kokkai Kaigiroku Joho Dai77kai Kokkai Yosan linkai Dai18go 国会会議録情報第 77 回国会予算委員会第 18 号 [Minutes of the House of Representatives, 77th Diet, Budget Committee, No. 18],” February 27, 1976.
497 “Exports.”
\end{quote}
treaty—the 1954 bilateral Mutual Defense Agreement, not the AEB.\textsuperscript{500} Regardless, the 1983 loosening of the ban was opposed by 69 percent of Japanese voters; only 15 percent supported it.\textsuperscript{501} Due in no small part to this opposition very few transfers actually occurred.\textsuperscript{502}

As a case in point of the normative power and longevity of the AEB, in September 1990, less than two months after Iraq invaded Kuwait, Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki (LDP; 1989-1991) made a speech to the UN General Assembly in which he called for a global ban on arms exports and suggested that past exporters of arms to Iraq were at least partially responsible for Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait.\textsuperscript{503} Although he did not explicitly cite U.S. arms sales to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War, he repeated the link between arms exports and the war in a Diet speech the following month.\textsuperscript{504} This was an important event for many reasons, not the least of which is the fact that it is clear evidence of Japan’s desire for greater international standing and to shape global norms, but in a manner that was strictly non-military in nature and which aimed to move other major powers toward conformity with Japan’s own non-military ideals.\textsuperscript{505}

The “Four Pillars of Japan’s Nuclear Policy” and Japan’s “National Mission” As a Non-Nuclear Power

During the second half of the 1960s and in the immediate aftermath of China’s first-ever nuclear (October 16, 1964) and thermonuclear (June 17, 1967) tests, the Japanese public grew increasingly concerned about the nuclear intentions of Prime Minister Sato Eisaku. Sato was the

\textsuperscript{500} Akaha, “Nonnuclear,” 862.
\textsuperscript{503} Tamamoto, “Trial,” 97.
\textsuperscript{504} Prime Minister Kaifu 海部内閣総理大臣, “Kokkai Kaigiroku Joho Dai119kai Kokkai Honkaiji Dai1go 国会会議録情報第 119 回国会本会議第 1 号 [Minutes of the House of Representatives, 119th Diet, Regular Session, No. 1],” October 12, 1990.
\textsuperscript{505} Tamamoto, “Trial,” 97.
brother of deposed former Prime Minister Kishi—the political casualty of the 1960 anti-treaty protests—and expressed interest in Japan developing its own nuclear deterrent. Despite his recognition of the growing threat that China’s now-proven nuclear weapons program posed to Japan, in response to fervent domestic opposition to nuclear weapons Sato made two speeches to the Diet, on December 11, 1967 and January 30, 1968, in which he articulated what would later become known as the Four Pillars of Japan’s Nuclear Policy: to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy; to promote global nuclear disarmament; to rely on U.S. nuclear extended deterrence against all forms of nuclear attack, and the so-called “Three Non-nuclear Principles” (hikaku sangensoku 非核三原則): non-possession, non-production, and non-introduction (into Japanese territory) (tsukurazu, motazu, mochikomasezu 作らず、持たず、持ち込ませず) of nuclear weapons.506

Given his apparent personal pro-nuclear leanings, Sato unsurprisingly did not intend for these pillars to lock Japan into an anti-nuclear weapon policy. In fact, his chief secretary later wrote that Sato’s December 1967 remarks, which contained only the non-possession, non-production, and non-introduction principles (the “three non-nuclear principles), were intended merely as an expression of “sentiment” (センチメント).507 Sato also engineered a loophole in the four pillars—his speech committed Japan to abide by the three non-nuclear principles conditional on Japan’s security being guaranteed by the first, second, and third pillars. Additionally, and significantly, although adopted by the Diet in 1971, the pillars were never

made into law. Nevertheless, domestic political pressures because of Japan’s identity as a non-nuclear ‘peace nation’ and widespread antipathy to these weapons of mass destruction ensured that within a few years the non-nuclear principles became what proponents referred to as the nation’s *kokuze* (国是), a term which has no English equivalent and which implies that these principles are an inextricable part of Japan’s quintessential ‘national mission’ or ‘national policy.’ A rough American equivalent would be support for democracy as a ‘City on a Hill.’ All subsequent prime ministers faced intense public pressure to reaffirm the non-nuclear principles as *kokuze* soon after taking office. All eventually did so, in several notable cases apparently against their will. In May 1982, fifteen years after Sato’s speech, and as Japan’s economy was on the verge of passing that of the Soviet Union’s in size, a unanimous resolution passed by both houses of the Diet formally enshrined the principles as *kokuze* and as a “universal wish of our country’s people” (*wagakuni kokumin no icchi shita ganbo* 我が国国民の一致した願望).

**The Puzzle: Why Japan “should have” gotten nuclear weapon**

Most, if not all, of the non-material and material rationales found in the international relations literature for why states should seek to acquire nuclear weapons applied in the case of late 20th-century Japan. These rationales were also supported by contemporary discourse about

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509 “Hikaku Sangensoku Shusho No ‘Kokuze’ Bokashi 非核三原則 首相の「国是」ぼかし [Three Non-Nuclear Principles; PM’s Ambiguous Stance],” *Asahi Shimbun* 朝日新聞, February 20, 1983.  
510 The first line of the resolution reads: “The promotion of global disarmament centered on nuclear disarmament is the universal wish of our country’s people, who desire eternal peace and have held up the three non-nuclear principles as national policy [‘kokuze’]. [It is also] a shared desire of all peoples who hope for true peace and security.” (Original Japanese: “核軍縮を中心とする世界の軍縮の促進は、恒久の平和を願い非核三原則を国是として堅持する我が国国民の一致した願望であり、真の平和と安全を希求する諸国民の共通した念願でもある。”) Gaimusho 外務省 [MOFA], “(Canko) Hikaku Sengensoku Ni Kan Suru Kokkai Ketsugi （参考）非核三原則に関する国会決議 [(Reference) Diet Resolutions Concerning 3 Non-Nuclear Principles],” accessed July 9, 2013, http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/kaku/gensoku/ketsugi.html.

almost entirely pull out U.S. naval forces from Japan for budgetary reasons—a decision which reportedly “shocked” the Japanese government. The combined effect of these developments was to significantly reduce the perceived credibility of the U.S. commitment to defend Japan and, by extension, the credibility of the ‘nuclear umbrella.’\textsuperscript{513} Thus, Japan’s leaders chose to eschew nuclear weapons during a period in which perceived threats had surged while alliance reliability was arguably at an all-time low. Okimoto writes in 1975 that most Japanese defense specialists doubted the ‘umbrella theory’ and shared French skepticism about U.S. commitment to its allies.\textsuperscript{514}

Meanwhile, by this time the supply side of the equation was no longer a major issue. Once its leaders gave the green light, Japan possessed the economic and technological capability to develop nuclear weapons within several years. A second-strike capability also appeared to be affordable. A study published in the 1970s by a U.S. expert showed that Japan could build a fleet of missile-carrying submarines for a few billion dollars, and a nuclear force by increasing defense spending by a moderate amount.\textsuperscript{515} In short, by the mid- to late-1960s whether Japan would develop nuclear weapons clearly had become a purely political decision.

Unsurprisingly, many contemporary observers expected Japan to ‘go nuclear.’ In the 1960s the U.S. Defense Department expected that once China got the bomb Japan’s attitude


\textsuperscript{514} Okimoto, “Japan’s Non-Nuclear Policy,” 325.

\textsuperscript{515} Roger W. Gale, “Nuclear Power and Japan’s Proliferation Option,” \textit{Asian Survey} 18, no. 11 (November 1, 1978): 1131.
toward nuclear weapons would change. A number of scholars argued that Japan’s nuclear “allergy” (arerugi アレルギー) was “eroding” and predicted that its leaders would soon pursue a “Gaullist” path; including the development of an independent nuclear deterrent. Such an independent course was expected to please both leftists, who sought independence from the U.S., and rightists, who desired enhanced national prestige, international influence, and independent military power. Indeed, in 1974 a U.S. military officer wrote that Japan’s lack of nuclear weapons weakened its diplomatic influence by removing “teeth” in international negotiations. In his view, “super-power status,” for which he believed the possession of nuclear weapons was a condition, was often a necessary factor for success in such negotiations. Furthermore, there were growing concerns in the government about the surging costs of JSDF personnel and conventional weapons. Some argued that nuclear weapons provided more ‘bang for the buck.’ (As they had for U.S. President Eisenhower under “New Look” a decade earlier, many argued that nuclear weapons offered a relatively cost-effective, potent deterrent against external threats.) Finally, throughout this period a long-serving pro-nuclear prime minister—Sato—held the reins of power. All these factors, combined with the government’s long-standing public recognition of limited ‘defensive’ nuclear arms as constitutional, led to serious debates in the upper echelons of power about whether Japan should acquire nuclear weapons. It was therefore not surprising

519 Gale, “Nuclear Power and Japan’s Proliferation Option,” 1132.
520 See “Alternative Explanations” section, below.
that many contemporaneous observers considered Japan’s acquisition of nuclear weapons to be “almost certain.”

The manifold, and manifest, material and non-material incentives for Japan to ‘go nuclear’ make its leaders’ series of decisions in the late 1960s to essentially self-impose a de facto ban on nuclear weapons at the peak of its decade of double-digit economic growth and with growing threats right next door very puzzling from the perspective of existing theory. Contrary to widespread belief, the available evidence suggests that ‘nuclear hedging’ was not a major factor in Japan’s civilian nuclear energy program; and there is little evidence it ever existed as a coherent national strategy. Nor was Japan able to develop a nuclear deterrent ‘overnight,’ even if a political decision had been made.

When one ponders the real-world consequences of Japan’s decision whether to develop nuclear weapons—which a 1966 New York Times article predicted would be “awesome”—it is clear that this ranked among the most significant strategic decisions of the second half of the 20th century, of any country.

Reasons for the Four Non-nuclear Pillars and their Persistence

To be sure, Washington’s provision of extended deterrence was a major factor in Japan’s avoidance of nuclear weapons during this period. But for both theoretical and empirical reasons it is at best an incomplete explanation of Japan’s political decision. As leading IR scholars have

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524 The article asks “without military power, and especially without nuclear military power, can Japan play the role that her position would justify and can she maintain the position without nuclear weapons?” “Japan Ponders.”
argued, even during the Cold War China, Britain, France, and other secondary states with the option to rely on a nuclear umbrella provided by a ‘superpower’ security benefactor have decided to hedge by developing indigenous nuclear deterrents. They have chosen to do so primarily for two reasons familiar to any Realist theory of IR: to mitigate the risk of abandonment and the uncertainties of political subordination under international anarchy, and to minimize defense allocations in the face of major resource constraints. In other words, even Britain and France, full mutual defense treaty allies of the United States—a category to which Japan has never belonged—with significantly less wealth and technological prowess than Japan by the late 1960s, feared abandonment sufficiently to decide that they had best not take their chances by relying on U.S. extended deterrence. Nor was Japan’s exceptional path due to deeper trust in its U.S. security benefactor. As discussed below, it is clear that throughout this period both Japanese leaders and the public appear to have widely perceived the U.S. nuclear umbrella as unreliable.

If not because of faith in America’s extended deterrent, why did Japan’s leaders choose to eschew nuclear weapons? Hymans offers a compelling alternative argument about shrinking institutional space given the gradually proliferating institutional obstacles to policy change on nuclear issues. Yet his study focuses almost exclusively on these institutions and ‘veto players’ as causal variables, overlooking the likelihood that they themselves are outcomes of some more fundamental factor, rather than causes in and of themselves. While institutional obstacles no

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526 Jacques E.C. Hymans, “Veto Players, Nuclear Energy, and Nonproliferation: Domestic Institutional Barriers to a Japanese Bomb,” *International Security* 36, no. 2 (2011): 154–89. A veto-player argument cannot explain single-digit public support for nuclear weapons the same year as the three principles were first put in place. It cannot explain the principles’ content or the overwhelming and longstanding support they received, much less their elevation to *kokuze*. It also cannot account for the clear taboo on discussing nuclear matters openly, even something
doubt capture part of the story, and are certainly one factor accounting for policy rigidity over time, they cannot adequately account for the more fundamental issue during the period examined in this chapter—the initial 1967 policy decision itself, which pro-nuclear Sato himself attributed to public ‘sentiment.’

In short, the first-order cause of Japan’s avoidance of nuclear weapons appears to be the fact that it was a core manifestation of widely-held national identity as a non-nuclear ‘peace nation’ and a direct result of the opposition of a critical mass of the public to any military policies seen as reflecting status as a military great power. Despite interest among Japanese leaders in developing nuclear weapons in order to enhance Japan’s security as external threats worsened and economic, industrial, and technological capabilities surged in the extremely high-growth 1960s, widespread public hostility effectively took this force development option off the table. A secret 1968/1970 report commissioned by the Prime Minister’s Cabinet Information Research Office (naikaku chosashitsu 内閣調査室) to assess the costs and benefits of going nuclear is instructive. While the report listed several practical reasons for Japan not to develop nuclear weapons, all of the listed reasons also hold in the cases of other states whose leaders chose to develop independent nuclear deterrents. Furthermore, the conclusion of the report may have been pre-determined. According to Kase, the report was commissioned so the government would have ammunition for countering the arguments of pro-nuclear conservatives and making a concise case for why nukes would be “undesirable” for Japan. The fact that this report’s existence was secret until the mid-1990s is surprising given that it was not an official government document, was written by four university academics, and contains no sensitive

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military information.\textsuperscript{528} One of the four authors explained that the government kept the report secret due to concerns about popular anti-nuclear sentiment and fears of popular backlash in the run-up to renewal of the 1960 U.S.-Japan mutual security treaty in 1970, as well as concerns that the Japanese media would respond “hysterically” to this “taboo issue.”\textsuperscript{529}

So domestically sensitive was the topic of a nuclear deterrent, in fact, that even top U.S. security and intelligence officials acknowledged that the chaos in Tokyo after the 1960 revision of the security treaty made even raising the issue of storing U.S. nuclear weapons in Japan, which would have enhanced extended deterrence, “unwise.” Because of these domestic political sensitivities in Japan, the topic was removed from the agenda for President John F. Kennedy’s 1961 summit meeting with then Prime Minister Ikeda.\textsuperscript{530} In a January 1965 meeting with U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson, a mere two months after China’s first-ever nuclear weapons test, Sato made clear that he wished for Japan to acquire a nuclear deterrent but lamented that “Japanese public opinion will not permit [nuclear weapons] at present.”\textsuperscript{531} Later that year, he bemoaned the fact that Japanese public opinion about military affairs—especially nuclear weapons—prevented a frank discussion of Japan’s security options and stated that for this reason Japan had “no intention of possessing any nuclear arms.”\textsuperscript{532} Sato considered the topic of nuclear weapons so politically volatile, in fact, that he feared that even a public request for Washington merely to reaffirm the U.S. nuclear umbrella could cause him major problems domestically.\textsuperscript{533}

\textsuperscript{528} Kase, “Costs&Benefits,” 58.
\textsuperscript{529} Ibid., 56.
\textsuperscript{530} Ota, “Quagmire,” 5.
\textsuperscript{531} Secret State Department memorandum; cited in Campbell and Sunohara, “JTTU,” 222.
\textsuperscript{532} “Sato Sees U.S.-J In Accord.”
\textsuperscript{533} Internal government memorandum; cited in Ota, “Quagmire,” 10.
Other LDP politicians shared both Sato’s frustration with the public’s so-called “nuclear allergy” and concern about the potentially catastrophic implications for Japan’s national security.\(^{534}\)

Top political leaders were not alone in being frustrated with the public’s overwhelming opposition to nuclear weapons. As noted above, one of the three non-nuclear principles was “non-introduction” of nuclear weapons into Japanese territory. In effect, this principle not only forbade Japan’s leaders from developing an indigenous nuclear deterrent; it also forbade the placement of foreign (read: U.S.) nuclear weapons on Japanese territory, which prevented Japan’s leaders from even effectively exploiting the U.S. provision of extended deterrence. JSDF leaders appear to have been deeply frustrated with public opposition to nuclear weapons, opposition which they saw as—at a minimum—significantly weakening the U.S. nuclear umbrella. Especially disconcerting at this time was the public’s demand for “non-nuclear reversion” of Okinawa—i.e., a demand that the U.S. return Okinawa to Japanese administration along with a guarantee not to introduce nuclear weapons into the prefecture. JSDF leaders reasonably judged that this condition ran directly against Japan’s security interests by compromising the U.S. commitment to defend Japan, which in turn sent a dangerous signal to Japan’s neighbors.\(^{535}\) Political sensitivities were so acute, however, that Japan’s political and military leaders effectively judged there was no alternative. They even limited how the JSDF could prepare for a nuclear attack against Japan’s territory. For example, a mere three lines of the Ground Self-defense Force’s (JGSDF) 1969 training manual discussed nuclear weapons.\(^{536}\)

In stark contrast to other states during this period of nuclear proliferation, Japan’s leaders lamented that the Japanese public generally expressed little interest in the concept of nuclear

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\(^{536}\) Akaha, “Nonnuclear,” 869.
Three years after China’s first nuclear test and the same year that Beijing first tested a thermonuclear weapon, a 1967 poll registered support among the Japanese public for nuclear arms in the single-digits (8.9%). Only a few months after the Three Principles were articulated, Agriculture Minister Kuraishi Tadao was forced to resign for saying that he wished Japan had nuclear weapons in order to deter the Soviet Union from provocative actions against Japan. Before, and throughout the rest of the high-growth period, fears of dismissal for even suggesting the nuclear option effectively silenced would-be supporters among elected officials, bureaucrats, and especially JSDF personnel. In the years immediately after the Four Pillars were announced, public opposition to nuclear weapons increased. Politicians’ stated views evolved to reflect this widespread anti-nuclear sentiment—in addition to almost total opposition by the four opposition parties, nearly half of members of supporters of the ruling conservative LDP came to publicly oppose nuclear weapons. In 1981, 82-percent of respondents to a poll by conservative daily Yomiuri Shimbun stated they opposed Japan’s possession of nuclear weapons.

In addition to generally rejecting deterrence-based rationales for nuclear weapons, the Japanese public also generally expressed little interest in following France’s—or, later, India’s—nationalism-infused path to nuclear weapons. Such efforts were widely associated with the pursuit of the very military power-based great power status that large majorities of the Japanese

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537 Wakaizumi, “Problem,” 79.
538 “Japanese Wrestling.”
539 Sorenson, Japanese Policy and Nuclear Arms, 22.
542 Kamiya, “Nuclear Japan: Oxymoron or Coming Soon?,” 66.
public appears to have abhorred. In contrast to France and India, as well as many other powers, where nationalism pushed leaders toward development of an autarkic nuclear weapons capability, Japanese nationalism was a complicated mix of a similar desire for independence from America, coupled with deeply-held anti-nuclear sentiment. Violent protests against the port call of a U.S. aircraft carrier in 1968 were a concrete manifestation of this form of nationalism, and sent yet another signal to LDP leaders that if they wanted to maintain power and prevent a pacifistic party advocating unarmed neutrality from taking control of the government, they needed to avoid military policies anathema to this national identity. Despite a decade of double-digit annual GDP growth rates throughout the 1960s—a decade during which GNP tripled—widespread opposition to a ‘normal’ military trajectory was so powerful that even during the campaign for the July 1972 election for the presidency of the (conservative) ruling LDP—an election in which the opposition parties had no vote—all four candidates issued long statements in which they vowed never to take Japan on the path to status as a military great power. And the winner, Tanaka Kakuei, vowed to place pacifism at the center of his foreign policy.

Toward an Alternate Path

Despite the manifold strategic, technological, economic, diplomatic, and prestige-based rationales for going nuclear, Japanese leaders chose to eschew nuclear weapons—repeatedly—throughout Japan’s late 20th-century rise. Widespread public opposition was based first and foremost in Japan’s historical experiences, which had shaped its national identity as a non-

543 Indeed, a secretly government-commissioned report concluded that the main reason that France opted for an independent nuclear weapons capability for political reasons—namely, to regain the great power status that it had lost because of World War II and the loss of its colonial possessions. Kase, “Costs&Benefits,” 62.
545 Kusunoki, “Sato Cabinet,” 47.
nuclear peace nation. It was also linked to a widely-held desire to avoid the normatively associated trappings of what many Japanese saw as an anachronistic view of international politics that afforded social prestige to those countries with these despicable weapons. In a prescient 1966 article, scholar Wakaizumi Kei, Sato’s personal envoy to the Johnson and Nixon administrations, wrote that the Japanese public’s hatred—“even to the point of neurosis”—of nuclear weapons was “the most important and conclusive deterrent” not only to Japan’s nuclear armament, but even to the mere “consideration of national nuclear weapons” by political leaders. It turned out that he was right.

Seven years later, after the non-nuclear principles had been made explicit and he had served as Sato’s special envoy on nuclear affairs, Wakaizumi explained Japan’s eschewing of nuclear weapons as rooted in concern about a perceived global norm that the possession of nuclear weapons was “the passport to big-power status and […] prestige.” Accordingly, he wrote, Japan rejected the notion “that a country must maintain armaments in order to seek disarmament” and sought to “oppose the nuclear ‘chauvinism’ of the nuclear big powers that reflects their ‘arrogance of power.’”

In short, domestic political incentives rooted in national identity as a peace nation appear to have served as the primary force compelling conservative Japanese leaders to promulgate and to subsequently uphold the Four Non-nuclear Principles, even as they often bemoaned the price Japan paid for its lack of an independent nuclear weapons capability and its reliance on U.S. extended deterrence. The risks and costs appear to have been paid in several areas, including in terms of national security, diplomatic and political leverage, independence from America and international prestige. Japan’s leaders were unable to openly debate the impact of the Cold War

547 Wakaizumi, “Problem,” 78.
nuclear competition on Japan’s security. They also did not openly discuss the implications of U.S. force posture changes for extended deterrence. In stark contrast, in response to public pressure they effectively weakened extended deterrence by publicly refusing to give Washington permission to base U.S. nuclear forces in Japan. This occurred at a time when European allies were debating greater control over nuclear doctrine. Japan went in the opposite direction. The U.S. government grew frustrated, to the point that the Nixon Administration even suggested that it would help Japan acquire its own ‘defensive’ nuclear weapons.

On the prestige side of things, in 1971 future prime minister and recently-resigned MITI Minister Miyazawa Kiichi expressed his frustration with public opposition to nuclear weapons and lamented Japan’s continued relegation to status as a “second-rate” nation as a result. Drawing a direct link to historical memories as causal factor, Miyazawa called on future Japanese generations to become “their own masters” by “build[ing] their own umbrella” once memories of World War II had receded.

Miyazawa was to be disappointed, however. Sato’s 1967/8 articulation of the Four Non-Nuclear Principles effectively ended the debate about a possible nuclear future for rising Japan. A decade later (1982), the Diet would unanimously adopt a resolution that declared Japan’s non-nuclear principles to be Japan’s kokuze. By the 1980s even high-ranking U.S. defense officials appear to have recognized that the degree of popular opposition within Japan to nuclear weapons made it “unthinkable” that Japan would acquire them.

551 Quoted in Ibid., 17–18.
552 “Hikaku Sangensoku Shusho No ‘Kokuze’ Bokashi 非核三原則 首相の「国是」ぼかし [Three Non-Nuclear Principles; PM’s Ambiguous Stance].”
553 Author’s meeting with former U.S. defense official. March 2013.
Paradoxically, and in stark contrast to the trajectories of many other rising powers, as Japan become more industrially, economically, and technologically capable, popular opposition to nuclear weapons increased. In one of history’s ironic twists, once pro-nuclear Prime Minister Sato would be awarded the 1974 Nobel Peace Prize for the very non-nuclear principles he had privately dismissed as “nonsense” five years earlier.\textsuperscript{554} At his acceptance speech, Sato explicitly recognized, accurately, that Japan had “made the firm choice not to be armed with nuclear weapons” despite “ha[ving] the capacity to produce nuclear arms.” He attributed this path, which he noted was an exceptional one for “a major power like Japan,” to a “national consensus not to be armed with nuclear weapons” and an associated desire to “renounce[e] the use of force in the settlement of international disputes.”\textsuperscript{555} In short, the widespread expectations of IR theory, as well as the predictions of contemporary observers that Japan’s rapid growth in the 1960s and 1970s would inevitably result in Japan’s emergence as a nuclear-armed military great power were clearly off the mark. National identity as a ‘peace nation,’ coupled with perceived normative associations of nuclear weapons with international status as a ‘military great power,’ appear to have effectively trumped other security and material interests.

The Late-1970s/Early-1980s Soviet Threat and Japan’s ‘Non-buildup’\textsuperscript{556}

Japan’s ‘low-posture’ military policies during the late 20\textsuperscript{th}-century faced arguably their greatest challenge in the 1970s and early 1980s, as the Soviet Union’s military buildup in the Far East posed an increasingly direct and existential threat to Japan’s territorial security, sea lanes,

\textsuperscript{554} Campbell and Sunohara, “JTTU,” 223.
\textsuperscript{556} Term in quotation marks borrowed from Tetsuya Kataoka, “Japan’s Defense Non-Buildup: What Went Wrong?,” International Journal on World Peace 2, no. 2 (April 1985): 10–33. While this term is clearly hyperbolic, the basic point remains.
and economic interests. The psychological and material impact of Washington’s post-Vietnam reduction of forces in East Asia and the harsh reality of the rapidly changing and volatile military balance between the United States and the Soviet Union exacerbated this sense of insecurity and severely reduced the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence. These developments also occurred in the wake of President Nixon’s 1969 “Guam Doctrine” speech, which called on U.S. security partners in East Asia to take greater responsibility for their own defense, and fears of ‘Japan passing’ following Nixon’s surprising trip to China. During this period, longstanding concerns about the U.S.’ ability and willingness to defend Japan in a crisis deepened, prompting a major debate in Japan about its low defense spending and limited military capabilities.

To be sure, in response to these threats and concerns, Japan’s leaders certainly did implement several important changes to military policy, including low-level cooperation with the United States military. From the perspectives of the leading alternative explanations and policy (as well as that of Washington), however, this period was most remarkable for the changes to force development and employment that did not occur. Major shifts to military policy were avoided despite leaders’ concerted efforts to catalyze a major military buildup and to transform Japan’s regional and global role in international security affairs. Simply put, Japan’s military policy responses to its rapidly worsening strategic environment appear to have been severely ‘suboptimal’ from any Realist or other materialist perspective.

*The Soviet threat*

Throughout the period of Japan’s rise the Soviet Union posed a clear and present danger to Japan’s territory and material interests. Moscow invaded and annexed several of Japan’s northern islands (the “Northern Territories”) in the days immediately following Japan’s August 1945 surrender. These islands, which Japan still claims as its own, have remained under
Moscow’s effective control to this day. The dispute has prevented Tokyo and Moscow from signing a peace treaty to end World War II. Japan’s longstanding sense of threat vis-à-vis the Soviet Union reached a peak during the 1970s and 1980s as Moscow launched an unprecedented buildup of military power in the Far East. In 1980 even the state-run media of Japan’s erstwhile (and Communist) adversary, China, publicly warned Japan about the dangerous persistence of its “taboo concerning defense issues” (fangwei wenti shi ‘jinji’ de wenti 防卫问题是‘禁忌’的问题) and pointed out that “the facts demonstrate that the [Soviet] hegemonists’ arms expansion and war preparation are at Japan’s door.”  

Beyond the Soviet Union’s occupation of islands Japan continued to claim as its own, what were the specifics of the Soviet military threat to Japan during this period? In 1977, the Soviet Union announced an extension of its territorial waters to 200 miles in an effort to enhance its claim to the Northern Territories. The following June, Soviet air, naval, and marine forces staged a mock invasion of an island 125 kilometers north of Hokkaido. By August, Moscow had deployed to the Far East 31 divisions (~300,000 troops), 2040 warplanes, 755 ships (including 125 submarines, 50 of which were nuclear-powered) and significantly increased violations of Japanese air space and territorial waters. By 1979, the number of Soviet divisions in the Far East had increased to 44, and a qualitative and quantitative surge in Soviet naval and air power was well underway, manifest in the deployment to its Pacific Fleet of supersonic, long-range Backfire bombers and the VSTOL aircraft carrier Minsk, as well as a new amphibious

559 Ibid., 260.
560 Ibid., 250.
warship.\textsuperscript{561} Moscow’s decisions to construct a new port, build a major airstrip, and garrison marines on the Northern Territories were seen in Tokyo as severe provocations that posed direct threats to Hokkaido.\textsuperscript{562} The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 marked the first time Soviet troops invaded a country outside Moscow’s post-war sphere of influence. This development severely exacerbated extant fears about the Soviet threat to Japan and appeared to signal that the U.S. military was no longer sufficiently powerful or, perhaps worse, \textit{willing} to deter Soviet expansionism in Asia.\textsuperscript{563}

The Soviet threat to Japan’s security worsened significantly in the 1980s. In January 1983, Moscow’s official news agency effectively threatened Japan with a nuclear attack.\textsuperscript{564} That September, Moscow shot down a Korean passenger plane in air space adjacent to Japanese airspace. By summer 1985, the Soviet Union had stationed forty-percent of its ICBMs and thirty-percent of its SS-20s in the Far East and increased the total tonnage of its Pacific Fleet to such an extent (830 ships) that it was \textit{three times} the size of the U.S. 7

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fleet.\textsuperscript{565} By then, Moscow had also stationed between 10,000-16,000 troops and 40 Mig-23 jets, and built three naval installations and seven airfields on the disputed Northern territories.\textsuperscript{566} Japanese fighter planes were forced to scramble an average of three times per day to respond to aircraft, often Soviet, approaching Japan’s airspace.\textsuperscript{567} In this context, it was not surprising that Japan’s JDA white paper referred to an increasingly “harsh” international military situation in East Asia, criticized Japan’s military capabilities as below their “necessary peacetime level,” and called an

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\textsuperscript{561} Denis Warner, “Japan: The Mounting Pressure to Rearm,” \textit{Asian Affairs} 6, no. 6 (July 1, 1979): 370–371.
\textsuperscript{562} Ibid., 373.
\end{flushleft}
accelerated defense buildup to confront the growing Soviet threat an “urgent task.” Needless to say, concerns about the Soviet buildup were shared widely among various schools of strategic thought in Japan—with the obvious exception of those who continued to advocate unarmed neutrality. Most observers saw the JSDF’s existing capabilities as quantitatively and qualitatively inadequate to protect Japan’s territory, much less its sea lanes.

Meanwhile, throughout this period concerns about the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence and fears of U.S. abandonment in the wake of the Guam Doctrine and U.S. President Jimmy Carter’s announcement of a phase-out of U.S. ground forces from South Korea exacerbated the insecurity of Japan’s leaders. Despite U.S. rhetorical commitments to remain an Asian power, seen from Tokyo realities on the ground made these commitments increasingly incredible. Japan’s 1977 Defense White Paper for the first time publicly expressed Tokyo’s concern about the rapidly changing strategic balance between Moscow and Washington. Coupled with statements from the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff that a “shortage of warships” meant that the U.S. fleet would “not be able to protect the sea lanes into the Western Pacific” and from the Chief of Naval Operations that U.S. ships operate in the Sea of Japan at the “tolerance” of the Soviets, these developments deepened skepticism in Japan about whether the U.S. even had the capabilities, much less the willingness, necessary to defend Japan against Soviet aggression. Making matters worse, in 1979 Washington scuttled its mutual defense treaty with Taipei, and recently resigned former Secretary of State and National Security Advisor

570 A U.S. embassy official captured Japanese concerns when he said “[w]e say the security treaty is the anchor of our Far East Policy. They say, ‘An anchor? That’s something you can pick up and run with!’” Quoted in Ha and Guinasso, “Rearmament,” 250.
572 Ha and Guinasso, “Rearmament,” 250.
Henry Kissinger is reported to have said that American allies in Europe should not rely on the U.S. nuclear umbrella functioning against SS-20s.\(^\text{573}\)

Fears of the Soviet threat and U.S. abandonment were not limited to Japanese elites. These fears appear to also have been widely shared among the general population. In 1979, polling data showed that the majority of the Japanese public doubted the U.S. commitment to defend Japan in a major emergency.\(^\text{574}\) Five years later, this number was unchanged; and only 29 percent of the Japanese public considered the U.S. commitment credible.\(^\text{575}\)

**Japan’s response**

Confronting the Soviet Union’s unprecedented buildup of military power and its provocative operations on Japan’s doorstep, coupled with widespread doubts about the credibility of the U.S. commitment to defend Japan, how did Japan’s leaders respond? As discussed earlier, throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s foreign and domestic observers predicted that because of its rapid economic growth, coupled with its rapidly worsening strategic environment, Japan was bound to transform itself into a major political and military power and establish greater military and political independence from the United States.\(^\text{576}\)

To be sure, Japan’s leaders were not unresponsive to external threats during this period. Significant changes to Japan’s military policies did occur during the 1970s and early 1980s, including several important ‘firsts.’ In 1976, Tokyo published Japan’s first-ever explicit strategic doctrine in the post-war era—the National Defense Program Guidelines. It also conducted joint planning with the United States for the first time. The resulting 1978 Joint Guidelines for the first

\(^{573}\) Akaha, “Nonnuclear,” 868.
\(^{575}\) “Shitsumon to Kaito_ Jieitai 質問と回答_自衛隊 [Q&A_JSDF],” *Asahi Shimbun* 朝日新聞, June 18, 1984.
time identified the two militaries’ respective roles in the event of an attack on Japan. Over the next several years, joint exercises were authorized for the first time, intelligence-sharing was enhanced, and Japan’s maritime defense perimeter was (nominally) expanded to 1000 nautical miles. Additionally, defense spending increased (albeit at a level roughly commensurate with GDP growth). These increases allowed for the purchase of platforms that enhanced the JSDF’s air-defense and anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capabilities.\footnote{Armacost, FoR?, 82.} Prime Minister Nakasone’s (LDP; 1982-1987) statement that Japan would aim to control strategic straits near Japan so that Soviet submarines and other naval vessels could not pass through was unprecedented.\footnote{“U.S. Accuses Soviets.”} In 1983 the arms export ban was loosened to allow for some enhanced cooperation with the United States. In late 1984 Japan and the U.S. reportedly signed a military cooperation agreement containing operational plans for repelling a Soviet invasion of Japan.\footnote{“Japan Sets More Arms Spending,” Washington Post, December 30, 1984.}

Yet given the extent and nature of the threat to Japan’s territorial and material interests, the response fell far short of expectations and Japan continued to ‘under-invest’ in security relative to what its political and military leaders sought. The military policy changes implemented during this period were considered significant primarily because of the relatively low base from which Japan began in the mid-1970s, three decades after the end of World War II and twenty-five years after it first signed a security treaty with Washington. For example, despite the fact that Japan’s security was inextricably intertwined with the U.S. military, it was not until the mid-1970s that Japan for the first time engaged in even basic contingency planning with the U.S. The reason was a de facto, self-imposed ban on contingency planning set in place by
Japan’s leaders in 1965 due to fears of a domestic political backlash.\textsuperscript{580} This lack of bilateral contingency planning was in stark contrast to the America’s other major security partners, such as its NATO allies and South Korea, with whom Washington had created integrated war-fighting plans by the previous decade. And despite some new contingency planning beginning in the late 1970s, no formal exchanges on joint military operations between Washington and Tokyo existed until the 1980s.\textsuperscript{581}

Even many of the signs of progress that occurred during this period came with major caveats. A case in point is arguably the most significant development to occur during this period—the Suzuki administration’s 1981 commitment to expand the Maritime Self-defense Force’s (JMSDF) maritime defense perimeter to 1000 nautical miles. In 1983, the US ambassador predicted that Japan would probably not achieve that capability until “about 1995.”\textsuperscript{582} Meanwhile, estimates by US experts dismissed the goal of 1000-mile sea lane defense at Japan’s levels of spending as unrealistic.\textsuperscript{583}

Overall, underinvestment because of popular opposition prevented the government from increasing defense spending above an arbitrary and normative ceiling of one-percent of GNP (see below), which in turn prevented the JSDF from developing the necessary force structure to confront what many saw as a severe Soviet threat. The contrast with another U.S. ally in the region, South Korea, during this period is remarkable. Japan’s defense spending basically remained constant as a percentage of GNP throughout the period of its rise, despite volatile shifts.

\textsuperscript{580} A major public furor erupted when it was revealed in 1965 that the JSDF Joint Staff Office had actually engaged in concrete operational planning and threat assessments in the hypothetical event of another war on the Korean Peninsula; the JSDF was forced to disavow contingency planning—a “trauma” that handicapped defense planning for years and prevented formal integration of operations with the U.S. military for over a decade. Smith, “Japan’s Future,” 13–14.
\textsuperscript{581} Samuels, \textit{Securing Japan}, 44.
in leaders’ perceptions of strategic threats to Japan’s territory and interests and both leaders’ and
the general publics’ evaluations of America’s credibility as an ally.

Table 6 Comparative Statistics on Defense Spending as Percentage of GDP\(^{584}\)

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Finally, despite persistent and widespread abandonment concerns among the public and
elites, Japan continued to resist American pressure for a commitment to collective defense—a
right afforded to all sovereign states by the UN Charter. Into the 1980s the self-imposed ban on
collective self-defense forbade Japan from even assisting a U.S. warship that came under attack
while defending Japan from third-party attack.\(^{585}\) Faced with the Soviet threat Japan’s leaders
ultimately gave in to immense U.S. pressure, but still agreed only to defend the U.S. military
under strictly defined conditions—namely, when U.S. forces are actively engaged in defending
the territory of Japan—and only Japan—against armed attack. In contrast to most other U.S.
allies, Japan made no commitment to defend U.S. forces engaged in operations outside Japan,
even in the event of a third-party attack on the U.S. homeland—hardly a policy to reduce the
likelihood of U.S. abandonment in a crisis.

Deep frustrations within Japanese and U.S. defense communities at the persistence of
strict limitations on JSDF force development and force employment policies during this period
despite the rapidly worsening strategic environment were manifest. Although for domestic

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\(^{584}\) Table data from IISS Military Balance, as compiled in Takao, *Remilitarising?*, 33. Table shows that Japan’s
spending as a percentage of GDP was also much lower than that of the U.S. and its other allies and security partners
in East Asia. The differences are noticeable both a) for the difference in scale and b) for the consistency of Japan’s
spending despite a highly volatile strategic environment and the variability of that of other countries.

political reasons the JDA and JSDF were prohibited from explicitly criticizing this state of affairs, the annual defense white papers during this period reveal the severe concerns of civilian and military leaders responsible for ensuring Japan’s security. In several remarkable cases these concerns boiled over. The inefficiencies in Japan’s military policies proved so severe during this period that two chairmen of the Joint Staff Council each took the remarkable step of essentially falling on their swords to publicly criticize the status quo. Political leaders concerned about the public’s response rewarded both of these chairmen for their candor by firing them. For example, in 1978 General Kurisu Hiroomi revealed that JMSDF destroyers on patrol were required to return to port in order to pick up torpedoes before they could respond to an attack, while JASDF ammunition stores were so dangerously low that Japan’s fighter aircraft had only four air-to-air missiles each. Three years later, when General Goro Takedo publicly criticized Japanese security policy as based on naïve political debate rather than sober strategic analysis, Diet budget deliberations screeched to a halt. Deliberations did not restart until General Goro was fired and the prime minister and JDA director issued formal apologies.

**Obstacles to a Military Buildup in Response to the Soviet Threat**

Nearly four decades after the end of World War II, the Japanese public generally remained so resistant to policies associated with status as a military great power that despite the

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586 For example, Japan’s 1984 defense white paper bemoaned the JSDF’s lack of training, weak logistic capabilities, and civil defense and contained thinly-veiled criticism of the public’s reluctance to get serious about defense. “Soviets in ‘Relentless Buildup’ of Military Forces,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 15, 1984. All the parties in the political opposition, save one, severely criticized the JDA for even pointing out these weaknesses. Japan’s leading opposition party decried the white paper’s content as evidence of “the Nakasone Cabinet’s dangerous policies.” Quoted in Ibid. Similarly, the 1986 white paper stated that the JSDF had been unable to achieve its “necessary peacetime level” in the context of Soviet military expansion. “Japan May Exceed Cap.”


588 General Goro stated in a magazine interview that “defensive defense was insufficiently robust to be a national security doctrine and that roles and missions should take precedence over arbitrary budget caps.” Samuels, *Securing Japan*, 1, 54.
growing Soviet threat, in 1981 less than a quarter of Japanese supported any increase in the scale of the JSDF.\textsuperscript{589} De facto outsourcing of Japan’s security had become increasing popular, however, and a March 1981 \textit{Asahi Shimbun} poll showed that public support for the security treaty with the U.S. surpassed fifty-percent for the first time. It also revealed that the most popular alternative military pathway (thirty-percent support), was not autarkic military might, but unarmed neutrality.\textsuperscript{590} Popular opposition to revision of the Constitution’s Article Nine increased monotonically between 1970 and 1983, reaching a post-war high in 1983 at about eighty-percent.\textsuperscript{591}

Throughout the period of the Soviet Union’s military buildup in the Far East, peace activists steadfastly defended Japan’s arbitrary one-percent ceiling on defense spending and often searched military procurement documents for any signs of policy shifts that would put Japan on a path toward becoming a military great power.\textsuperscript{592} Widespread opposition to associated military policies had powerful effects on the political calculations of Japan’s leaders. Prime Minister Nakasone rapid and remarkable about-face on military policy as both the Soviet threat and widespread concerns about the credibility of the U.S. commitment to come to Japan’s aid in the event of a crisis were peaking is a powerful case-in-point.

Just a few months before Nakasone took office in 1982, fifty-eight members of the Diet demanded a revision of the security treaty with the U.S., declaring the treaty a “stain on [Japan’s] national pride,” stating that it was “inexcusable for Japan to rely on the United States,” and

\textsuperscript{590} “30\% Hibuso Churitsu Wo Hyoka 30\%非武装中立を評価 [30\% Value Unarmed Neutrality],” \textit{Asahi Shimbun} 朝日新聞, March 26, 1981.
\textsuperscript{591} Poll data cited in Hook, \textit{Militarization & Demilitarization}, 103.
\textsuperscript{592} Especially incendiary were perceived moves to acquire offensive capabilities. “Japanese Military.”
calling for a major expansion of Japan’s military. A widely recognized ‘defense hawk’ and former chief of Japan’s Defense Agency (JDA) who had tried to push through major military buildups during the Sato administration, Nakasone’s ascension to the prime-ministership seemed to augur that major changes were in store for Japan’s force development and employment policies and its role in regional and global security affairs. Nakasone was a staunch advocate of Japan abandoning the three non-nuclear principles and acquiring nuclear weapons, pursuing “autonomous defense” (jishu boei 自主防衛) and ending its reliance on the U.S. for security, and acquiring force projection capabilities. He had also previously spearheaded a movement to increase defense spending from less than one-percent of GNP to between three- and five-percent of GNP.

After taking office Nakasone initially behaved in a manner consistent with widely-held expectations. He promptly called for Japan to evolve behind its standing as an economic power and to also become a “big political power.” In January 1983, he expressed his wish that “the whole Japanese archipelago or the Japanese islands should be like an unsinkable aircraft carrier putting up a tremendous bulwark of defense against infiltration of the [Soviet] Backfire bomber.” Several months later, Nakasone harshly criticized the leading opposition Socialist Party’s call for “unarmed neutrality” as tantamount to “unarmed surrender” to Japan’s enemies. With the Soviet threat at an all-time high by any objective standard and fears of U.S.

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593 Steel, “With Japan Rearmed.”
594 For concise overviews of Nakasone’s failure to push through major changes to Japan’s policy during his time as JDA chief during the Sato Administration, including the very ambitious ‘Fourth Defense Buildup Plan,’ as well as how concerns about the expected adverse public response in the 1971 election led Sato to withdraw his support, see Berger, Cultures, 95–98; Takao, Remilitarising?, 22–23.
abandonment deepening it seemed that the stars were aligned for Japan to finally break out as a military great power. Nakasone seemed to be the right leader at the right time.

Yet Nakasone’s efforts to strengthen Japan’s military posture caused his public support to crater soon after he became prime minister. In a shift reminiscent of Prime Minister Ikeda’s pivot to a focus on economic policy after widespread protests against the 1960 revision of the U.S.-Japan security treaty caused the collapse of the Kishi government, Nakasone sought to overcome this sharp decline in public support by quickly shifting his focus from politically incendiary foreign and defense affairs to domestic issues, which were far less controversial.

Although this shift allowed Nakasone to remain in power for five years, it also meant that by the end of his tenure he had failed to realize any of what appeared to be his longstanding major military policy-related objectives: to achieve “autonomous defense,” to acquire nuclear weapons, to revise Japan’s constitution, to develop significant force projection capabilities, or to transform Japan into a “big political power.”

The powerful domestic political resistance and obstacles to even moderate—in some cases, purely symbolic—measures to enhance Japan’s military capabilities in cases where those policy shifts were normatively associated with pursuit of status as a ‘military great power’ was Nakasone’s effort to increase Japan’s defense spending above one-percent of GNP. The normative and entirely arbitrary ceiling on defense spending that had been self-imposed by a 1976 Cabinet resolution, the so-called “one-percent framework” (1% waku 1%枠), was widely

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599 “Japanese PM’s Popularity Drops”; “Japan Steps Up Talk.” In the 1983 election the LDP suffered one of its worst-ever defeats; many analysts attributed the outcome to Nakasone’s ‘hawkishness,’ Katzenstein, CN&NS, 118. Hook cites Yomiuri Shimbun data showing that in October 1985 58-percent of the public listed dissatisfaction with defense policy as one of two reasons for not supporting Nakasone’s cabinet. Hook, Militarization&Demilitarization, 111.


seen by contemporary observers as a symbol of Japan’s commitment to never become a “military
great power” and its “identity as a ‘peace nation.’” 602

At the outset it seemed that Nakasone was destined to succeed in his effort to ramp up
defense spending, even if not the tripling or quintupling that he had personally championed. The
surging Soviet threat, deepening abandonment concerns, and the wide array of powerful actors
supporting Nakasone’s effort to break through the one-percent ceiling, which included the U.S.
government and Congress, Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the JDA, a sizable
segment of the LDP, and a number of outside defense experts, suggested as much. Yet despite a
four-year struggle Nakasone was able to achieve only a purely symbolic victory during his final
year in office, when nominal projected spending for the 1987 fiscal year increased from an
average of 0.994 percent of GNP during the 1984-1986 period (0.997 percent in 1986) to 1.004
percent of GNP—an extremely far cry from the three- to five-percent of GNP for which he had
previously called.

Remarkably, recognizing the widespread domestic resistance to any measure perceived to
be associated with the pursuit of status as a military great power, in an attempt to preempt the
expected severe domestic political backlash against even this negligible increase in defense
spending of a mere 0.007 percent of GNP, the Cabinet resolution that officially—if nominally—
overturned the one-percent ceiling adopted several prophylactic measures. Most importantly, it
contained explicit vow that Japan would “not become a military great power that can threaten
other countries” (takoku ni kyou wo atae ru you na gunji taikoku to naranai 他国に脅威を与える

602 For examples, see Gaimusho 外務省 [MOFA], “Heiwa Kokka Toshite No 60nen No Ayumi 平和国家としての
60 年の歩み [Sixty Years’ of Progress as a Peace Nation].” The editorial department of the leading international
affairs journal Sekai (World) called the one-percent ceiling “proof of ‘Japan’s status as a] Peace Nation’” “Gunji
ような軍事大国とならない）and stated that the government would continue carry out defense planning “in accordance with our country’s fundamental policy as a peace nation” (zenki no heiwa kokka toshite no wagakuni no kihon hoshin no moto de kettei wo okonau koto to suru 前記の平和国家としての我が国の基本方針の下で決定を行うこととする). The resolution thus explicitly recognized that this purely symbolic increase of defense spending was a de facto violation of Japan’s national identity as a “peace nation” and the associated determination to never again pursue status as a “military great power.”

Remarkably, it soon became clear that even with this increase of projected defense spending by less than one-tenth thousandth of a percent of GNP Nakasone had over-reached. Despite the practical insignificance of such a negligible increase in spending, the domestic political backlash to the symbolic breaking of the one-percent ceiling was swift and severe. 78% of the public had opposed piercing the one-percent ceiling. Doi Takako, the leader of Japan’s main opposition party, called the 1987 defense budget “an outrage” and “a reckless move” that could “open the way for unlimited arms expansion.” She not only demanded its formal retraction, but also threatened a no-confidence bill against the government. Meanwhile, the chairman of Japan’s Communist Party called the Cabinet resolution overturning the normative ceiling “an unforgivable rash act” and evidence of “Nakasone’s declaration toward a large military expansion.”


As the Los Angeles Times had written two years earlier, “Japan is the only place in the world where the difference between a ‘dove’ and a ‘hawk’ is 0.003 percent of the gross national product.” “Growing Debate.”

Mainichi Shimbun poll cited in Midford, Rethinking, 66.


Nakasone’s Cabinet redoubled its efforts to contain the domestic political fallout by launching expeditiously into full damage-control mode. Explicitly recognizing the public’s concerns, Nakasone made a public declaration that “there is no possibility” of Japan becoming a military great power.\(^{608}\) He also implored the public not to overreact, saying “[the 1986 defense budget] was 0.997 percent [of GNP]. A rise to 1.004 percent—that is not militarism.”\(^{609}\) In a separate public statement, Chief Cabinet Secretary Gotoda Masaharu reiterated the language of the resolution, vowing that Japan “will not become a military great power that can threaten other countries.”\(^{610}\)

In the end, Nakasone may have won the battle by formally overturning the 1976 Cabinet resolution that established the de facto one percent ceiling and achieving a projected budget in 1987 of 1.004 percent of GNP, but he clearly lost the war—failing in any practical sense to clear the way for the large increases to defense spending that both his administration and the U.S. government and military sought in response to the Soviet threat, inter alia. To add insult to injury, faster-than-expected economic growth in 1987 meant that actual (as opposed to projected) defense spending for the year came in at under one-percent of GNP. The one-percent ceiling was never again pierced.

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\(^{609}\) “For Japanese.”

\(^{610}\) Kataoka, “Japan’s Defense Non-Buildup.”“防衛費1%枠突破に関する後藤田官房長官の談話 [Chief Cabinet Secretary Gotoda’s Statement Concerning Defense Spending’s Exceeding of the 1% Framework],” *Asahi Shimbun*, December 31, 1986.
To be sure, Japan did make some important changes to its military policies during the 1970s and 1980s in response to the surging Soviet threat. Nevertheless, Clyde Haberman of *The New York Times* was clearly on firm ground when he wrote in 1988 that despite these changes (and the domestic outcry in response) “given modern standards, it would be a gross overstatement to call Japan a military power.” As former high-ranking Reagan- and Bush (41)-era U.S. defense and diplomatic officials later reflected, during this period efforts by Japan’s

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612 Haberman, “Presumed Uniqueness of Japan.”
leaders to engage in even a moderate military buildup remained “an internal problem of great sensitivity.” Changes to defense policy fell far short of what Japan’s civilian and military leaders sought during this period, were most significant given the low base from which they began, and were only tolerated by Japan’s security benefactor—Washington—because of an understanding of the domestic political constraints on Japanese leaders.613

Resistance to Pressure to Conform to Force Employment Norms—the Late 1980s/early 1990s

As Japan’s phenomenal economic, industrial, and technological surge continued and Cold War tensions ebbed at the end of the 1980s, international and domestic pressures began to pose new challenges to Japan’s de facto self-imposed ban on overseas operational deployment of the JSDF. First, the international community, led by its U.S. security partner, increasingly called on Japan to play the role expected of a responsible economic superpower and to contribute to multinational efforts to safeguard global peace and stability. These external normative pressures on Japan’s leaders reached a critical mass by 1990.614 Second, conflicts in the Middle East severely threatened Japan’s core economic interests, especially its access to the oil imports upon which its economy relied. Third, the collapse of the Soviet Union allowed the UN to play a greater role in international peacekeeping operations. The resulting debates evince the persistent and significant influence of Japan’s identity as a “peace nation” on its force employment policy decisions, nearly a half-century after the end of World War II.615

613 Author’s meetings with former senior U.S. diplomats and defense officials. March 2013.
615 The argument of this section is consistent with that Midford, who argues persuasively that public opinion, while by no means determinative, can have powerful effects on Japan’s security policy when it runs into ‘robust public attitudes’ (such as those concerning use of hard military power overseas). Midford, Rethinking, 26.
Debates over JSDF deployment to the Middle East

When Japanese and other (esp. Kuwaiti-flagged) oil tankers in the Persian Gulf came under threat during the Iran-Iraq War, a U.S.-led international coalition formed to protect them. Washington called on Japan to deploy its Maritime Self-defense Forces (JMSDF) to assist. Eager to contribute, especially given the unmatched reliance of Japan’s economy on oil imports from the Middle East, in 1987 the Nakasone administration proposed deploying minesweepers to assist U.S. and European ships protecting Kuwaiti-flagged oil tankers. Significantly, the government even judged that the proposed mission would be constitutional. But it was not to be. Despite pressure from Washington to step up and deploy, widespread domestic opposition scuttled the abortive effort to implement this major change to Japan’s force employment policy.

Three years later, Iraq’s August 1990 invasion of Kuwait again challenged two pillars of postwar Japan’s foreign policy: the de facto ‘ban’ on overseas deployment of the JSDF and, because of severe U.S. pressure to contribute to the U.S.-led military response to Iraq’s behavior, its security treaty with the United States. The Persian Gulf crisis caused severe headaches for Japan’s leaders, who for decades had faced powerful domestic political pressures to ensure that Japan’s engagement with the world was consistent with its identity as a peace nation and based on an exclusively nonmilitary foundation. As then Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki (LDP; 1989-

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1991) explained in an October 1990 speech to the Diet, “[the Gulf War] crisis is a major time of
testing for Japan as a nation of peace and the most severe trial [Japan has] faced since the end of
[World War II]” (sic.). As Don Oberdorfer would later write, the Gulf War “brought the
Japanese face to face with their impotence and even irrelevance in non-economic fields as world-
shaking events unfolded.”

Economic and security interests under threat

As Berger notes, the crisis seemed like it was almost “tailor-made” for Japan to finally emerge from its shell. Military conflict in the Persian Gulf posed direct and indirect threats to Japan’s material interests in manifold ways, amounting to a direct strike against what one contemporary analyst later referred to as “Japan’s Achilles heel.” Despite countermeasures adopted during oil crises in the 1970s Japan remained deeply vulnerable to a cut-off in oil supplies from the region. In 1991, Japan continued to depend on maritime imports for 99-percent of its total oil supply, three-fourths of which was sourced from the Middle East. Consequently, the leadership faced immense pressure from the business community—a key backer of the ruling LDP—to play a significant role in the U.S.-led multinational coalition’s military response to Iraq’s invasion. To make matters worse, the threat to Japan’s interests was not limited to economic concerns. During the early stages of the war 141 Japanese hostages were held in Baghdad and another 136 Japanese nationals were unable to acquire visas to leave the war zone.

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621 Berger, Cultures, 198.
623 Ibid. In addition to the immediate loss of the 10 percent of its crude imports that came from Iraq and Kuwait, imports of refined products—Japan imported more of naptha, kerosene, and gasoil from Kuwait than from any other country, save one—were also threatened.
624 Abe, “Japanese Business Community.”
Further complicating the calculus for Japan’s leaders was the fact that the U.S. government was placing enormous diplomatic pressure on Japan to ‘show the flag’ and to contribute to U.S.-led military operations. Failure to do so risked seriously threatening Japan’s close security ties with the United States, which were already on very shaky ground due to Japan’s emergence over the previous decade as America’s chief economic competitor—and the resulting decade-old (and ugly) bilateral trade war—and the disappearance of the treaty’s primary raison d'être during the Cold War: the Soviet Union and the threat of Communist expansionism. In sum, Japan’s leaders appeared to have clear domestic political, security, economic, and diplomatic incentives to contribute militarily.

**Japan reacts**

Japan’s initial response to Iraq’s August 2 invasion of Kuwait fed optimism in Washington that Tokyo would finally step up to perform the great power role expected of it. First, Kaifu publicly condemned the invasion. The next day, Japan’s government froze Iraqi and Kuwait assets and said it would comply with UN Security Council sanctions. It also supported UN resolutions demanding the withdrawal of Iraqi forces, the restoration of Kuwait’s sovereignty, and the release of hostages.

As then U.S. Ambassador to Japan Michael Armacost later recalled, however, “after these initial steps, […] the going got considerably tougher.” Compared to its own full-scale preparations of military strikes on Iraq’s forces, Washington’s requests of Tokyo were relatively minimal: to literally ‘show the flag’ by deploying a ship with Japanese personnel and with a

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626 Armacost, *FoR?*, 99.
Japanese flag. Japan’s subsequent response, however, constituted what former MITI Vice Minister Amaya Naohiro later criticized as tantamount to an ostrich confronting a lion that, despite its agility, panics and buries its head in the sand in the hope that the danger will pass.

In an August 13 phone call with Kaifu, U.S. President George H. W. Bush directly requested that Japan share the burden by making “a direct contribution to the multinational naval force,” such as by deploying minesweepers. Doing so, Bush said, would “send a signal that Japan was a full participant in the western alliance […] and would protect our common interests.” Kaifu refused, however, declaring that Japan’s “national policy” and domestic political obstacles made it “next to unthinkable to participate directly in the military sphere.” This response surprised the U.S. side, which had expected that Japan would at least contribute nonlethal support to U.S. forces in light of the UN’s authorization of the proposed deployment, the operation’s “defensive” nature, and Japan’s overwhelming economic reliance on the region—especially for oil. Sensing that Tokyo was not persuadable, however, by the end of August the Bush Administration abandoned its effort to persuade Japan to send minesweepers. Washington requested that Tokyo instead provide logistical support—e.g., transport aircraft to carry medical supplies and to evacuate refugees, supply ships, or military tankers. Yet the Japanese government again refused, citing concerns about the likely domestic political backlash and the absence of a domestic law to authorize such a deployment.

Unsurprisingly, Washington—especially Congress—was furious at Japan’s unwillingness to contribute forces to the U.S.-led coalition. On September 12, the U.S. House of

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627 Ibid., 102.
628 Quoted in Ibid., 100.
630 Tamamoto, “Trial,” 95.
Representatives voted 370-53 to start withdrawing U.S. military personnel from Japan unless Tokyo offered to cover the full costs of America’s military presence in Japan. The U.S. Senate piled on, unanimously passing a resolution threatening to downgrade relations with allies—i.e., Japan and Germany—that many senators appeared to consider not appropriately supportive of the coalition’s effort in the Persian Gulf.

In response to this mounting anger in and pressure from Japan’s security patron, but aware of widespread domestic opposition to JSDF deployment, on September 14 Kaifu proposed the creation of an unarmed, volunteer, “UN Cooperation Corps.” The UN Cooperation Corps would be tasked with providing only medical, communications, and surveillance support to UN peacekeepers far away from the front lines. Yet even this extremely moderate proposal came under rapid fire domestically. An alternative proposal championed by LDP Secretary General Ozawa Ichiro, which called for a revision of the JSDF Law to allow personnel to participate in peacekeeping activities, was shot down by both the prime minister and foreign minister.

In a September 29 meeting with Bush, Kaifu explicitly recognized the material toll that conflict was taking on Japan and expressed Japan’s support for the mission. Kaifu expressed concerns about rising oil prices in light of Japan’s previous reliance on imports of 220,000 barrels of oil per day from Iraq and Kuwait and even told Bush “we ought to get rid of Saddam Hussein as soon as possible.” When Kaifu informed Bush about the UN Cooperation Corps

634 Socialists and moderates opposed the bill as a “dangerous step down a slippery slope.” Ibid., 109, 115.
635 Ibid., 115.
idea—which fell far short of U.S. expectations—Kaifu stressed the role of public opinion and the strong opposition of the opposition parties to deployment.  

In an effort to generate domestic support for the contribution, in an October 12 Diet speech Kaifu basically attempted to redefine the behavior normatively expected of Japan given its identity as a “peace nation.” He implored the public to recognize that “as a peace nation and member of international society Japan [has a] responsibility to protect peace” and that “a contribution to maintain peace is an indispensable cost that comes with Japan’s position in the international society.” Consistent with the playbook used by past LDP leaders, in order to gain support for this major shift in policy Kaifu twice vowed that Japan would make this contribution in such a way as to never abandon its principle to “never become a military great power.” Given the actual substance of the proposed mission, the fact that Japan’s hugely popular leader felt that such a vow was necessary is remarkable.

Initially, Kaifu’s clever strategy of linking the contribution to Japan’s identity as a peace nation appeared to have worked. After much debate, on October 14 the Cabinet agreed to approve a plan to deploy JSDF personnel to the Persian Gulf. Importantly, however, even the Cabinet-approved plan contained severe restrictions on the scope of activities in which these personnel could engage. First, their duties would be limited to overseeing the cease-fire and elections and performing activities related to communications, maintenance, medical care, transportation, and disaster relief. Second, the proposed bill explicitly forbade JSDF personnel


638 Ibid.

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from engaging in any behavior that would constitute the use, or threat of use, of military force.\textsuperscript{639} 

On October 16, two-and-a-half months after Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait, the Kaifu cabinet formally submitted a bill to the Diet that sanctioned deployment of the JSDF to the Persian Gulf.

Yet even this proposal for an extremely limited contribution proved too incendiary on the home front to pass. Despite the severe restrictions the proposed bill would have placed on the JSDF’s role, which would have effectively limited the JSDF’s role to providing only logistical support, it nevertheless caused an uproar among the opposition parties, the public, and even a sizable percentage of members of the ruling LDP itself. Faced with the prospect of an embarrassing and very public rejection, the Cabinet admitted defeat and formally withdrew the bill before it even came up for a vote.\textsuperscript{640}

**Reasons for Japan’s Resistance**

Japan’s unwillingness to participate, even non-militarily, in the international community’s response to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait was puzzling for a number of reasons. Most importantly, as Kaifu himself noted, Japan had economic, security, political, and diplomatic incentives to deploy the JSDF. Significantly, failure to ‘step up’ and contribute even moderately severely damaged political ties with the United States—Japan’s sole security benefactor. Additionally, the U.S.-led operation had even received authorization from the UN—one of three ostensible “pillars” of Japan’s foreign policy since 1957 (see next section). Third, the majority of the Japanese public opposed Iraq’s invasion. Kaifu was immensely popular, his public support ratings prior to the August 2 invasion had reached unprecedented highs, and he had publicly condemned the invasion at the UN General Assembly. Accordingly, it seemed he had some

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\textsuperscript{639} Armacost, *FoR?*, 115.
\textsuperscript{640} Tamamoto, “Trial,” 100; Midford, *Rethinking*, 70–75.
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political capital to spend. Fourth, there were no constitutional, legal, or other bans on JSDF deployment as long as it was not for the purpose of using force, nor was there an explicit geographical limitation on the scope of what constitutes JSDF operations undertaken in “self-defense.”  

Kaifu had argued that as long as the JSDF was not sent to “dangerous” regions and did not engage in combat, its dispatch would be constitutional.  

Nevertheless, the Kaifu administration was ultimately unwilling to risk the domestic political backlash that provision of JSDF support to U.S.-led military operations would probably have fomented. The reasons for widespread public opposition were primarily non-material: most importantly “haunting” memories of the last time Japan sent military forces abroad and a lack of interest among the general public in enhancing Japan’s international standing by military means. In a revealing moment, during a lunch meeting in mid-October Gotoda Masaharu, former Chief Cabinet Secretary in the Nakasone Cabinet, told U.S. Ambassador Armacost that even he personally opposed Japan’s involvement in peacekeeping because of fears that a measure deploying military forces abroad could be the first step down a slippery slope that could lead to a categorical change in Japan’s role in the world and its repeat of past mistakes. In the end, as Tamamoto writes, Japanese voters had sent a clear signal to LDP leaders that “they would not support a party that sends their children to war” and that meeting U.S. demands “would have been tantamount to a betrayal of the national ideal of peace.”

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641 As George notes, some scholars, as well as the Japanese public, took issue with the idea that deployment for purposes other than the use of force was constitutional. George, “Participation,” 562. Ibid.
643 Ibid., 96–97.
645 Tamamoto, “Trial,” 103.
In 1957, the Japanese government established “UN-centered diplomacy” ( kokusai rengo chushin 国際連合中心) as one of three core pillars of its foreign policy. Yet over the next three years, when the UN twice asked Japan to contribute JSDF and other personnel to UN operations, the government declined. In 1969, after a decade of double-digit annual GDP growth, Wakaizumi Kei, special envoy to Prime Minister Sato, identified participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO) as an “ideal opportunity” for Japan to make an international contribution. He argued that contributing personnel, materials, and funds would not violate the Constitution. Most importantly, it was a prerequisite for Japan to attain international recognition and status as a “responsible international power.” He explicitly criticized “any pacifism in any nation” that did not allow at least this minimal contribution to global peace and security as “merely national egoism.” Although discussions within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about involvement in UN peacekeeping operations reportedly began around this time, it appears to be the case that it was not until the late 1980s that increasing domestic and international pressures led Japanese leaders to seriously consider adding UNPKO to the JSDF’s mission set.

Yet as the failure of even Kaifu’s modest proposal in September 1990 to create a UN Cooperation Corps illustrates, the idea of the JSDF adopting a role overseas in UN-sanctioned

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646 The debate over Japan’s role in peacekeeping has attracted a great deal of attention from scholars. For examples of English-language analyses, see Kiyofuku Chuma, “The Debate over Japan’s Participation in Peace-Keeping Operations,” Japan Review of International Affairs, Fall 1992, 239–54; George, “Participation”; Inoguchi, “Japan’s UNPKO”; Go Ito, “Participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations,” in Japan in International Politics: The Foreign Policies of an Adaptive State, ed. Thomas U Berger, Mike Mochizuki, and Jitsuo Tsuchiyama (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2007), 75–96; Shinoda, Koizumi Diplomacy, chap. 2; Midford, Rethinking, chap. 6.

647 This occurred at least twice: the 1958 request was to send JSDF officers to Lebanon for weapons monitoring. The 1960 request was for dispatch to monitor a buffer zone in the (newly independent) Congo. Ito, “Participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations,” 79. The UN PKO initiative that was approved in the early 1990s was reportedly based off discussions within MOFA from several decades earlier. George, “Participation,” 563 fn 10.


649 Ibid., 514.

650 George, “Participation,” 563.
peacekeeping operations faced immense domestic political opposition. A June 1991 poll revealed that only 17-percent of Japanese public supported the JSDF’s armed participation in a peacekeeping force.\(^{651}\) A poll immediately after the formation of Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi’s (LDP; 1991-1993) government in early November showed that only two-percent of the Japanese public supported participation in a multinational military force not under UN command, such as the UN-sanctioned, but U.S.-led, military response to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. Most importantly, even among the 71-percent of respondents who supported JSDF dispatch overseas, more than two in three supported only participation in strictly non-military activities.\(^{652}\)

In a landmark moment in Japan’s postwar history, however, on June 15, 1992 the Diet passed the U.N. Peacekeeping Cooperation Law (UNPCL). This legislation created a legal foundation for the deployment of the JSDF overseas for the first time, 38 years after the JSDF’s creation. Yet even this law authorized only JSDF deployment abroad specifically to participate in UN peacekeeping operations.\(^{653}\) The passage of this law occurred in the context of immense international pressure and after two years of intense domestic contestation. Yet it is important to recognize that, as Midford points out, the 1992 bill succeeded where the abortive 1990 proposal had failed not because of changes in public opinion but because it was qualitatively different from the failed earlier bill.\(^{654}\) The earlier 1990 bill, debated and withdrawn in the fall of that year before even being put up for a vote due to widespread opposition, would have created a Japanese peacekeeping corps separate from but including the JSDF, in addition to authorizing rear-area

\(^{651}\) “Shitsumon to Kaito Wangan Sensogo No Nihon 質問と回答 湾岸戦争後の日本 [Q&A: Japan Post-Gulf War],” *Asahi Shimbun* 朝日新聞, June 19, 1991.


\(^{653}\) As noted in the alternative explanations section, below, there was never a legal ban on JSDF deployment overseas. There just was not an explicit legal foundation.

\(^{654}\) Midford, *Rethinking*, 85, 93–94.
logistical support to foreign militaries (i.e., the U.S.-led task force) in a possible war zone. In contrast, the successful 1992 UNPCL limited JSDF deployment to UN-authorized, and strictly nonmilitary, humanitarian assistance operations.

Most significantly, the 1992 UNPCL passed only after the government agreed to impose numerous conditions on JSDF involvement, including that a direct request for deployment be issued by the UN Secretary General; that the activities be impartial; that the operation be supported by the parties involved as well as neighboring countries; and that the parties have already agreed to a cease-fire. Additionally, if any of these requirements were to break down after the JSDF has already been deployed the mission was to be suspended or terminated. Furthermore, the government had abandoned an earlier proposal for the JSDF to be involved in weapon collection, cease-fire monitoring, and front-line peacekeeping operations, choosing instead to focus on medical services, construction, and relief operations. JSDF personnel were allowed to carry small firearms but were granted permission to fire only in self-defense and were ordered to stay away from the sound of gunfire whenever possible—an odd demand for the de facto military force of the nation with the world’s second largest economy and expansive global economic and political interests. A 1992 JDA pamphlet distributed to JSDF personnel and their families summed up the significance of these restrictions well, stating explicitly that “there is no possibility of JSDF personnel being drawn into an armed confrontation.”

In sum, while no doubt a landmark event in the evolution of Japan’s late 20th-century force employment policy, in any comparative context the UNPCL is most notable for the depth of domestic opposition that delayed its passage and the extent to which severe domestic sensitivities to deploying the JSDF

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655 George, “Participation,” 560.
656 Chuma, “PKO,” 240.
657 Midford, Rethinking, 93–94.
abroad ultimately forced leaders to further water down what had been an extremely moderate proposal in the first place. In the end, JSDF participation in military operations overseas, with or without UN sanction, proved politically unacceptable.\footnote{A poll that same year revealed that only 23 percent of the population supported the JSDF adopting a military role overseas, even if the operations were under UN command. George, “Participation,” 573.}

At the end of Japan’s high-growth period, its economy was ‘on fire.’ In September 1991, Japan’s economy experienced its 58$^{th}$ consecutive month of economic growth, surpassing its own previous record during the 1965-1970 period, albeit at a lower rate. Yet Japan’s growing economic influence and rapidly expanding global interests did not cause a significant weakening in Japan’s identity as a peace nation or major changes to its military policy profile. Even a half-century after 1945, extremely strong popular resistance to any policies perceived to put Japan again on the military pathway to great power status persisted. These domestic sensitivities continued to frustrate the efforts of those policymakers and business leaders who wanted to employ the JSDF in support of Japan’s economic and political interests outside Japan’s territory, much less those who sought to ‘normalize Japan’ and to enhance its international image by adopting the mantle of an active and ‘responsible’ power in international security affairs. On the contrary, Japan’s leaders (begrudgingly) avoided the military force employment policies necessary to achieve these goals despite recognizing that Japan’s unwillingness to employ military power in a more assertive manner overseas in fact at times hurt its international image—especially from the U.S. perspective. As the U.S. ambassador to Japan at the time of Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait later noted, “the Gulf War experience demonstrated [that] Japan was hardly poised to break into the ranks of the world’s major military powers.” He assessed that its response to the crisis “[revealed] the large gap […] between Japan’s desire for recognition as a
great power and its willingness to assume these [associated] risks and responsibilities.”

A 1997 MOFA report concluded that Japan’s reluctance to play a major role in the U.S. coalition outside of the financial sphere had severely damaged its international prestige and led to bitter criticism from both Western and Arab countries for not “sharing the burden with blood, sweat and tears […] as a responsible member of the international community.”

Despite these reputational and international prestige costs, however, debates in Japan in the late 1980s and early 1990s over the employment of its military forces overseas demonstrate that nearly half a century after its surrender, nonaggression and the nonuse of military force outside of strict territorial self-defense remained non-negotiable core components of Japan’s national identity and foreign policy posture. Any force employment policies perceived to be incompatible with this identity were to be avoided, regardless of expected risks and costs.

**Japan’s pursuit of an alternative path to great power status**

Consistent with the expectations of SAT, Japan’s leaders avoided status as a *military* great power during its late 20th-century rise despite clear external threats to its territory and global economic and politics interests, and despite enjoying the economic, industrial, and technological capabilities necessary to develop independently the associated capabilities and to employ its forces on the associated missions. This is not to say that Japan’s leaders and the public were not concerned about national prestige or moving up the international social hierarchy, however. It also does not mean that Japan was not willing to invest in defense capabilities in response to threats. But there were clear qualitative limits on what was and was not considered

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acceptable; those policies normatively-associated with great power status in the military domain remained largely off-limits.

Evincing a trend similar in nature to that manifest in the other rising powers examined in this study, as Japan’s economy took off in the 1960s an increasing number of Japanese observers expressed a growing frustration with Japan’s “second-rank” standing in the international community. Increasingly, they expressed a desire to regain standing as a member of the exclusive club of ‘first-rank’ great powers. The key difference, of course, was that after 1960 any military policies perceived by large segments of the public to be an effort to regain the status Japan forfeited upon its surrender in August 1945 were taken off the menu of available policy options.

A powerful example of Japan’s pursuit of a strictly non-military pathway to great power status manifests in the immediate aftermath of the pandemonium fomented by the 1960 revision of the U.S.-Japan security treaty. After the collapse of his predecessor’s government made clear that military affairs were the ‘third rail’ of Japanese politics, Prime Minister Ikeda turned his attention to economic and domestic affairs. Ikeda himself reportedly believed that Japan needed certain military capabilities (e.g., nuclear weapons) to be considered an equal of the other powers and to have a greater voice in international affairs. Yet he made the shift anyway, promptly vowing to double GDP within a decade and to attain for Japan membership in the exclusive Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)—the economic version of the ‘great power club.’ Ikeda reportedly even referred to the OECD as the “salon of developed nations” and was determined to achieve this objective, believing that unless Japan became a

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member it would forever be treated as a “second-rank nation” (二等国).\textsuperscript{663} Ikeda’s use of the term “second-rank nation” is infused with historical significance, as discussed in Chapter 3.

In short, during its post-war economic and industrial rise the drive for social recognition as a member of the great power club appeared again. Its historical experiences, however, had transformed Japan’s national identity in such a way that repeating a key means of Meiji Japan’s trajectory—i.e., conforming to contemporaneous norms of great powers’ military force development and force employment—was unacceptable domestically.

To be sure, late 20\textsuperscript{th}-century Japan was not devoid of small pockets of more traditional nationalism. While by no means advocates of military expansionism or colonialism à la Imperial Japan, Japan’s postwar conservative leaders, such as Nakasone and Miyazawa, grew extremely frustrated with domestic opposition to a more ‘normal’ military policy profile. In addition to the security risks and perceived lost sovereignty as a result of asymmetric reliance on an external security benefactor, there was also annoyance with the costs in terms of prestige. Indeed, as noted earlier, in 1971 recently-resigned MITI Minister Miyazawa had explicitly expressed his frustration with Japan’s lack of nuclear weapons, which he believed relegated Japan forever to international status as a “second-rank nation.”\textsuperscript{664} Pockets of nationalist pressure for Japan to pursue greater prestige in international society by adopting the mantle of a more ‘normal’ great power grew throughout the period of its rise.\textsuperscript{665} Yet even this more conservative nationalism was extremely moderate by any contemporary or historical standard. It was also a far cry from the militaristic or chauvinistic nationalism of the past.

\textsuperscript{664} Harrison, \textit{Nuclear}, 17–18.
\textsuperscript{665} Haberman, “Presumed Uniqueness of Japan.”
In 1974, Wakaizumi Kei warned that “[i]f Japan fails to bear international responsibility commensurate with its national power, it will incur international antipathy and criticism and could ultimately be driven into isolation […] Japan must not shirk its duty any longer.”666 By the 1980s, a decade during which predictions that Japan’s economy and technological capabilities would soon surpass those of even the United States were widespread, this notional drive for greater international prestige grew even more pronounced. There was frequent talk of “regaining” Japan’s lost “dignity, pride, and power” beyond the economic and technological domains.667 For example, Amaya Naohiro, former vice minister of MITI, in 1987 asked his compatriots:

“Does Japan have the soul of a merchant or a samurai? It’s time to decide if we are a nation of salesmen or statesmen. There’s no glory in an abacus, so I vote for grandeur. […] No matter what Japan decides, the future is fraught with peril. But for me, the choice is clear. Failure in the quest for glory is far more noble than failure in the pursuit of profit.”668

Despite the fact that this drive for enhanced international standing was shared by many in late 20th-century Japan during its rise, the dominant national identity (and the non-military status-seeking that flowed from it) drove the public by and large not to call for greater military independence and ‘glory’ typically sought by rising powers (and coveted by a small minority such as Amaya),669 nor even a material utility-maximizing and contingency-based military buildup to mitigate specific material threats and to hedge against abandonment or entrapment. Conservative Japanese leaders understood—or soon learned from experience—that efforts to push Japan on a more ‘normal’ military trajectory would directly threaten the LDP’s grip on

669 Efforts to transform Japan’s military policy profile to adhere more closely to great power norms—most notably in a push by leading politicians to turn Japan into a “Normal Nation” (普通の国)—were largely unsuccessful.
power. Consequently, Japan’s post-war identity limited them to efforts to contribute to peace and stability outside the military domain, such as by encouraging international cooperation, and to explicitly avoid policy measures normatively associated with status as a military great power.

The resulting vector—an alternative, strictly nonmilitary, pathway to great power status manifest in the alternative security concepts that its leaders promoted, its focus on official development assistance as a pillar of its foreign policy and, eventually, contributions to international security beyond national defense exclusively through UN-sanctioned peacekeeping operations.

“Omnidirectional Diplomacy,” “Comprehensive Security,” and Peacekeeping

In 1977, the same year that Moscow expanded its territorial claims to include waters around the islands it had annexed after Japan’s surrender in 1945, Prime Minister Fukuda Takeo (LDP; 1976-1978) gave a landmark speech in Manila that encapsulated what would later become known as the ‘Fukuda Doctrine.’ In the speech, Fukuda pledged that “Japan, a nation committed to peace, rejects the role of a military great power [gunji taikoku 軍事大国], and on that basis is resolved to contribute to the peace and prosperity of Southeast Asia, and of the world community.” Despite clear concerns about Japan’s worsening security environment and a desire to respond with major changes to Japan’s military policies, Fukuda’s administration


671 Faced with the surging Soviet threat, Fukuda called for a complete review of military and security issues in his opening statement to the Diet in 1978, and reiterated the constitutionality of nuclear weapons two months later. Prime Minister Fukuda 福田内閣総理大臣, “Kokkai Kaigiroku Joho Dai84kai Kokkai Gaimu Iinkai Dai8go 国会会議録情報第 84 回国会本会議第 3 号 [Minutes of the House of Representatives, 84th Diet, Plenary Session, No. 3],” January 21, 1978; Prime Minister Fukuda 福田内閣総理大臣, “Kokkai Kaigiroku Joho Dai84kai Kokkai Gaimu Einkai Dai8go 国会会議録情報第 84 回国会外務委員会第 8 号 [Minutes of the House of Representatives, 84th Diet, Foreign Affairs Committee, No. 8],” March 24, 1978. Meanwhile, his JDA chief, future foreign minister and LDP kingmaker Kanemaru Shin, reportedly called on Japan to acquire offensive strike capabilities in order to deter would-be aggressors, Quoted in D. Petrov, “Japan’s Place in U.S. Asian Policy,” International Affairs (Moscow), 253
ended up best remembered for the aforementioned eponymous ‘doctrine’ and “omnidirectional diplomacy” (zenhoi gaiko 全方位外交), a vague foreign policy posture which The Washington Post summarized as “look[ing] in all directions for friends and ha[ving] no enemies.” Similarly, despite the fact that reports commissioned by Fukuda’s immediate successors, Prime Ministers Ohira Masayoshi (LDP; 1978-1980) and Nakasone, in 1979-1980 and 1983, respectively, also called for significantly strengthening Japan’s military capabilities—the government’s advocacy of “comprehensive security” (sogo anzen hosho 総合安全保障) around this time and its corresponding pursuit of nonmilitary alternatives was shaped in large part by domestic opposition to a military buildup. Indeed, as Samuels notes, during this period “the defense debate” was “still the most divisive issue in domestic Japanese politics.”

As discussed earlier, even when the stars appeared to be aligned for a major military buildup in the 1980s under Prime Minister Nakasone, popular opposition hamstrung the leadership and compelled the Nakasone cabinet to issue explicit vows that it would reject the military pathway to great power status. During this period, not even a rapid acceleration of the Soviet Far East military buildup to include nuclear threats against Japan to cause a disaster “more serious” than Hiroshima and Nagasaki, mounting fears of U.S. abandonment, a surge in the yen’s value, severe trade frictions with the United States, and immense pressure from the U.S. government to increase defense spending, could prevent the de facto embrace of a search for

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October 1978, 55. Caveat: Kanemaru’s reported call for offensive-strike capabilities is quoted in text but Petrov provides no citation.

672 “Nakasone.”


674 Samuels, RNSA, 54.
prestige via nonmilitary means as a “peace nation,” “global civilian power,” and a “great [overseas developmental] aid power.”

**Toward an “Aid Great Power”**

As discussed above, in the late 1970s Japan confronted major oil crises and the beginning of a ‘second cold war’ with the Soviet Union. The U.S. put huge pressure on Japan to contribute more. Continuing in the footsteps of his predecessor, Prime Minister Ohira actively promoted the concept of “comprehensive security,” which conceived of Japan’s security as based on three pillars: defense, foreign aid, and diplomacy. Despite the fact that a task force commissioned by Ohira had concluded that the JSDF lacked minimum necessary denial strength, and that the “absolute and relative” decline of the U.S. called for greater self-reliance, political obstacles to more assertive embrace of the first pillar caused the Japanese government to conclude that foreign aid was the means through which it could make the greatest contribution to global security. Accordingly, Japan ramped up spending on foreign aid to such an extent that by the end of the 1970s it emerged as the second largest provider of official development assistance (ODA). Ten years later, Japan’s foreign aid budget had surged so rapidly—significantly, despite strict austerity policies throughout the decade—that Japan leapfrogged the United States to become the world’s top donor.

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677 Samuels, *RNSA*, 54.
678 Haberman, “Presumed Uniqueness of Japan.”
A push for enhanced international prestige and a desire to contribute to international society were major drivers of Japan’s embrace of ODA. By the early 1980s, the idea of an alternative, nonmilitary path to enhanced international prestige—specifically, a push for status as an “aid great power”—gained traction within Japanese foreign policy circles. Official government reports at the time cited “international respect” as an explicit objective of the rapid increase in Japan’s ODA, and conceived of aid provision as Japan’s “historic mission” as a rising economic power. In May 1988, Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru (LDP; 1987-1989) designated ODA and other forms of “economic cooperation” as the “most valued aspect of Japan’s international contribution.” A seminal 1989 academic study argued that these efforts were successful: “eye-catching increases and new activism in aid policy have heightened Japan’s visibility in world affairs and enhanced its economic great power status.”

The way in which views of military power and foreign aid differed between Japan and its U.S. ‘ally’ during this period are instructive. As a testament to the link between ODA and Japan’s identity, in stark contrast to the U.S.A, where developmental aid is often politically controversial, ODA was widely popular in Japan as a foreign policy tool. Japan partially chose to focus on aid as an alternative to military power. Concomitant with the Carter/Reagan military buildups at the end of the 1970s/early 1980s, Japan launched three aid-doubling campaigns. As the military threat from the Soviet Union peaked in the early 1980s, in bilateral negotiations

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681 Yasutomo, “Why Aid?”.
682 Ibid., 497.
683 Ibid., 500.
684 Ibid., 491.
685 Ibid., 497.
686 Ibid., 501–02; Orr, Emergence, 25–27.
with Washington Tokyo even proposed ODA as an alternative to the massive military buildup that the U.S. government demanded of Japan. Unsurprisingly, many in Washington did not accept the implied equivalence.\textsuperscript{688} In fact, Reagan’s National Security Council reportedly went so far as to draft guidelines the aim of which was to make clear to Japan’s leaders that Washington would not accept increases to ODA as a substitute for increased defense spending.\textsuperscript{689}

\textit{Toward a ‘Normal Nation’?}

Throughout this period, because of contemporaneous ‘great power’ norms in international society the tension inherent between Japan’s general desire for greater international prestige and the “peace nation” ideal were manifest. The tempest in the early 1990s surrounding overseas deployment of the JSDF to participate in peacekeeping operations is a valuable case-in-point. It occurred within a lively debate about whether Japan should behave like a more “normal” power.

Japanese opinion leaders belonging to the so-called “realist” camp often called on Japan to play a greater role in international affairs and to adopt the global responsibilities normatively expected of great powers at the time to become what leading advocates in the government referred to as status as a “normal nation” (\textit{futsu no kuni} 普通の国).\textsuperscript{690} Summarizing the realist position on the peacekeeping legislation discussed earlier, George writes that for the realists U.N. peacekeeping was seen as “the vehicle on which Japan will ride to international rehabilitation and restoration as a fully functioning global power accorded an honorable place in the international community. This ultimately includes the restoration of the JSDF to the status of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{688} Ibid., 500.
\item \textsuperscript{689} Robert M. Orr, “The Aid Factor in U.S.-Japan Relations,” \textit{Asian Survey} 28, no. 7 (July 1, 1988): 747.
\item \textsuperscript{690} Ichiro Ozawa 小沢一郎, \textit{Nihon Kaizo Keikaku} 日本改造計画 [Blueprint for a New Japan] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1993). This book launched cottage industries of scholarship in Japanese and English examining the same question or, in the case of some conservative Japanese writers, imploring Japan to become a ‘normal nation.’
\end{itemize}
fully fledged armed forces.”  

Similarly, Suzuki argues that UNPKO was seen as a means by which Japanese conservatives could seek out “legitimate great power status.”  

To the larger group of domestic opponents, however, deployment of the JSDF overseas on a mission of any kind—even UNPKO—was seen as anathema to Japan’s core identity as a “peace nation.”  

While the U.S. repeatedly called on Japan to step up and play the role expected of an aspiring great power by taking on international responsibilities commensurate with its standing in the economic domain, the Japanese public largely opposed contributions requiring the employment of Japan’s (de facto) military forces. In short, in stark contrast to interactions in other rising power-great power dyads normative pressures from the leading state on Japan to employ its military to engage in “responsible” behaviors role-appropriate for an aspiring great power backfired. Pressures to conform to great power norms effectively functioned as a deterrent rather than an inducement to action.  

This tension was evident in the content of the political debates over JSDF dispatch. On the one hand, leading politicians and intellectuals called for the JSDF to deploy abroad. For example, Ozawa Ichiro, the LDP’s secretary general and the chair of an LDP study group on Japan’s international role, demanded that Japan stop behaving like a “special state” and adopt the mantle of a more “normal” great power. This status, he argued, required Japan to recognize the use of military force as a normal and necessary instrument of foreign policy. By no means a chauvinistic nationalist, Ozawa merely called on Japan to take on its responsibility and to embrace the Western norm of noblesse oblige. As an “economic superpower” (keizai teki

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691 George, “Participation,” 573.
693 Chuma, “PKO,” 251.
695 Ibid., 100.
Ozawa argued that Japan should “actively fulfill its duty to contribute to the maintenance of peace” [平和維持のために積極的に貢献しなければならない義務がある]. Essentially articulating contemporaneous norms of great power force employment, Ozawa argued that “one of the important hallmarks of a ‘regular player’ [i.e., great power] is to deploy its troops abroad” and that JSDF participation in PKO was necessary to achieve Japan’s revitalization and its acceptance as a great power in the contemporary world. 696

On the other hand, the perceived incompatibility with Japan’s national identity of even these minimal policies in the military domain, manifest in the response of the head of Japan’s main opposition party, Doi Takako. Doi not only pejoratively called the UN Peace Cooperation Corps Bill a “beautiful disguise for deployment of soldiers overseas” (海外派兵) but also directly, and disparagingly, criticized such actions as “tantamount to the behavior of a military great power” and thus anathema to Japan’s pacifist “core principles.” Instead, Doi called on Japan to make a strictly “non-military” (非軍事面) contribution. 697

As discussed earlier, the Diet ultimately passed significantly watered-down peacekeeping legislation in 1992. Nevertheless, the continuing tension between Japan’s desire for enhanced international standing on the one hand and its national identity concerning the employment of military power on the other manifest even in the manner in which the legislation was written. The bill drew an explicit link to the Preamble of Japan’s constitution, especially the phrase “We desire to occupy an honored place in an international society striving for the preservation of

696 For original Ozawa text, see Ozawa, Blueprint, 114. As Suzuki Shogo notes, in this context “regular player” refers to the Western powers. Suzuki, “Seeking,” 57. See also, George, “Participation,” 566.
peace,” rather than on Article Nine. Japan’s leaders coveted greater international “esteem” in areas outside the economic sphere. As George notes, severe criticism from the United States and other countries for its response to the Gulf War only a year earlier “largely wrote the script” for the subsequent push by MOFA and other domestic actors in support of PKO involvement. In other words, international status concerns and a desire for “greater international respect” were central drivers of MOFA’s and much of the LDP’s support for the legislation. Yet a clear tension existed between that desire for greater international standing on the one hand and what appeared to be a widely-held view among the public that overseas dispatch of the JSDF to participate in a mission of any kind threatened its core identity. Leaders’ fears of domestic political backlash caused them to water down the legislation significantly. They set strict limits on even the use of small arms, and explicitly designed the legislation to avoid JSDF participation in any military activities that would compromise the “distinctive role model” that Japan had provided for the world as a “peace nation.”

Alternative Explanations

Power-Maximizing/Offensive Realist Hypothesis

The inability of this alternative explanation to explain even basic elements of late 20th-century Japan’s military policy profile during the period of its rapid rise is sufficient grounds for dismissing it categorically. These core aspects include but are not limited to Japan’s complete lack of an effort to establish hegemony in the region despite clear material disparities, its choice to asymmetrically rely on the U.S. military for the security of its territory and overseas interests;

699 George, “Participation,” 564.
700 Ibid., 565.
701 Chuma, “PKO,” 251.
702 George, “Participation,” 574–575.
its fundamental policy of ‘exclusive defense;’ self-imposed prohibitions on arms exports, nuclear weapons, offensive-strike, naval power projection capabilities to safeguard its world-leading reliance on sea lanes as economic life-lines, defense spending over one-percent of GNP, and the use, or even the mere threat of use of military force, as a diplomatic tool; and categorical denial of the (UN Charter-sanctioned) right to collective self-defense, inter alia.

Security-Maximizing Hypothesis

Perhaps the most influential, and frequently articulated, alternative explanation for late 20th-century Japan’s military trajectory is the security-maximizing hypothesis. This hypothesis basically expects that under international anarchy states will have no choice but to adopt military policies constituting rational and efficient measures to safeguard national security and expand the state’s economic interests, and to develop autarkic military capabilities to the extent that their level of economic development allows. In this view of international politics, structural and material variables dominate, while non-material factors such as socially-contingent norms and national identity are typically dismissed as irrelevant.703

The most common (and most ostensibly compelling) alternative explanation typically associated with this hypothesis applied to the specific case of post-war Japan is that which dismisses the otherwise puzzling military policy choices of Japan’s political leaders as driven by a desire to opportunistically exploit, or ‘free-ride,’ Japan’s security treaty with the United States.704 In this interpretation of Japan’s late 20th-century military trajectory, the severe

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703 For example, Kenneth Waltz is dismissive of Japanese public opinion as a force in shaping Japan’s military policy choices; especially the idea that “whether the Japanese people wish their country to become a great power” would affect policy outcomes nearly as much as threats. Waltz, “Emerging Structure,” 65.
704 For one recent argument in support of this alternative explanation, in this case termed ‘buck-passing,’ see Jennifer M Lind, “Pacifism or Passing the Buck?: Testing Theories of Japanese Security Policy,” International Security 29, no. 1 (2004): 92–121. Although arguing against structural Realism, Berger also categorizes ‘free-riding’
restrictions Japan’s leaders imposed on the JSDF’s force structure and mission set were shrewdly
designed by Japan’s leaders to efficiently exploit U.S. security guarantees in order to minimize
Japan’s defense expenditures and to maximize its material wealth. In short, this view identifies
the security treaty as a sufficient cause of Japan’s otherwise theoretically puzzling military
policy decisions. 705

To be sure, Washington’s willingness to offer an extended deterrent to Japan during this
period appears to have been an important factor in shaping its military trajectory. Yet it appears
to be the case that arguments along the lines of this alternative explanation are often shaped by a
sort of post-hoc rationalization based on theoretical assumptions about state behavior, coupled
with an effort to reconcile observed (and otherwise puzzling) policy outcomes with those
assumptions. A rigorous analysis of the empirical record of actual military policy decision-
making during this period, however, reveals a far more complicated picture. It also evinces
several important theoretical and empirical problems with the security-maximizing hypothesis as
a primary, to say nothing of a sufficient, explanation of Japan’s military trajectory.

First, and most importantly, the very concept of ‘free-riding’ on another state’s provision
of security appears to be fundamentally incompatible with the core, unifying assumption of all
Realist theory: the ‘self-help’ survival imperative under anarchy.

Second, the empirical record of the factors that actually shaped leaders’ decision-making
demonstrates that although reliance on the U.S. security treaty in the recovery years during the

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705 A policy-specific argument is implied in a recent study on Japan’s nuclear option, the introduction of which
makes the categorical, and empirically and theoretically dubious, claim that U.S. extended deterrence “virtually
eliminated any need for [Japan] to develop nuclear weapons on its own over the past half-century.” Self and
Thompson, Japan’s Nuclear Option, xiii. Though the details of the subsequent analysis appear to recognize a far
more complicated decision-making process, including the important role played of public opinion, the headline
summary claim remains.
Occupation immediately after 1945 may have been a pragmatic, even necessary, choice, military policy decisions during the multi-decade high-growth period that followed was self-imposed and in important cases do not appear to even conform to the wishes of Japan’s own political and military leaders. In other words, the policy of asymmetric reliance on Japan’s U.S. security benefactor was in large part an unintended consequence of LDP leaders’ efforts to maintain control of the government in the face of widespread domestic opposition to the more independent path that they themselves coveted. Indeed, a consistent fear of LDP leaders throughout much of this period was that pursuing more robust and independent military capabilities and missions—many of which these leaders personally championed—risked the emergence of a Socialist government advocating unarmed neutrality.

If, as the security maximizing hypothesis contends, the international system is anarchical then Japan’s asymmetric dependence on the United States military for its security appears to have been at least a very high risk and costly choice. Empirically, widespread concerns in Japan about entrapment in a U.S. conflict or abandonment by Washington in the event of a military crisis make this clear. Japan’s security ties with America were at most a necessary, but by themselves an insufficient, condition for explaining Japan’s military trajectory.

As a case-in-point from the preceding analysis, other states with superpower patrons and with less material wealth during the Cold War chose to hedge against abandonment fears by procuring indigenous nuclear deterrents. Japan did not. It also did not even allow the U.S.

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706 As Japan’s ‘latent power’ surged, support for abrogating the U.S.-J security treaty and defending Japan by its own power was relatively constant – less than 10% throughout the 1975-2006 period. Yet during that same period, respondents saying there was a “definite risk” of Japan becoming involved in a war tripled from 15% to 45%, while those who said there was “no risk” plummeted from 35% to 16%. Christopher W. Hughes, Japan’s Remilitarisation (New York: Routledge, 2009), 161–162.
707 Similarly, Berger argues that U.S. hegemony was not a sufficient cause of German and Japanese antimilitarism. Berger, Cultures, 6.
military to station U.S. nuclear weapons on Japanese territory for the purposes of deterring an attack on Japan. Nor did Japan have a coherent nuclear hedging strategy, which suggests that even if Washington were to withdraw the ‘nuclear umbrella’ Japan would still probably have opted not to ‘go nuclear.’

Even some (questionable) claims that Japan’s leaders pursued nuclear breakout capacity, and recent revelations about moderate secret agreements with Washington show that leaders concerned about protecting the country could at best pursue suboptimal strategies in secret—out of fear of the likely domestic political consequences.

Supporters of this opportunistic free-riding alternative explanation also typically overlook two fundamental characteristics of the 1960 U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty: First, under Article V, the U.S. government has never committed to respond to an armed attack against any of Japan’s interests outside of “territories under the administration of Japan.” Accordingly, the U.S. military was not obligated to defend Japan’s economic lifelines—commercial shipping, to support its global political interests militarily, or to help Japan assert itself in territorial disputes with its neighbors. Coupled with the fact that throughout its modern history—both before and since 1945—Japan has relied more on maritime commerce as an economic lifeline than any other major economy, from the perspective of this alternative explanation this characteristic of the U.S.-Japan security treaty makes Japan’s reluctance to develop major naval power projection capabilities to address these issues independently puzzling. Second, the asymmetric nature of the security treaty—especially Japan’s unilateral refusal to commit to assisting the U.S. militarily in the event of an attack on U.S. territory and/or its interests (or, for most of this period, even U.S. military forces actively engaged in defense during a third-party military attack on Japan)—

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appears to have significantly increased the likelihood of U.S. abandonment in the event of a crisis.

Even if Japan’s treaty with the United States had been a full-fledged mutual defense pact—which it was not—from the perspective of the security-maximizing hypothesis and the alleged self-help imperative under anarchy its leaders’ willingness to essentially outsource significant elements of the defense of Japan’s territory and material interests to the U.S. military is extremely puzzling. Furthermore, based on this theory’s core assumptions, this approach appears to be inferior to the obvious alternative: developing independent military capabilities commensurate with its latent material capabilities. This alternative path was clearly economically and technologically feasible by the late 1960s—exactly when Japan began ‘doubling-down’ on its alternative path. A ‘security-maximizing’ Japan would have developed robust independent capabilities regardless of whether it chose to also continue to benefit from close security ties with the United States. Indeed, U.S. support for and pressure on Japan to significantly expand its military capabilities and roles and missions—beginning with significant pressure to remilitarize during and immediately after the Occupation and especially during the period of severe Soviet provocations in the 1970s and 1980s—makes clear that this alternative path, which could have effectively minimized risks of abandonment while maximizing benefits of partnership, was not

711 The expected utility provided by an alliance must be discounted by widespread doubts within Japan about its credibility, and improving one’s own military capabilities is a far more reliable strategy. Why not do both? The answer is that the costs of each strategy “are paid in domestic politics.” James D. Morrow, “Arms Versus Allies: Trade-Offs in the Search for Security,” *International Organization* 47, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 215–216. Robert Art argues that “the default position of states, especially when it comes to military matters, is not dependence, but autonomy and independence, if they can achieve it.” Art, “Correspondence: Striking the Balance,” 185. As Daniel Kliman writes, the logic of alliance theory predicts that Japan will enhance its autarkic military capabilities both a) to reduce the likelihood of abandonment by increasing the importance of the state’s military to its treaty partner and b) to decrease the likelihood of entrapment by leaving open a more credible “exit option.” Daniel M. Kliman, *Japan’s Security Strategy in the Post-9/11 World: Embracing a New Realpolitik*, Washington Papers 183 (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2006), 13. For the theoretical foundations of the entrapment-versus-abandonment dilemma in alliance theory, see Glenn H. Snyder, “The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics,” *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (July 1984): 461–95.
imposed on Japan by Washington. Despite these clear security and material incentives, however, throughout the period of Japan’s rapid rise its leaders unilaterally eschewed key independent capabilities and rights; e.g., a nuclear deterrent (either indigenous or foreign) on Japanese territory, offensive-strike capabilities, the (UN Charter-sanctioned) right to exercise collective self-defense, annual defense budgets above an arbitrary ceiling of one-percent of GNP, amphibious warfare capabilities (despite territory consisting of 6800 islands), a blue-water navy and/or aircraft carriers (despite greater reliance on maritime commerce than any other major economy), and the use, or even threat of use, of military force as a tool of coercive diplomacy. They certainly evinced no signs of preparing for a hegemonic war.

Additional costs and risks of reliance on the U.S. military that were identified by Japanese leaders (and, in important cases, the public) include fears of abandonment by the United States in a military crisis and entrapment in a war as a result of its reliance on the U.S. military; lost political and diplomatic independence and regional and global influence; and lost international prestige and diminished standing in international society due to Japan’s lack of the key trappings of a major power, especially nuclear weapons.

The ‘free-riding’ alternative explanation appears to oversimplify and in some cases mistake the causal mechanisms actually at play in many of late 20th-century Japan’s most consequential force development and employment decisions. For example, it cannot explain why leaders would establish as the three core pillars of Japan’s basic defense policy the principle of ‘exclusive defense’ \( (\text{senshu boei} \ 専守防衛) \), which essentially forbids the JSDF from using military force until after it has absorbed an enemy attack and requires that even then it must still exercise only ‘minimal self-defense’; not threatening other countries by becoming a ‘military
great power’; and the three non-nuclear principles. It cannot explain why throughout this period Japan’s leaders unilaterally abandoned the UN Charter-sanctioned right to externally balance more effectively by allowing collective self-defense. It also overlooks the reality that the leading contender to outsourcing Japan’s security to the U.S. during much of this period was not the autonomous defense sought by Prime Minister Nakasone and other conservative postwar leaders but unarmed neutrality, an alternative policy which as late as the 1980s continued to garner support from 30-percent of the electorate. Furthermore, it cannot explain why even the limited funds that leaders were able to spend on defense were in important cases allocated in a manner that they themselves appear to have considered very inefficient.

Japan’s asymmetric reliance on the U.S. military to defend Japanese territory and safeguard its regional and global material interests does not appear to have been by design. Rather, it was seen by Japan’s leaders as the ‘least bad’ option given widespread popular opposition to a more ‘normal,’ independent military trajectory. Indeed, most post-war leaders, even Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru, the namesake of the eponymous “Doctrine” that would later (and inappropriately) became associated with the alleged strategy of ‘free-riding,’ privately bemoaned the public’s unwillingness to allow its leaders to leverage Japan’s economic, industrial, and technological strength to develop and employ independent military capabilities in a manner befitting a more normal ‘great power.’ Furthermore, what is often forgotten is that even when initially set in place this putative ‘Doctrine,’ while clearly influenced by concerns about the

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713 As Yoshida wrote in his 1963 memoirs, as an independent economic, technological, and scholarly leading nation “the time ha[d] passed for Japan to rely on the power of another country for [its] defense.” Failure to change this state of affairs, he wrote, would leave Japan as “a crippled nation […] that will never be respected in international diplomacy.” Original text appears in full in Ozawa, Blueprint, 109–110. See also Yoshida, Yoshida Shigeru, 119. Memorandum by Robert Fearey of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs to the consultant to the secretary, Tokyo, January 25, 1951, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951, Volume 6, p. 810; cited in Kataoka, “Japan’s Defense Non-Buildup,” 14.
economic burden of remilitarization during the early years of Japan’s recovery from the War, was also heavily influenced by what Samuels refers to as Yoshida’s concerns at the time about a “newly pacified electorate.” Yoshida’s caution was also shaped heavily by a belief that the revitalization of an arms industry and military buildup would be politically divisive, risked giving the opposition parties an advantage in future elections, and would pose a major threat to domestic political stability.714

In short, the argument that asymmetric reliance on the U.S. military to provide for Japan’s security was primarily the result of an opportunistic grand strategy designed by Japan’s leaders simply because this policy proved relatively successful appears to be shaped in large part by a kind of post-hoc rationalization, albeit a very seductive one given some of the observed empirical outcomes during Japan’s rise. Undoubtedly, aspects of Japan’s security policy appeared to be a ‘free-ride’ from the perspective of outside observers, especially those in Washington. Nevertheless, the argument that this was by opportunistic design seems to be inconsistent with the core theoretical claims of the security-maximizing hypothesis. It is also in important cases contrary to the empirical record of actual military policy decision-making during this period.

**Domestic Institutional Constraints**

Domestic institutional constraints are often cited by observers as an explanation of Japan’s relatively passive military policy profile after it regained its sovereignty in 1952. The most common view is that institutions established during the U.S. Occupation (1945-1952) effectively acted as a ‘strait-jacket’ on sovereign Japan’s alleged military ambitions and were the

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714 Samuels, RNSA, 137–138.
primary obstacle to what would otherwise have been a more traditional path to status as a ‘military great power.’ The institutional obstacles most frequently identified as being responsible for Japan’s puzzling military trajectory are: Article Nine of Japan’s so-called ‘Peace Constitution;’ the Japan Defense Agency’s subordinate status relative to other, more powerful, government ministries; and the Cabinet and Diet resolutions that allegedly locked in the de facto policy bans that were collectively one of its defining elements (e.g., the ‘arms export ban,’ the ‘four non-nuclear pillars,’ the ‘one-percent ceiling’ on defense expenditures, and the putative ‘ban’ on overseas JSDF deployment).

To be sure, these institutions were certainly important parts of the story of Japan’s post-war military trajectory. The empirical record suggests strongly, however, that domestic institutional constraints are best understood as effects, rather than causes, of popular opposition to the pursuit of the more traditional, or even merely more efficient, military policies expected by existing theories. Alternative explanations along these lines also appear to share a common, and significant, flaw: effectively denying agency and choice to both Japan’s post-war leaders and the voters who elected them. Particularly in the case of the various relevant resolutions, the practical hurdles to overturning them were extremely low.

**Article Nine of Japan’s Constitution and the Legacy of the Occupation**

“Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. To accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.”

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Arguably the most ostensibly powerful, and frequently articulated, institutional alternative explanation is basically that Article Nine of Japan’s so-called “Pacifist” Constitution (quoted above), promulgated during the U.S. Occupation in 1947 and unrevised ever since, tied the hands of Japan’s post-war leaders over the subsequent half-century of rapid economic and industrial growth and prevented them from pursuing a more normal military trajectory after Japan regained its sovereignty in 1952.

While there is no question that Article Nine has influenced military policy decision-making, especially as a focal point for those advocating adherence to a path befitting a ‘peace nation,’ the argument that Article Nine, promulgated under the U.S. Occupation, caused Japan’s puzzling trajectory for decades after Japan regained its sovereignty has some important weaknesses that are often overlooked. First, there is not a consensus among historians over the origins of Article Nine—namely, whether it was forced on Japan by Occupation forces. Additionally, there is also significant evidence to suggest that it was in fact an accurate reflection of views among a large segment of the war-weary Japanese population after Japan’s surrender. Second, and perhaps most importantly, the otherwise puzzling military policy choices explored in this chapter do not appear to be attributable primarily to prohibitions rooted in the government’s official interpretation of Article Nine. Third, even after the Occupation ended the spirit of Article Nine appears to have accurately reflected popular sentiment concerning military power. In other words, the primary reason for its persistence over the past seventy years does not appear to be some exogenous factor. In sum, for this alternative explanation to work it should be true that Article Nine was the primary cause of the ‘abnormal’ military policies that in aggregate defined late 20th-century Japan’s military trajectory and that its creation and resilience are not a reflection of popular sentiment. As the following paragraphs demonstrate, however, an extensive
survey of the available empirical data shows that throughout the period of Japan’s late 20th-century rise, the government’s interpretation of Article Nine and the role it played in shaping Japan’s military policies were primarily issues of policy.

With regard to the first statement, historians disagree about whether the original proposal for Article Nine came from Prime Minister Shidehara Kijuro (Independent; 1945-1946), which is what both Shidehara and Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers and supervisor of the U.S. Occupation General Douglas MacArthur claim in their respective memoirs, or was proposed by the Occupation authorities. This may be beside the point, however, as regardless of the progenitor of the original proposal, however, according to Occupation-era Prime Minister Yoshida himself, in 1947 the Far Eastern Commission gave explicit sanction to Japan’s elected political leaders to rewrite the Constitution and/or to make whatever revisions they deemed necessary to ensure that the Japanese people would embrace it as “chosen by the free will of the Japanese people.” Over the next two years, various media and the public drafted and debated possible revisions but, as Yoshida would later write, when the time came to take action “the general public was not stirred.” Coupled with the ultimate outcome, these words suggest the accuracy of the view of one American who was directly involved in drafting the constitution’s interpretation: that Article Nine resonated deeply with the Japanese public and its persistence is a reflection (i.e., effect) of widespread popular sentiment.

Two cases-in-point of later decision-making are instructive. First, prior to taking the post of prime minister in the 1960s, Sato Eisaku and his planning group explored whether they should include constitutional revision, a key component of the LDP’s founding charter and a desired

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717 Yoshida, Yoshida Shigeru, 117–118.
objective of Sato himself, in their list of policy objectives. They opted not to do so out of concern for severe ramifications for domestic politics and in order to avoid the fate that befell the Kishi Cabinet in 1960.\footnote{Kusunoki, “Sato Cabinet,” 32.} As Sato would later state in a meeting with the U.S. ambassador, the Japanese people did not wish to abandon Article Nine.\footnote{Ibid.} Twenty years later, in a revealing 1983 interview Prime Minister Nakasone, who personally advocated constitutional revision for decades prior to taking up his post in 1982, called the issue of constitutional revision “very delicate.” He stated that even “talk of revision” or public criticism of the constitution is a taboo; adding that he would “dare not mention it even in our Diet.”\footnote{“‘Because of Expansion [We Risk] Being Isolated,’” \textit{Washington Post}, January 19, 1983.}

With regard to the second statement, contrary to widespread misconception throughout the period of Japan’s rapid rise most of the more ‘normal’ military policy alternatives that Japan’s postwar leaders eschewed were either explicitly deemed “constitutional” (e.g., possession of nuclear weapons) or had no direct relevance to the text of Article Nine (e.g., the precise level of defense spending or whether Japan exported arms). None appear to be direct legacies of interpretations of Article Nine established during the Occupation.

For example, in terms of force development policies, the JSDF itself was not even established until 1954, two years after Japan regained its sovereignty. In other words, after Japan regained its sovereignty Japan’s leaders faced little difficulty liberally ‘reinterpreting’ Article Nine to allow for the creation of what had been forbidden during the Occupation—a de facto military. Since the mid-1950s, the Japanese government has interpreted the definition of “war potential” (\textit{senryoku} 戦力), a key phrase in Article Nine, to mean “that which does not exceed the minimum necessary level for self-defense” (\textit{jiei no tame hitsuyona saisho gendo wo koeru} じまいのためhitotsuyon skeisho genso wo kakeru).
The malleability of this official interpretation is manifest in the fact that leaders have repeatedly affirmed the constitutionality of even nuclear weapons, including during the period of highest growth—such as in official statements issued in 1957, in 1965, and in Japan’s first-ever defense white paper in 1970 (a mere three years after Sato’s promulgation of the three non-nuclear principles). Accordingly, and accurately, Japan’s leaders have explicitly identified the three non-nuclear principles and Japan’s lack of nuclear weapons as a “policy choice” (seisakutekina sentaku 政策的な選択); they are not a constitutional requirement. As further evidence of the flexibility of Article Nine, in 1959 the Japanese government stated that even offensive strike capabilities (aka, “counter attacks on enemy bases”)—a broad category of weapons explicitly avoided throughout Japan’s rise that significantly weakened its ability to independently deter would-be aggressors—are also constitutional. To be sure, the government has explicitly identified some other force development options—specifically, inter-continental ballistic missiles, long-range strategic bombers and so-called “offensive aircraft carriers” (kogekigata kubo 攻撃型空母)—as

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exceeding the limits of ‘self-defense.’ Yet as the cases of nuclear weapons and offensive-strike capabilities illustrate, the fact remains that in Japan, as in all countries, what military capabilities are considered ‘offensive’ and what capabilities are considered necessary for ‘defense’ are inherently political questions. Under different domestic political circumstances Japan’s leaders undoubtedly could have argued that aircraft carriers and other power projection platforms and capabilities are ‘defensive’ in the sense that they are necessary to defend national interests—exactly as China’s government does today, incidentally—and therefore constitutional. As a case-in-point, in August 1952 the head of the JDA’s precursor said that fighter jets were unconstitutional. Thirty years later, however, pilots in Japan’s Air Self-defense Forces flew the most advanced fighter in the world: the U.S.-designed F-15 Eagle.

Similarly, the historical record demonstrates that the constitutionality of various force employment policies is also subject to political interpretation (and reinterpretation) and is not in fact a legacy of the Occupation. Most importantly, the text of Article Nine provides no explicit limitations or prohibitions on the JSDF’s deployment abroad or the geographical scope of what constitutes ‘self-defense.’ Nor does it prohibit participation in collective self-defense.

First, the JSDF Law, which established the JSDF in 1954, did not forbid overseas deployment. What is often—somewhat misleadingly—referred to as a ‘ban’ on the JSDF’s overseas deployment is based entirely on a non-binding resolution passed in 1954—two years after the Occupation ended—by only a single house of the Diet: the (relatively weak) House of

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727 As Yoshida himself noted, even Japan’s pre-1946 wars had been justified as necessary for ‘self-defense.’ Yoshida, Yoshida Shigeru, 114–115.
728 Auer, “Article Nine,” 177.
730 George, “Participation,” 562.
Councillors. In fact, though not widely known, far from banning overseas deployment of Japanese military forces, the Occupation authorities in fact ordered the Japanese government to deploy minesweepers in support of U.S. military operations during the Korean War. Given the 1954 resolution’s non-binding nature and apparently limited support—the more powerful House of Representatives conspicuously did not pass a similar resolution—future Japanese leaders could have just as easily ignored the ‘ban’ as institutionalized it in formal legislation. As the cases of the (nominal) expansion of Japan’s defense perimeter to 1000 miles in the 1980s and the 1991 deployment of JMSDF minesweepers to the Persian Gulf after Iraq’s surrender illustrate, in key instances all that was necessary to change the scope of acceptable JSDF deployments overseas was for Japan’s political leaders to choose to do so. These decisions required neither constitutional revision nor even the passage of new legislation.

Second, as it concerns Japan’s self-imposed ban on collective self-defense (shudanteki jieiken 集団的自衛権), not only does the UN Charter stipulate that participation in collective self-defense is a fundamental right of all sovereign states, the 1951 U.S.-Japan security treaty also explicitly recognized that Japan was also afforded this right. It was not until four years after Japan regained its sovereignty—1956—that the Japanese government chose to formally interpret the Constitution to prohibit participation in collective self-defense.

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In sum, the empirical record demonstrates clearly that many of the force development and employment policies that Japan’s leaders have chosen to avoid during its late 20th-century rise were explicitly deemed constitutional. Furthermore, since the promulgation of Japan’s constitution in 1947 the government’s interpretation of Article Nine has proven to be extremely malleable and dependent primarily on changing political winds. The historical record suggests that under different domestic political circumstances Japan’s leaders could have easily interpreted the Constitution to sanction a much wider range of force development and force employment policies, including offensive strike capabilities to enhance ‘defensive’ deterrence or a blue-water navy and power projection capabilities to ‘defend’ Japan’s rapidly expanding maritime commercial interests and citizens overseas.

With regard to the third and final statement, widespread public opposition to Constitutional revision throughout the period of Japan’s rise demonstrates that the persistence of Article Nine was not, as some observers have argued, merely an artifact of Article 96’s strict requirements for constitutional revision. Rather, it appears to be largely a reflection of majority will. Public opinion survey results suggest that even a lower, more internationally modal, requirement for emendation of Japan’s Constitution would probably not have led to a different outcome. As a case-in-point, popular opposition to revision of the Constitution’s Article Nine was 80-percent in 1983, the peak period of the Soviet threat. Throughout Japan’s rise, LDP leaders cited fears of expected domestic political fallout as the primary reason not to attempt to revise Article Nine. Furthermore, as discussed above, even without formal constitutional revision the political leadership proved adept at finding workarounds, such as

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734 Article 96 requires a two-thirds majority of both houses of the Diet to approve amendments, as well as ratification by popular majority in a referendum.
formally reinterpreting the constitution through other institutional channels, primarily the Cabinet Legislation Bureau.737 These measures allowed for new military policies whenever leaders judged that the domestic political risks of such actions were tolerable.

In sum, while no doubt an important part of the story of Japan’s military trajectory, the establishment and persistence of Article Nine were far from determinative of these outcomes. Japan’s military trajectory during the late 20th-century was actively sanctioned by the Japanese people and was not merely the legacy of U.S. Occupation-era policies imposed on Japan, or even of the 1947 constitution. Most of the strict limitations on Japan’s military policies were self-imposed by Japan’s political leaders after Japan regained its sovereignty in 1952. More importantly, the empirical record of decision-making shows that these restrictions were put into place by Japan’s leaders in response to domestic political incentives and were broadly reflective of public opinion.

### JDA Subordination

A second popular domestic institution-based alternative explanation of Japan’s late 20th-century military trajectory points to the JDA’s status as a sub-cabinet level agency under the Cabinet Office and the prime minister—rather than as a full-fledged ministry during the period under examination—as the major constraint on Japan’s military policies. It is true that throughout the period examined in this chapter JDA officials were lower-ranked than their bureaucratic counterparts in other ministries. This subordination undoubtedly affected the efficiency of defense planning, at least from a strategic perspective. Nevertheless, the JDA’s relative status does not provide a reasonable primary alternative explanation of the outcomes

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observed in this chapter for several reasons. Most importantly, the JDA’s low-status in the bureaucratic hierarchy was in large part an effect, rather than a cause of the stigmatization of military affairs in post-war Japan.

First, it was Japanese politicians in sovereign Japan, not Occupation authorities, who set up the JDA in 1954—two years after the end of the Occupation. Second, it was they who chose to establish it as an agency rather than as a ministry. Third, throughout this period subsequent political leaders could have easily decided to promote the JDA to a full-ledged ministry at any time. The primary obstacle was domestic political conditions. Third, while the JDA’s subordination to say, the powerful Ministry of Finance, may partially explain the government’s reluctance to spend U.S.- or Soviet-levels of Japan’s treasure on defense, it cannot account for the extraordinarily low levels of defense spending relative to not only the superpowers but also other developed countries and U.S. allies, the persistence of the arbitrary, normative one-percent ceiling on defense spending regardless of Japan’s external threat environment or fiscal circumstances, or the Finance Ministry’s support for exempting defense spending from across-the-board austerity measures in the 1980s. Most importantly, JDA subordination cannot explain the puzzling and apparently inefficient ways in which the government chose to allocate funds to the JSDF even within the budget constraints that did exist. Fourth, many of the most important debates over military policy the defense establishment had powerful allies both within the Diet and ministry-level bureaucracies—esp. MOFA and MITI—and outside the government, including domestic business and industrial interests and perhaps most importantly, Washington.
Finally, on many of the major foreign policy decisions of the late 20th-century, it was LDP politicians, not bureaucrats, who were in the driver’s seat.738

**Cabinet and Diet Resolutions**

Most of the alleged institutional constraints, or “brakes,” (hadome歯止め) imposed on Japan’s military policy in the post-war era not only were implemented by Japanese leaders after the Occupation (in some cases, decades after) but also were not even formally institutionalized into binding legislation. Examples of resolution-based policies include the Arms Export Ban, the Three Non-nuclear Principles/Four Pillars of Nuclear Policy, the one-percent ceiling on defense spending, and the ban on overseas dispatch of the JSDF. These de facto prohibitions were based on Cabinet policy statements (kakugi ketsugi 閣議決議) or non-binding Diet resolutions (kokkai ketsugi国会決議), all of which would have been extremely easy—in procedural terms—for political leaders to overturn or, in the case of the latter, to ignore when formulating specific policies. For example, all that would have been necessary to reverse an existing Cabinet policy statement was a Cabinet decision to issue a new one. The extremely low-bar on overturning these policies was manifest in 1983 and 1987, when the Nakasone Cabinet loosened the Arms Export Ban and removed the one-percent ceiling on defense spending (in theory, though not in practice), respectively, or when the Kaifu cabinet chose to deploy minesweepers after the end of the Persian Gulf War without first either amending the Constitution, passing a specific law to authorize JSDF deployment overseas, or revising the existing JSDF law.

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738 Gerald Curtis cites PM Hatoyama’s decision to normalize relations with the Soviet Union, PM Kishi’s decision to renegotiate and force through the 1960 security treaty revision, and PM Tanaka’s move to quickly normalize ties with Beijing in 1972 as examples of major decisions championed by politicians, not bureaucrats. Curtis, *The Japanese Way of Politics*, 106–107.
In sum, despite their popularity as alternative explanations, when tested against the empirical record domestic institution-based obstacles do not provide explanatory power superior to SAT for why Japan did not meet widespread expectations that it would pursue a more ‘normal’ military trajectory in the late-20th century. Appearances to the contrary, the legal or institutional obstacles to Japan’s pursuit of a relatively more ‘normal’ military trajectory or to the adoption of significantly more militarily efficient force development and force employment policies were in fact surprisingly limited. Nor did the legacy of the U.S. Occupation constitute a first-order cause.

4. Conclusion

During the peak of the Soviet threat in the mid-1980s, former Prime Minister Fukuda Takeo told an audience that, “[n]ow, with the economy 25 times bigger [than before 1945] and [having achieved] great advances in scientific and technological capacity, Japan could very quickly become a military great power—indeed, a super-military great power.”739 Fukuda’s statement captured one obvious fact about Japan’s late 20th-century military trajectory that is often forgotten in hindsight and neglected by the existing theoretical literature on rising powers: the scale and pace of Japan’s economic, industrial, and technological development were such that Japan’s leaders could easily have opted to pursue a very different pathway to status as a member of the great power club.

The fact that Japan avoided the military trajectory it was widely expected to pursue is not only of immense consequence for the history of 20th-century (and contemporary) international relations, it also runs directly counter to foundational assumptions of existing theories of rising powers and, more generally, about the fundamental drivers of military policy choices under international anarchy. By the late 1960s Japan clearly possessed the economic, industrial, and

739 Quoted in “Growing Debate.”
technological capabilities necessary to adopt any of the military policies typically associated with
great power status. What if Herman Kahn had been correct when he predicted in 1970 that Japan
would become a military superpower commensurate with its economic, technological, financial
stature and would undergo a transition in its global role “not unlike the change brought about in
European and world affairs in the 1870’s by the rise of Prussia”? As late as the mid-1980s
Henry Kissinger predicted that rapid economic growth and the (nominal) removal of the one-
percent ceiling meant that Japan’s “emerge[nce] as a major military power in the not-too-distant
future” was “inevitable.” Such predictions are entirely consistent with influential mainstream
theories of rising powers. Yet Japan’s actual policy choices during the period examined in this
chapter make it clear that the assumptions underpinning these predictions have major flaws.

Despite widespread fears of entrapment and abandonment it was precisely as Japan’s
economic and industrial growth surged that its leaders paradoxically self-imposed major
prohibitions on force development and force employment policies, essentially ‘doubling down’
on a high-risk, costly asymmetric reliance on an external security benefactor. As the analysis in
this chapter has shown, although by no means determinative of outcomes, the interaction of
Japan’s post-war identity as a “peace nation” and perceptions of contemporaneous great power
norms shaped the domestic political incentives of Japan’s conservative leaders in powerful ways.
To be sure, the peace nation ideal was domestically contested throughout the period of Japan’s
rise. Yet its effects were sufficiently powerful to effectively compel leaders to eschew military
force development and force employment policies that they otherwise saw as beneficial, even
necessary, not only to protect Japan’s territory and to safeguard and promote its other global
security and economic interests—but also to enhance its international prestige. Yet these policies

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740 Kahn, Superstate, vii, ix, 237.
were ultimately avoided primarily because of their normative associations with the military pathway to great power status, and despite the resulting political, security, and material costs and risks.\textsuperscript{742} These effects were even manifest in those moderate changes to military policy that leaders were able to achieve during this period. Such changes were often coupled with explicit vows by the government “to not become a military great power.” In short, in important cases the interaction of these non-material factors trumped international structure and external threats, compelling leaders to significantly ‘underinvest’ in the development and employment of military power. In effect, it ‘bent the curve’ of Japan’s military trajectory away from the expectations of mainstream theories of rising power behavior under anarchy.

Contrary to widespread conventional wisdoms, the empirical record suggests strongly that Japan’s postwar military trajectory was not primarily the result of a grand strategy to opportunistically ‘free-ride’ on an external security benefactor—even if that may have been a result—nor was it the direct legacy of the U.S. Occupation. Indeed, consistent with the expectations of the Realist paradigm, the LDP’s 1955 founding party platform explicitly called for “national independence,” a “collective security system,” “self-defense military commensurate with national power and conditions,” and the “withdrawal of foreign forces stationed [in Japan].”\textsuperscript{743} Despite ruling Japan for the vast majority of the past sixty years, however, LDP leaders have yet to achieve any of these fundamental objectives. Rather, throughout the period of

\textsuperscript{742} A 2005 Ministry of Foreign Affairs document outlines explicitly several of the policy choices that resulted from Japan’s awareness of the consequences of its actions prior to 1945 and the identity as a “peace nation” that emerged as a result, including: never having used military force to solve disputes, keeping defense spending below 1% of GNP, the three non-nuclear principles, not supporting international disputes through the arms-export ban and opposition to nuclear weapons, UNPKO contributions, overseas development assistance, and humanitarian contributions. Gaimusho 外務省 [MOFA], “Heiwa Kokka Toshite No 60nen No Ayumi 平和国家としての 60 年の歩み [Sixty Years’ of Progress as a Peace Nation],” July 2005, http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/taisen/ayumi.html.

late 20th-century Japan’s rise, the decisions of Japan’s rational, self-interest maximizing political leaders resulted in military policy outcomes that they themselves often explicitly recognized as detrimental to both Japan’s security interests and its international prestige. These policies appear, at best, extremely “inefficient” or even “irrational” when examined through a strictly Realist or exclusively materialist lens. National identity effectively took those military policies associated with the “power games of great-power egoism,” which many Japanese citizens saw as an anachronism in the post-1945 world, off the menu of policy choices.

The result was a historic military trajectory during a period of unprecedented rapid economic and industrial growth characterized by remarkable self-restraint and designed to support the U.S.-led international order. In the course of doing so, Japan effectively sacrificed significant prestige and put its territory and material interests at risk in order to essentially ‘opt out’ of these ‘games’ altogether. To some critics, the resulting constraints on international influence and policy freedom in the military domain were the unfortunate consequence of “impractical pacifist idealism.” To some supporters, they were seen as a virtue, and were part of an effort to help chart a course for the world away from “almost total dependence on military power politics” and toward cooperation in economic, social, scientific, cultural, and political spheres.

This is not to say that past is necessarily prologue, or that the military trajectory mapped out during Japan’s late 20th-century rise will forever be its course. Japan’s strategic environment is currently undergoing important changes. Furthermore, while national identity can be relatively

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745 Keio University scholar Soeya Yoshihide has called Japan’s path that of “middle power” diplomacy. Yoshihide Soeya 添谷芳秀, Nihon No “Midoru Pawaa” Gaikō: Sengo Nihon No Sentaku to Koso 日本の「ミドルパワー」外交—戦後日本の選択と構想 [Japan’s “Middle Power” Diplomacy: Post-War Japan’s Choices and Ideas] (Chukuma Shinsho, 2005).
747 Wakaizumi, “Japan’s Role,” 326.
stable, it is certainly neither domestically uncontested nor static. Accordingly, Japan’s military policy posture appears to be undergoing a gradual evolution. As Samuels notes, however, a major shift would necessitate the “selection and construction of a national identity, whether Japan comes to see itself as a great or middle power and whether it will define its role in regional or global terms.” Whether, and the extent to which, such a shift toward ‘normalization’ or something else is underway now, more than two decades after the end of Japan’s high growth period, is a topic for another venue.

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749 Although the post-1993 focus of this literature is beyond the scope of this chapter, for reader reference recent related English-language scholarship exploring the issue of whether Japan is ‘normalizing’ in the post-Cold War era includes: Michael J. Green, *Japan’s Reluctant Realism: Foreign Policy Challenges in an Era of Uncertain Power* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Richard J. Samuels, *Machiavelli’s Children: Leaders And Their Legacies In Italy And Japan* (Cornell University Press, 2005), chap. 10; Christopher W. Hughes, *Japan’s Re-Emergence as a “Normal” Military Power* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Pyle, *Japan Rising*; Samuels, *Securing Japan*; Oros, *Normalizing*; Takao, *Remilitarising*?; Yoshihide Soeya, David A. Welch, and Masayaki Tadokoro, eds., *Japan as a “Normal Country”? : A Nation in Search of Its Place in the World* (University of Toronto Press, 2011).
Chapter 5: Contemporary China

“[T]here is almost a momentum in Chinese thinking that great powers—and they clearly want to be viewed as a great power—need certain things, and they are not necessarily tied to a specific military event, either proposed or expected, but simply become the trappings of, I will use the word, their global legitimacy.”

-- General Michael Hayden, Principal Deputy Director of the U.S. Office of National Intelligence, at a February 28, 2006 hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee

“[PLA military operations other than war] reveal China’s fearlessness and image[s] of [its] peaceful rise and as the model of a mighty military and model of civilization.”

-- PLA Navy Admiral Tian Zhong, Commander of the Northern Fleet, 2008

“The rejuvenation of the Chinese People in the 21st Century requires venturing out into the open seas, [and] constructing a maritime great power is the only way (biyouzhilu 必由之路) to achieve national rejuvenation.”

-- China Ocean Development Report, 2010

“All the great powers in the world, including [other] permanent members of the UN Security Council, have aircraft carriers; it seems that aircraft carriers are a marker of a great power [daguo de biaozhi 大国的标志]. So I say the Chinese people, as they make their way out into the world, also must pass through this stage.”

-- Lt. General Qi Jianguo, then Assistant to the Chief of the General Staff, 2011

“Constructing a strong national defense and powerful armed forces that are commensurate with China's international standing [...] is a strategic task of China's modernization drive.”

-- President, CCP General Secretary, and Chairman of the Central Military Commission Hu Jintao’s Report to the 18th Party Congress, November 2012

752 Zhongguo Haiyang Fazhan Baogao 中国海洋发展报告 [China’s Ocean Development Report] (Beijing: Haiyang Chubanshe, 2010), 482.
753 Quoted in “Zhongguo Hangmu Zai Jian Buhui Shiru Taguo 中国航母在建 不會駛入他國 [Chinese A/C Under Construction; Won’t Enter Other Countries],” Xianggang Shangbao 香港商报, June 7, 2011.
754 Hu, “Zhonggong Shibada Zhengzhi Baogao.”
At approximately 5:40 A.M. local time on a foggy Wednesday morning in August 2011, China’s first-ever aircraft carrier steamed out of Xianglujiao port in Dalian to commence sea trials. Formally commissioned thirteen months later, the massive 60,000-ton Liaoning flattop marks the most visible manifestation of an ongoing shift toward what China’s leaders describe as China’s pursuit of military power “commensurate with its international standing” (yu woguo guoji diwei xiangcheng 与我国国际地位相称)b.

Yet China’s aircraft carrier program is merely the most conspicuous manifestation of what appear to be important changes taking place in China’s military trajectory at the beginning of the 21st century. Far from merely representing a quantitative change in terms of defense spending and numbers of platforms, concomitant with its rapid economic and industrial growth and gradually consolidating identity as an aspiring ‘great power’ China’s overall military policy profile is also undergoing a significant qualitative transformation.

To be sure, as exemplified in the first set of strategic decision points in this chapter’s empirical analysis, the desire to enhance the People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA)’s ability to assert China’s stance on vast and ambiguous, yet longstanding, maritime and territorial sovereignty claims on its immediate periphery remains the major driver of China’s force development. The PLA’s rapidly expanding resources and improving capabilities are an issue of serious concern to the interests of stability in the region. Yet over the past decade, and especially since 2003, another important story appears to also be gradually unfolding. From investments in aircraft carriers, manned space flight, and lunar travel to involvement in humanitarian missions and anti-piracy operations across the globe, in several important cases China’s leaders appear to be developing and employing military power in a manner that seems to be aimed to significant

Ibid.

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degree at acquiring the symbolic ‘trappings’ and mimicking the behaviors that China’s leaders associate with status as a member of the great power club. This nascent trend, which has potentially significant implications for both China’s long-term military trajectory and the likelihood of its rise being peaceful, appears to be modeled on the military policies of the current leading state in the system—the United States.

China’s rise is ongoing, the future is uncertain, and it is far too early to write a history of its military trajectory. Yet recent trend lines suggest a gradually unfolding pattern that appears to depart in important ways from the expectations of mainstream IR theories of rising powers, and which also suggests increasing conformity with SAT’s expectations about the behavior of Type A, status-seeking rising powers. These shifts may be ‘at the margins’ at present. Yet history shows that the margins can matter. Decisions to implement (or not) even seemingly minor shifts to military policies in the medium- to long-term can be of immense significance for international peace and stability. These margins may also grow significantly in the years ahead.

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The puzzling and apparently prestige-driven nature of several important procurement decisions and changes to the PLA’s mission set has not gone unnoticed. As General Michael Hayden, then principal deputy director of the U.S. Office of National Intelligence, noted during testimony in front of the Senate Armed Services Committee in 2006,

“[T]here is almost a momentum in Chinese thinking that great powers—and they clearly want to be viewed as a great power—need certain things, and they are not
necessarily tied to a specific military event, either proposed or expected, but simply become the trappings of, I will use the word, their global legitimacy.”

Remarkably, even the PLA itself appears to have recognized the mimetic and inefficient, if not extremely wasteful, nature of some recent procurement decisions. For example, in a 2011 article published in an internal military journal, officers from the PLA’s Institute of Equipment Command and Technology bemoaned the “inefficiency” of PLA procurement and the tendency of China’s military to “blindly shadow [mangmu genzong 盲目跟踪] overseas developments in arms and equipment technology [in a manner that] lacks a foundation in [China’s] national strategic direction and policies and the potential threats from [China’s] enemies.”

One example of a force development trend that appears to aimed at achieving recognition as a member of the ‘great power club’ is China’s nascent push for a blue-water navy and status as a “maritime great power” (haiyang daguo 海洋大国). Although how far, and how fast, China will move in this direction remains unclear, this policy shift represents a major reversal of past practice. It occurs six centuries after Ming Dynasty leaders summarily “quit the seas,” unilaterally abandoning a blue-water navy. The puzzling nature of this historic about-face is manifest in China’s pursuit of conspicuous and expensive platforms that are of dubious military utility (e.g., aircraft carriers) given its strategic priorities and most likely conflicts. Still more puzzling is the fact that this push appears to occur without major investments in necessary defenses for these platforms to mitigate egregious and widely-recognized vulnerabilities (e.g., advanced anti-submarine warfare capabilities), as well as the PLA’s lack of overseas bases and logistical, replenishment, and lift capabilities that would be necessary to actually engage in a high-intensity conflict beyond China’s immediate periphery.

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756 Hayden, Security Threats to the United States.
757 Zhang, Qu, and Bai, “Jiantan Tigao Wuqi Zhuangbei Caibian Xiaoyi,” 29.
Similarly, several unprecedented additions to the PLA’s mission set also suggest that a desire to conform to perceived contemporaneous ‘great power’ behavioral norms may also be increasingly shaping China’s force employment decisions. For example, in the past decade China’s civilian leaders have ordered the Chinese Navy to deploy on its first operational mission to the Far Seas （yuanhai远海）since 1433 A.D. for its first-ever involvement in a multinational military force (U.S.- and European-led anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden since 2008). They have commissioned China’s first-ever purpose-built hospital ship (2008) and deployed it on China’s first-ever overseas naval humanitarian assistance missions (since 2010). They have also deployed PLA combat troops overseas for the first time since 1979—to support multinational UN peacekeeping forces in 2012 and 2013—also ‘firsts.’ Coupled with a nascent embrace of disaster relief operations, these unprecedented policy shifts not only represent the PLA’s first-ever contributions to nontraditional and cooperative security, they also represent major departures from past practice that have required sea changes in the way that China’s leaders think about the concept of military power and its application. Of potentially greater long-term significance, however, is the fact that each of these unprecedented missions occurred with the active encouragement of the U.S. government and has been linked explicitly to a concerted effort by the leadership to stake its claim to status and recognition for China from the international community—above all, from the United States—as a ‘responsible’ member of the ‘great power club.’

To be sure, it is still early, and these policies do not appear to constitute the main thrust of China’s military development. Yet these changes to China’s force development and employment policies do represent shifts of potential long-term significance for China’s military trajectory that appear to run against the expectations of influential theories of rising powers and the drivers of
state behavior in the military domain. First, since the mid-1990s rising China’s civilian and military leaders have consistently identified the U.S. ‘hegemon’ as China’s most likely adversary and as a country which is allegedly intent on “containing China’s rise” (ezhi zhongguo jueqi 遏制中国崛起). Yet outside of limited ‘pockets of excellence,’ by the civilian leadership’s own admission China’s military modernization is far from complete and its military capabilities remain inferior to those of the U.S. military and China’s other most likely adversaries, all of which are in China’s own backyard (e.g., Japan and Russia). This suggests that outside of the aforementioned specific sovereignty disputes, all of which predate its rise by several decades, and rhetoric to the contrary, China is not actively preparing for hegemonic war to challenge the U.S. militarily beyond its immediate periphery. This is somewhat puzzling from the perspective of some influential theories of rising powers.758

Second, and unsurprisingly, these is some evidence to suggest that the PLA itself has resisted participation in some of these new nontraditional security missions, identifying them as costly distractions from more pressing strategic concerns and preparations for actual warfighting.

Third, China’s leaders have chosen to adopt these costly new policies in a developing country in which the domestic opportunity costs (i.e., the ‘guns vs. butter’ tradeoff) are severe. While China’s defense budget is now the world’s second largest, per capita GDP ranks 114th (2011) in the world. Meanwhile, domestic instability caused by major negative externalities resulting from its rapid development and modernization poses such a severe threat to the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) grip on power that spending on “public security” (primarily to

758 As discussed in Chapter 2, Gilpin argues that a declining power’s “first and most attractive option” in response to the emergence of a potential challenger is to “eliminate the source of the problem”—i.e., preventive war. Gilpin, War&Change, 191. Copeland argues that the dominant but declining power is most likely to initiate a preventive war against a rising power out of fear for its future security, especially when there is only one challenger (i.e., not a multipolar system). Copeland, The Origins of Major War.
suppress widespread, and worsening, domestic unrest) now exceeds China’s official defense budget. By former President Hu Jintao’s own admission in his valedictory speech to the 18th Party Congress, the CCP faces a dizzying array of domestic and social challenges sufficiently severe to pose “an existential threat to the Party and the State” (wangdangwangguo 亡党亡国).

Finally, in some cases, such as the aircraft carrier program and China’s gradually growing willingness to deploy military forces to engage in humanitarian and disaster relief operation in other countries—even those which recognize Taiwan (e.g., Haiti in 2010)—recent military policy shifts represent departures from China’s longstanding core foreign policy principles. They also appear to constitute gradual convergence to the contemporary great power, even ‘Western,’ ‘great power’ norms that China’s leaders have traditionally opposed fervently. In particular, they are anathema to China’s erstwhile widely-held national identity as a post-colonial leader of the developing world, a defining element of which was a “century of national humiliation” (bainian guochi 百年国耻) at the hands of the Western great powers—a period that, in the official Party narrative, did not come to an end until “liberation” (jiefang 解放) by the PLA in 1949.

So what explains China’s military trajectory? While over the past decade a number of important changes to China’s military policy profile suggest that China’s leaders are increasingly mimicking the trappings and role-playing the behaviors that they see as normatively associated with their coveted membership in the ‘great power club,’ these non-material forces are of course not determinative and at this moment in time do not appear to be the main thrust of China’s military development. Indeed, there is still strong resistance to this de facto socialization from extremely conservative leaders within the CCP, and especially within the PLA. Disputes over

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759 Hu, “Zhonggong Shibada Zhengzhi Baogao.”
China’s expansive, albeit longstanding, territorial sovereignty claims on its periphery and Beijing’s desire to enhance the PLA’s ability to contest them continue to serve as the major drivers of the PLA’s modernization and development trajectory. Accordingly, whether China’s rise will be peaceful is far from certain.

Nevertheless, recent trends in China’s military policy profile also suggest that, paradoxically, a push to enter the great power ranks may be gradually driving China’s gradual socialization to what their leaders perceive to be contemporary great power norms. Significantly, in stark contrast to past periods (e.g., the period before 1914, as explored in Chapters 3 and 6), under today’s U.S.-led international order most of these associated great power norms are not inherently conflictual. To be sure, the pace of China’s leaders’ socialization appears moderate, it is still early in China’s rise, and clashes of interests over sovereignty claims (in particular) are unlikely to disappear anytime soon.

Yet the pessimistic expectations of both influential existing theories of rising powers and the recent upsurge of scholars and pundits drawing analogies between 1914 and today are overwrought. Coupled with the novel and mutually beneficial characteristics of the contemporary global economic, trading, and financial systems, as well as the existing institutional order discussed in Chapter 1, the normative context into which China is emerging further reduces the potential material benefits of the destabilizing behaviors embarked upon by past powers. If recent trends continue it suggests the possibility of a future military trajectory that sees China gradually emerge as a stakeholder and supporter of the prevailing global order. Even if its rapidly increasing spending on the PLA continues apace, key aspects of its trajectory appear likely to allow the United States and China to avoid the kind of hegemonic war that has defined the end state of some—but not all—past rising powers’ military trajectories.
How this all plays out, of course, will be heavily contingent on the policy choices of leaders in the years ahead, especially those in Beijing and Washington. Not only is China’s rise ongoing, but its military policy decision-making is notoriously lacking in transparency. Accordingly, the analysis that follows is necessarily preliminary, and should be updated as further data emerge.

Outline

This chapter is divided into four sections. First, I provide an overview of the disparate expectations of China’s military trajectory based on shadowing/avoiding theory and the leading alternative explanations. I then provide brief overviews of the formation of China’s national identity concerning military power, its rapid industrialization and economic development, and the territorial and material concerns that shape its leaders’ threat perceptions. The penultimate section, the bulk of the chapter, examines military policy decision-making at several major strategic decision points since the early 1990s, discusses China’s pursuit of status as a military great power, and evaluates the explanatory power of SAT relative to leading alternatives in explaining important shifts in China’s force development and employment policies. I then conclude.

1. Theoretical Expectations

Expectations of Shadowing/Avoiding Theory

Shadowing/avoiding theory (SAT) expects that as China’s identity as a Type A, status-seeking rising power consolidates in response to both changing material realities (rapidly increasing economic and industrial wherewithal) and domestic and international social cues, shifts in military policy will be shaped by a desire to gain recognition as a member of the great
power club by acquiring the contemporaneously socially-defined trappings of status as a “military great power” and increasing conformity with perceived role-appropriate great power behavioral norms. The resulting major changes to force development and force employment policies will be driven primarily by a desire to acquire greater international prestige and in important cases will be distinct from efficient measures to mitigate material threats in what China explicitly identifies as its most likely conflict scenarios. China’s military trajectory will evince a general trend toward policy convergence with its leaders’ aspirational referent(s): the contemporaneous great powers, especially the United States. And it will become increasingly inefficient over time, defined by over-investment in the socially-defined trappings of status as a military great power, even when the associated military policies have dubious direct connections to pressing strategic threats to territorial and economic interests.

The case of contemporary China represents a very ‘hard’ case for SAT for a number of reasons. Generally speaking, as discussed in Chapter 2, existing theory contends that international anarchy, the self-help imperative and the ‘guns vs. butter’ tradeoff will compel all states experiencing rapid increases in latent material capabilities, such as China, to invest heavily and efficiently in developing and employing military power for the reasons discussed below. Most importantly, the existential threat posed by the established powers should compel its leaders to prepare for a hegemonic war. Existing theory does not expect major shifts in rising powers’ military policies to be shaped in any significant way by non-material factors.

There are also several additional reasons specific to the case of contemporary China that suggest SAT should provide especially poor explanatory power. First, policymakers and scholars alike have long identified China as having an extremely “hard realpolitik” approach to foreign
affairs. Second, it is an authoritarian state emerging in a world in which the de facto group of leading states are all advanced industrial democracies. It is run by a Communist party whose political and military culture is extremely conservative and nontransparent, and whose leaders remain deeply suspicious of foreign—especially ‘Western’—influence in general, let alone that of the United States in particular. Accordingly, they have imposed strict restrictions on military-to-military dialogue with other countries. Third, for at least the past two decades, China’s leaders have explicitly and consistently identified the United States as the country posing the greatest military threat to its interests. Furthermore, Beijing has no military alliances (North Korea a nominal exception), yet is surrounded by close security allies and partners of the United States. These qualities appear to make China a very likely candidate for leading alternative explanations.

Even as far as historical memories and national identity are concerned, China seems to be a hard case. As recently as the late 1990s, China’s leaders often bristled at the notion that China was a ‘rising’—or any kind of—power, or that it would become one in the future. Instead, they tended to cling to the idea that China belonged to (and was a leader of) the group of developing nations. The associated national identity found its roots in a kind of post-colonial nationalism resulting from perceived mistreatment and ‘national humiliation’ (guochi 国耻) by the ‘Western’ imperialist ‘great powers’ (including Japan) between the first Opium War (1842) and China’s ‘liberation’ by the Communist Party upon the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. In other words, opposition to policies normatively associated

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760 Christensen has called China the “high church of realpolitik in the post-Cold War world.” Christensen, “Chinese Realpolitik,” 37. See also Johnston, Social States, 32–33.
761 Friedberg identifies China’s system of authoritarian rule as a likely source of major friction with the United States in the years ahead. He argues that “Beijing’s ultimate aim is to ‘make the world safe for authoritarianism’” and that a “desire for dominance and control” is a direct consequence of its political system. Friedberg, “Hegemony with Chinese Characteristics.” Based on this argument, China seems likely to oppose norms promoted by the liberal democratic leading states, above all the United States.
with ‘great power’ status, much less with ‘the West,’ is essentially baked into the ideological DNA of the ruling party and its military. Accordingly, in the foreign policy domain China’s identity has traditionally come packaged with a set of associated constitutive and behavioral norms that in most cases prescribed categorical and reflexive opposition to policies normatively associated with status as a ‘great power,’ especially a ‘Western one. Thus, any evidence of shifts in this regard would be especially noteworthy.

In sum, these qualities of rising China represent a stark contrast even in comparison to the political systems and cultures of other authoritarian rising powers examined in this study—such as Meiji Japan and Wilhelmine Germany. In short, in the case of contemporary China the deck appears to be stacked powerfully against SAT.

**Expectations of the Leading Alternative Explanations**

The first category of alternative explanations, the power-maximization/offensive realist hypothesis, expects that structural factors will inexorably compel China to follow the military trajectory of past expansionist and revisionist rising powers. China’s leaders will seek to maximize military power and global influence by rapidly investing expanding latent material capabilities into ramping up military spending in order to increasingly project hard, coercive military power overseas, to expand territorially, politically, and economically in support of its expanding interests, and to prepare efficiently for an inevitable clash with the contemporaneous hegemon: the United States. China will increasingly seek to revise the international system in its favor, pursue its expanding interests by force and expansion, and show little restraint militarily when weaker states get in its way. Any international military cooperation in which China’s leaders engage will be limited to opportunistic bandwagoning to help China achieve its
expansionist goals. Its military policies will become increasingly predatory and will be immune to considerations of domestic politics, national identity, and/or domestic or international norms. A sizable existing literature suggests that such a predatory and destabilizing military trajectory is an inevitable outcome for authoritarian China. In the words of one widely-cited American scholar, “China cannot rise peacefully.”

The second alternative explanation, the security-maximizing hypothesis, expects that the self-help imperative under international anarchy will interact with the ‘guns vs. butter’ trade-off to cause China’s leaders to invest as efficiently as possible in the development and employment of military power to confront its most pressing strategic threats and to use other scarce resources to help solve China’s assortment of severe domestic economic, social, political, and environmental problems. In the military domain China will focus exclusively on addressing its vulnerabilities, enhancing its ability to assert long-standing sovereignty claims and preparing its military via internal and external balancing as efficiently as possible to deter and/or fight a 21st-century war against its most feared and most likely adversaries, above all the contemporary hegemon: the United States. Any socialization of U.S. military platforms and missions that takes place will be ‘Waltzian’ in nature—marked exclusively by convergence of China’s behavior around realpolitik behavioral traits. In other words, any visible emulation of more powerful states will be attributable exclusively to competitive pressures—i.e. internal balancing aimed at developing military power efficiently to deter or fight a war to survive. There will be little or no evidence of China cooperating with other countries’ militaries, except to the extent that such

cooperation is a means of external balancing, e.g., forming traditional military alliances against the United States and other countries that threaten China militarily. In short, major changes to China’s military policies will be attributable to straight-forward calculations of external threats to territory and economic interests. These changes will be immune to considerations of domestic politics, national identity, or domestic or international norms.

The third category of alternative explanations, domestic institutions/interest group politics, expects that one or more powerful domestic political actors in China (especially a bureaucracy within the military establishment) will hijack policymaking and advance military policies aimed at enhancing its/their clout within the domestic polity. In other words, policy shifts will not be primarily attributable to decisions made at the pinnacle of state power (i.e., top-down); instead, policy-making will be bottom-up. In the case of China, arguably the leading candidate to play this role in the military domain is the PLA ground forces, the dominant ‘service’ within the PLA since the 1920s.

2. Background

The Rise of Contemporary China

The specific details of China’s record-breaking economic and industrial development since the mid-1990s will be familiar to most contemporary readers and will not be repeated at length here. China’s GDP increased from one-eighth to one-half of U.S. GDP between 2000 and 2011. In 2004, China surpassed Japan to become the world’s second largest consumer of oil and generator of electricity. In the 2007-2010 period China’s economy surpassed that of Japan to become the world’s second largest. China even passed America to become the world’s largest exporter, target of fixed investment, manufacturer, energy consumer, car market, and granter of
patents to residents. China also surpassed the United States in the number of satellite launches in a calendar year, a clear sign of its growing technological prowess.

**China as a ‘rising power’**

By the early 2000s, years of rapid economic growth and industrial development, coupled with the concomitant expansion of calls from domestic and overseas voices for China to play a greater role in the world as a “responsible power,” appear to have catalyzed a gradual, but fundamental, change in China’s self-image. In the earlier period of its rise, China’s leaders and public largely identified China as a “backwards, developing country,” and therefore followed closely Deng Xiaoping’s famous dictum to keep a low-profile (taoguangyanghui 韬光养晦) in foreign affairs. Yet in the new millennium domestic discourse suggests strongly that China’s leaders and people have come to explicitly identify China as a “rising power” (jueqizhong daguo 崖起中大国) and as an aspiring member of the great power club. Foreign discourse concerning “the rise of China” appears to have reinforced and accelerated this shift. As of May 2011, “[t]he on-going rise of China to first-tier nation status” ranked above the September 11 terrorist attacks, the 2008 election of Barack Obama, and all other news stories as the top global news story of the 21st century. Even U.S. government publications, such as recent reports from

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the National Intelligence Council and Department of Defense, regularly and explicitly identify China as a “rising power.”

China’s rapidly changing self-image and identity as a rising power soon began to translate into new broad, role-appropriate policy objectives at the highest echelons of power. In a landmark closed-door meeting of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee Political Bureau Group in November 2003, President Hu Jintao explicitly identified China as a “late-developing great power” (houfazhan daguo 后发展大国) and called on the government to study and draw lessons from the experiences of past rising powers in order to achieve “the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”—a popular slogan widely associated with surging nationalism—and to accede to the ranks of the leading states. The Political Bureau Group commissioned a landmark twelve-part documentary on “The Rise of the Great Powers,” which was later broadcast on (state-owned and operated) China Central Television to wide domestic acclaim and huge ratings.

During this period, Beijing also began to actively promote the concept of “peaceful rise” (heping jueqi 和平崛起) as the core tenet of China’s foreign policy. The concept of “peaceful rise” traces its origins to a 2002 trip to America by Zheng Bijian, a leading Chinese foreign policy thinker and the former executive vice-president of the CCP’s Central Party School. Both the concept’s significance and the objective behind its adoption are captured in Zheng’s 2005

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768 For recent examples, see Mapping the Global Future, 47; Office of the Secretary of Defense, Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China, 2012, 2. “China’s rise” was even the explicit focus of a topical segment during the October 22, 2012 U.S. presidential debate.
769 Jiang, “Mystery.”
770 Ibid.
article in *Foreign Affairs*, entitled “China’s ‘Peaceful Rise’ to Great-Power Status.” Zheng’s article evinced both the consolidation of China’s new self-image as a “rising power” and its ultimate goal: a move up the global hierarchy to join the ranks of the “great powers.” In Zheng’s words, China’s goal was to become a “responsible big power playing a constructive role in the international community […] that […] neither seeks hegemony nor leadership of the world.”

Although there was (and remains) strong ideological, cultural, and practical resistance within China to undertaking greater ‘global responsibilities’ normatively associated with great, in particular ‘Western,’ powers in the contemporary context, concern about its global image and growing international normative pressures appear to be having socializing effects on the way in which China’s leaders conceive of China’s role in the world and its approach to foreign policy. In a remarkable reversal for a regime that was actively exporting Communist revolution and railing against great power “hegemonism” (*baquanzhuyi* 霸权主义) as recently as the 1970s, in recent years China’s leaders have pursued greater international standing in a manner that evinces acute sensitivity to how China’s rise is perceived by higher-ranked states—and by the United States above all others. In fact, the ubiquitous “peaceful rise” (later, “peaceful development”) slogan itself traces its origins directly to severe concerns among China’s leaders about how the United States and other leading states would view China’s growing material power. As a testament to the socializing effects and reminiscent of Meiji Japan’s slogan of ‘following the trends of the times’ (see Chapter 3), leading Chinese foreign policy thinkers often speak of China’s modernization trajectory of rising powers like China as “a process of conforming to the

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standards (ruliu 入流) [of the time].”775 Beginning in the late 1990s, Chinese foreign policy
scholars directly appropriated Clintonian language, calling on China to adopt this mantle fully
and emerge as a “responsible great power” by conforming to widely-held expectations of
“appropriate” great power behavior.776 This trend appears to have accelerated in recent years,
especially in the aftermath of an explicit 2005 call by the U.S. government for China to emerge
as a “responsible stakeholder” in international affairs.777 Whether China’s rise will continue to be
peaceful, of course, remains an open question. Yet as a testament to how rapidly China’s identity
has changed from that of a “backward, developing country” less than two decades ago, beginning
in 2012 China’s leaders began calling for a vague—and presumably peaceful—end state between
Washington and Beijing: “a new-type of great power relations” (xinxing daguo guanxi 新型大国
关系).778

**Domestic unrest and nationalism as driving forces of policy decision-making**

In contrast to the relatively bullish expectations about the continued expansion of China’s
latent power and its emergence as a great power on the international stage, the situation on the
home front has become extremely volatile throughout the period of China’s post-Cold War rise.

Widespread fears within the CCP leadership of social unrest arguably have become the single

775 Quotation from Ambassador Wu Jianmin, President of the China Foreign Affairs University, in “Dadao Hangsi
daoxing [Thoughts on the Great Path],” DVD, Daguo Jueqi 大国崛起 [Rise of the Great Powers] (Zhongyang
Dianshitai, 2006). Similarly, in April 2004, Ruan Zongze, then vice-president of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’
think tank stated that China does not wish to upset the existing order and cause a war; rather, it merely desires “an
equal status as a big country in the international community so as to contribute more to world peace.” Quoted in

776 Shirk, *China*, 106–107. For example, as He Yafei, then China’s assistant foreign minister, said in a 2006
interview, “Whether a country is a regional or world power, it is not for that country to decide alone. If you say we
[China] are a [great] power, then we are. But we are a responsible [great power]. We are a maintainer and builder of
the international system.” Quoted in “China, Shy Giant, Shows Signs of Shedding Its False Modesty,” *New York
Times*, December 9, 2006.

777 Zoellick, “Whither China.”

778 Foreign Minister Yi Wang 王毅外长, “Ruhe Goujian Zhongmei Xinxing Daguo Guanxi 如何构建中美新型大
国关系 [How to Construct China-US New-Type Great Power Relations],” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC*,
greatest force shaping leaders’ decision-making. Since the violent crackdown on massive demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in late spring 1989, a guiding principle of China’s leaders has been that “stability takes precedence over everything” (wending yadao yiqie 稳定压倒一切).

As a testament to the CCP’s insecurity and tenuous grip on power, in a major speech to the Central Military Commission (CMC) in January 1993, then President Jiang Zemin identified “social upheaval” (shehui dongluan 社会动乱) alongside local (regional) wars and armed conflict as one of three primary threats to China’s national security.779

Paradoxically, the rapid GDP growth, modernization, and industrial development that have defined and enabled China’s status as a rising power, and which the CCP leadership has seen as the most effective means by which to enhance regime legitimacy in the wake of Tiananmen, have had the unintended consequences of unleashing powerful negative domestic and social externalities (e.g., environmental degradation, income inequality, inflation, etc.) so severe that domestic unrest has actually worsened as a result. By 2010 leading Chinese scholars estimated the number of annual protests, riots and other mass incidents in China to be 180,000, quadruple the rate of ten years earlier and double the 2006 official figure.780 In 2014, a government-affiliated think tank released a report labeling Beijing’s pollution “near a level that is no longer livable for human beings.”781 Less than two years earlier, CCP fears of popular discontent and unrest had become so severe that in his valedictory speech to the 18th Party Congress then President Hu Jintao explicitly referred to domestic issues as posing an “existential

779 Jiang Zemin Wenxuan 江泽民文选 [Collected Works of Jiang Zemin], vol. 1 (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 2006), 280.
threat to the Party and the State.” In addition to carrots aimed at addressing social ills directly, China’s leaders have also responded to worsening domestic instability and threats to the CCP’s grip on power through various sticks, including a “social management” (shehui guanli 社会管理) campaign and large increases in spending on “public security” (anti-riot forces, police, and other law-and-order-related agencies). Beginning in 2010, China’s public security budget has even surpassed that of China’s rapidly increasing defense budget.

Of perhaps greatest importance for China’s foreign policy and its role in the world, however, has been the leadership’s apparent campaign to deepen social “cohesion” (ningjuli 凝聚力) through appeals to nationalism and policies aimed at the abstract goal of enhancing China’s “international standing” (guoji diwei 国际地位).

Nationalism as a unifying force?

In the post-Cold War era, the CCP appears to have in practice all but abandoned communism and socialism, the erstwhile unifying ideologies in Chinese society and the once “legitimizing rubric” of Communist Party rule since 1949. One major consequence has been an ideological vacuum. In this context the Party has turned to nationalism as a key means by which to promote “national unity” and, in turn, strengthen the Communist Party’s domestic

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782 Hu, “Zhonggong Shibada Zhengzhi Baogao.”
784 Several excellent English-language surveys of how the CPC has exploited nationalism to legitimate its rule and “unify the nation,” and to fill the void left by the abandonment of communism and socialism, include Suisheng Zhao, “Chinese Intellectuals’ Quest for National Greatness and Nationalistic Writing in the 1990s,” 1997, 725–45; Suisheng Zhao, A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2004); Peter Hays Gries, China’s New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy, 1st ed. (University of California Press, 2004).
legitimacy. For example, in the wake of the 1989 Tiananmen tragedy, Party leaders launched a “patriotic education” (aiguozhuyi 爱国主义教育) campaign to cultivate greater loyalty to the Communist Party; in doing so, the Party effectively “elevated nationalism to the status of a spiritual pillar of the communist state.” More recently, a major focal point of the Party’s efforts to deepen “social cohesion” and bolster its grip on power appears to be rhetoric and policies aimed at achieving the abstract and emotional, yet widely popular, goals of achieving the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” (zhonghua minzu de weida fuxing 中华民族的伟大复兴) and achieving international status as a “great power.” Government-affiliated media even candidly characterize the slogan of “national rejuvenation” as “one of the greatest unifying forces in contemporary China” (dangdai zhongguo zui you ningjuli de kouhao zhi yi 当代中国最有凝聚力的口号之一).

China’s leaders often make explicit the links between social instability, the nationalist call for “rejuvenation of the Chinese nation,” and the development of military power. For example, in 1994, General Liu Huaqing, then Vice-Chairman of the Central Military Commission—and therefore one of China’s two highest ranking military officers—wrote in the PLA’s leading journal that demonstrations of patriotism by the Chinese people and the construction of military power should go hand-in-hand. Liu called on China’s leaders to respond to the disruptions caused by rapid modernization and opening up to the outside world by

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786 Zhao, A Nation-State by Construction, 214.


“continuously promot[ing] the spirit of patriotism, carry[ing] on the education of patriotism, and instill[ing] a sense of national defense among the Chinese people, thus further enhancing the cohesion of our nation.” [emphasis added]789 Similarly, in December 2010, China’s defense minister stated that “making the country prosperous and making the armed forces strong are two major cornerstones for realizing the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.”790 Continuing this trend, during the first year of the current administration of President Xi Jinping, civilian and military leaders frequently linked China’s “national rejuvenation” to a “dream” of a strong military and country (qiangjunneng; qiangguomeng 强军梦; 强国梦).791 Chinese scholars assess that the “China dream” has a direct effect on China’s military development and foreign policy.792 A case-in-point is China’s aircraft carrier program, which appears to be widely seen as a powerful symbol of national greatness. A widely circulated November 2013 aerial propaganda photo shows sailors on China’s first aircraft carrier forming the slogan “China Dream, Strong Military Dream” with their bodies. In 2014, the state-owned arms manufacturer responsible for developing it released a ‘Top Gun’-style music video called “Leader for the Dream” (wei mengxiang lingpao 为梦想领跑).793

In stark contrast to public sentiment about military power in late-20th century Japan, public opinion polls suggest that China’s leaders’ judgment that pursuing status as a military great power yields domestic political benefits and strengthens the CCP’s grip on power is sound.

792 Author’s meeting with Chinese scholar in Beijing. April 2013.
Although reliable national public opinion data in China is tough to come by, recent surveys by the Pew Global Attitudes Project have found that ninety-five percent of China’s urban citizens believe that China’s growing military power is a good thing.\textsuperscript{794} Such a data point is remarkable in a country where rampant inflation makes urban food prices increasingly unaffordable, even a social safety net is basically nonexistent, and the annual average per capita disposable income of more than half of the population (700 million rural residents) amounted to a mere USD $898 in 2010.\textsuperscript{795} Meetings with high- and mid-ranking PLA officers suggest that the views of China’s rapidly growing population of Chinese netizens, a very vocal minority which tend to skew hyper-nationalistic, may even be increasingly influential in policy decisions.\textsuperscript{796} Although by no means a democracy, the growing responsiveness of China’s leaders to public sentiment in formulating military policy\textsuperscript{797} appears to be consistent with trends in other policy areas.\textsuperscript{798}

**Baselines: Strategic Threats Shaping China’s Military Trajectory**

Throughout the period of its post-Cold War rise, and especially since the mid-1990s, Chinese strategists have consistently identified the U.S. “hegemon” (baquan 霸权) as China’s primary military threat. In a departure from Deng Xiaoping’s optimistic observation of a global trend toward peace and “multipolarity,” beginning in 1993 China’s leaders became increasing concerned about what they saw as the U.S. “superpower’s” intent to dominate the post-Cold War

\textsuperscript{794}“Pew Global Attitudes Project Question Database,” PewResearch Global Attitudes Project, accessed October 12, 2012, http://www.pewglobal.org/question-search/. The question is asked as “Is China’s growing military power a good or bad thing for our country?” It is important to note, however, that this question has not been asked since 2007.

\textsuperscript{795}Damian Tobin, “Inequality in China,” BBC News, June 29, 2011.

\textsuperscript{796}Jae-ho Hwang, “PLA’s Assessment of International Environment in the Future,” in PLA in the Next Decade (presented at the PLA in the Next Decade, Taipei, Taiwan, 2011), 85.

\textsuperscript{797}Multiple meetings in Beijing with Chinese scholars and military officers, 2011-2013.

\textsuperscript{798}Each Politburo member’s office now reportedly has full-time staff dedicated to tracking netizen sentiment online, which effectively gives netizens “disproportionate influence over policy.” Author’s meeting in Beijing with Chinese scholar, April 2013.
global order and to conquer the world with force. Since the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait crisis, Beijing has consistently identified deterring or, if necessary, defeating likely U.S. military intervention in a possible cross-Strait conflict as the PLA’s “Main Strategic Direction” (zhuyao zhanlue fangxiang 主要战略方向). As a widely-used official PLA textbook notes, military leaders identify the “Taiwan issue [as] the largest and the last obstacle which we must conquer in Chinese people’s path to rejuvenation in 21st century, and it is by all means the most important in our national security strategy in this century.”

This trend continues in the second decade of the 21st century.

Beyond the specific threat posed by the U.S. military as it concerns the status of Taiwan, Beijing also identifies America as its primary strategic competitor because of Washington’s close political and security ties with those countries on China’s immediate periphery with which Beijing has increasingly volatile disputes over maritime and territorial sovereignty claims. More generally, a widely-held belief in Beijing, especially among PLA leaders, maintains that U.S. leaders begrudge China its growing economic wherewithal, political influence, and international standing and increasingly seek to “contain” (ezhi 遏制) China’s rise and to forestall its ascension to its ‘rightful place’ among the great powers.

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801 Thomas J. Bickford, Heidi A. Holz, and Frederic Velluci, Jr., Uncertain Waters: Thinking About China’s Emergence as a Maritime Power, CRM (CNA, September 2011), 73.

China also faces a number of other potential threats close to its home territory, including a disadvantageous strategic geography as a continental state sharing land borders with fourteen states; four of which have nuclear weapons. Over the past century it had major military clashes with the four most powerful among its neighbors—India, Russia, Japan, and Vietnam. Furthermore, China’s rapidly expanding trade and investment, as well as the number of its citizens working overseas, also present new security concerns.

In sum, since the 1990s the qualitatively superior militaries of the United States and its security partners and allies—especially that of Japan—have been seen as the primary military threats to China’s territorial, security, and economic interests. Bickford, et al. sum up the salience of these threats to China’s leaders thus: “Everything the United States says and does influences China’s security policy.” Preparations for a possible conflict over Taiwan’s international status, which the CCP identifies as a renegade province that has yet to reunite with the Mainland, remains the PLA’s top strategic priority. Furthermore, Beijing has yet to resolve any of its maritime territorial disputes, all of which could foment conflicts with the U.S. military. Together with continental China’s unenviable strategic geography, this suggests that from Beijing’s perspective China’s military development has good reasons to remain exclusively focused on the most likely threats closest to home and on preparing for a high-intensity conflict with its most likely adversary—the United States.

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803 Bickford, Holz, and Velluci, Jr., Uncertain Waters, 52.
3. Strategic Decision Points

The 1990s: China’s Post-Cold War Strategic Priorities Become Clear—the Triple Shocks and Relatively Efficient, Concrete Contingency-based Defense Planning

During the second half of the 1980s, China’s close military cooperation with the United States and significantly improved relations with the Soviet Union meant that it had no clear military adversary. This new, relatively benign, regional strategic environment improved further following the Soviet Union’s collapse. China’s leaders responded by engaging in low-intensity “peacetime army construction” (*heping shiqi jundui jianshe* 和平时期军队建设). Consequently, China’s official defense spending declined in real terms.\(^804\) Three shocks in the 1990s, however, quickly transformed the threat perceptions of China’s leaders and, consequently, their perspective on the exigency of military modernization.\(^805\) With minor exceptions, at the beginning of China’s post-Cold War rise the first series of major changes to force development and employment policies generally constituted a relatively efficient response to what China’s leaders perceived as external threats to core material interests. As the following paragraphs illustrate, at least at this early stage of development, shifts in China’s military policy conformed most closely to the expectations of the security-maximizing hypothesis.

The first shock occurred when the U.S. military’s decimation of Iraqi ground forces during the Persian Gulf War, specifically Operation Desert Storm in 1991, made clear that the PLA was not prepared for warfare in the information age. This demonstration effect of high-tech, modern military power caused Beijing to designate military modernization an urgent task.\(^806\) It

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\(^804\) Liff and Erickson, “Demystifying.”

\(^805\) For a concise overview, see Shambaugh, *Modernizing*, 3–6.

\(^806\) This was manifest in a PLA Daily article on air power published less than two weeks after a ceasefire was declared in the Persian Gulf War. The article argued that “all militaries [must] inevitably evolve from physical [/quantitative, human] strength [体能] into technological mastery [技能], and then evolve into an intelligent military
prompted a major doctrinal shift: abandonment of Deng Xiaoping’s anachronistic “People’s war under modern conditions” and a push to develop the PLA to win “local wars under high-tech conditions” through an information-centric “revolution in military affairs” (RMA; junshi biange—a term appropriated directly from U.S. military planners. An internal speech delivered by Jiang Zemin to the CMC in 1993 stated that “the facts of the Gulf War” demonstrated that high technology and precision attack weapons, inter alia, provided those countries which could effectively exploit them with a “strategic initiative.” The leadership subsequently placed an increased focus on mechanization, mobility, flexibility, power projection, precision-strike, and joint operations. Interestingly, and as will be discussed in the analysis of more recent decisions, a core component of the RMA was a shift away from several of the major military platforms of the previous half-century, such as aircraft carriers. These platforms were (and are) considered extremely vulnerable to military technologies in the information age (e.g., satellite imagery; precision-guided missiles).

The second shock occurred when, in response to PLA exercises and missile tests intended to intimidate Taiwan during the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait crisis, the Clinton Administration carried out the largest display of U.S. military strength in East Asia since the end of the Vietnam War. From Beijing’s perspective, this display of U.S. military firepower marked the first time since 1971 that Washington had directly targeted China militarily. Thenceforth, and ever since, deterring, delaying, and/or disrupting possible U.S. ‘interference’ in a cross-Strait conflict has been the PLA’s chief priority and “main strategic direction.”


807 Quoted in Finkelstein, “China’s National Military Strategy, in Kamphausen and Scobell, Right-Sizing the PLA, 102.
The third shock was NATO’s 1999 war against Serbia. American PLA expert David Shambaugh assesses that the war had two major consequences for Beijing’s threat perceptions. First, China’s leaders interpreted the conflict as evidence of U.S. willingness to “interfere” militarily in regional conflicts under what Beijing saw as a contrived veneer of “humanitarian intervention” in order to further Washington’s alleged “hegemonic ambitions.” The war reportedly fomented widespread concerns that the United States might carry out a similar “humanitarian intervention” in China; e.g., in the event of major ethnic unrest in Tibet or Xinjiang. Second, it demonstrated that the era of U.S. ‘superpower’ had arrived, and that in the post-Cold War world the U.S. did not intend to reduce its forward-deployed global military presence or alliances in East Asia. In the views of many contemporary Chinese military analysts, now that America had gained control of Europe, Asia would be next [xianouhouya 先欧后亚].

In short, seen from Beijing, NATO’s 1999 intervention effectively poured cold water on the late Deng Xiaoping’s 1985 observations that the “global trend” in international relations was toward “peace and development” and multipolarity. Following the U.S. military’s accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade growing numbers of Chinese analysts considered war with the United States to be imminent.

**Force Development and Force Employment Decisions during the 1990s**

How closely did shifts in force development implemented during the 1990s accord with shifts in perceived threats and interests and evaluations of potential adversaries’ vulnerabilities?

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808 Many Chinese analysts failed to even recognize, or simply ignored, the fundamental humanitarian rationale for NATO’s intervention.
809 Shambaugh, *Modernizing*, 5, 84.
What began as reflexive mimicry of U.S. military doctrine in the immediate aftermath of the Persian Gulf War had within a few years evolved into a relatively efficient focus on developing ‘asymmetric’ capabilities aimed at posing unacceptable costs on Beijing’s most likely, and conventionally superior, adversaries.\(^{812}\)

In pursuit of this objective, arguably China’s most remarkable and strategically significant military policy shift was to embrace a conventional ballistic missile-centric strategy aimed at developing the ability to strike enemy bases and ultimately, ships, from launchers on the Chinese mainland. In the early 1990s, leaders made a major strategic decision to accelerate new Chinese missile systems and the PLA’s Second Artillery Corps (SAC) created its first-ever conventional missile arm. The SAC’s first conventional missile unit was stood up in 1991, carried out its first test-launch in November 1993, and was involved in the military exercises that led to the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis.\(^{813}\) In a rare case of PLA innovation that has attracted immense media attention in recent years, in the immediate aftermath of the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis, China reportedly decided to begin research on an anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM) designed to destroy, or disable, U.S. surface ships, especially aircraft carriers.\(^{814}\) In the two decades since, China’s conventional missile arsenal has grown to be seven times the size of China’s nuclear weapons arsenal, with newer, higher-quality and longer-range SRBMS, MRBMs,

\(^{812}\) Christensen, “Posing Problems,” 7.
\(^{814}\) Mark Stokes, *China’s Evolving Conventional Strategic Strike Capability* (Project 2049 Institute, September 14, 2009), 20.
IRBMs, and LACMs coming online at a rapid clip. By 2010, the Pentagon classified China’s program as “the most active land-based ballistic and cruise missile program in the world.”

China’s embrace of conventional ballistic missiles has become the central pillar of what U.S. analysts frequently refer to as an “anti-access/area-denial” strategy aimed at deterring, and if deterrence fails, delaying and disrupting the U.S. military’s ability to project power in East Asia, especially in the environs around Taiwan, and to hold fixed assets—e.g., U.S. bases—surface ships, and information and logistical networks vulnerable to missile strikes. Judging that logistics and force deployment times are the Achilles heel of U.S. force projection, the PLA has aimed to develop these ‘asymmetric’ capabilities to exploit China’s geographical advantage vis-à-vis the United States.

In sum, during the first decade of its post-Cold War rise, China’s leaders faced three external “shocks” that precipitated several major decision points. The military actions of the United States in the Persian Gulf War (1991), the Taiwan Strait Crisis (1995-1996), and the NATO war against Serbia (1999), coupled with the democratization of Taiwan and its perceived moves toward a formal declaration of independence, caused China’s leaders to conclude that the PLA was backward and needed to be modernized to carry out war under “high-tech conditions.” In Jiang Zemin’s words, the PLA needed to carry out a “Revolution in Military Affairs” and to implement the “historic task” (lishi renwu 历史任务) of “mechanization and

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informatization” (jixiehua he xinxihua jianshe 机械化和信息化建设). Seen from Beijing, developing the ability to carry out and win a high-intensity war with a highly-capable adversary (such as the U.S. military) was “a political requirement, military imperative, and matter of national survival.”

In short, during the 1990s and early 2000s China’s leaders came to identify the U.S. military as China’s most capable and most likely future adversary. China’s leaders prudently chose to rely on a low-cost, asymmetric, and highly efficient development strategy designed in response to specific external security threats to longstanding sovereignty claims, Taiwan above all. And despite growing international pressure, they remained fiercely (and ideologically) opposed to overseas military deployments. In sum, major changes to China’s force development profile during this period appear to evince a largely threat-based, efficient response to perceived external threats, especially vis-à-vis the United States military. Although there was a fair amount of mimicry of U.S. capabilities there was also noteworthy innovation—e.g., the conventional ballistic missile program. Thus, it appears that early on in its rise China invested its growing economic and industrial wherewithal into maximizing its security in a relatively efficient manner. Relative to the security maximization hypothesis, SAT and the other alternative explanations do a poor job of explaining the associated force development shifts.

Over the next decade, however, as China’s economic and industrial growth picked up pace and its identity as a rising power began to consolidate, its leaders would begin to implement several shifts to military policy with dubious connections to stated strategic priorities.

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818 Jiang Zemin Wenxuan 江泽民文选 [Collected Works of Jiang Zemin], vol. 3 (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 2006), 162.
820 Ibid., 98–99.
821 Christensen, “Posing Problems.”
The Early 2000s: Rising China as Social Climber: The “Great Power Dream” Consolidates and the Pursuit of Prestige and Status as a “Military Great Power”

As China’s economic and industrial expansion accelerated in the first decade of the new millennium, both the rapid increase in China’s investment in military power and the PLA’s expanding mission set have been remarkable. Between 2002 and 2011, China’s official defense spending increased 3.5x in nominal terms (2.3x in real terms). As discussed in the previous section, throughout this period relatively efficient investments aimed at enhancing the PLA’s ability to assert longstanding sovereignty claims over disputed territories in its immediate periphery (*jinhai* 近海; “Near Seas”)—especially Taiwan—have also continued.

Nevertheless, several unprecedented changes to China’s force development and employment policies that have taken place have potentially important, and perhaps salubrious, long-term implications for its military trajectory. In important cases, some the associated policy shifts are theoretically puzzling, for at least three reasons. First, in important cases these military policy shifts appear to have minimal direct connections to safeguarding what China’s own leaders identify as pressing strategic interests. They appear to be aimed at enhancing China’s international prestige and image-building by essentially role-playing as a ‘military great power’ based on leaders’ evaluation of contemporaneous norms associated with ‘great power’ status. Second, by China’s leaders’ own admission, throughout this period China’s military has remained inferior qualitatively relative to those of its most likely adversaries, especially the U.S. military and Japan’s Self-defense Forces. Third, these shifts have occurred prior to any of China’s longstanding strategic priorities being resolved, especially as it concerns asserting

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822 Liff and Erickson, “Demystifying.”
outstanding sovereignty claims to disputed territory in the Near Seas: Taiwan and maritime territory in the South and East China Seas. Unsurprisingly, therefore, these policies have attracted resistance from the PLA itself.

The two most significant strategic shifts during this period in terms of China’s own longstanding strategic priorities, ideology, and foreign policy traditions are its leaders’ gradual embrace of military operations other than war (MOOTW) and the nascent push to develop for a blue-water navy for the first time since China summarily ‘quit the seas’ nearly six centuries ago.

**Military Operations Other Than War**

In a landmark departure from longstanding past practice, on December 24, 2004 President Hu Jintao ordered China’s military to embrace four “New Historic Missions” (*xin lishi shiming* 新历史使命; below, NHM).\(^823\) The two externally-oriented missions—to “provide a strong strategic support for safeguarding national interests” (e.g., China’s growing, and increasingly global, maritime rights and interests) and to “play an important role in maintaining world peace and promoting common development”—are unprecedented in China’s modern history.\(^824\) The fourth NHM was particularly noteworthy, as it appears to evince a fundamental change in the way China’s leaders think about the role of military power and, more generally, China’s larger role in the world. In effect, Hu had ordered the PLA to abandon its apparent longstanding reluctance to deploy overseas and to embrace a new role as an active supporter of

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\(^823\) These four “new historical missions” are to safeguard CPC rule, a peaceful environment to ensure the country’s strategic development, national interests, and world peace and common development. “Zai Xin de Lishi Qidian Shang Kuobu Xiang Qian [Striding Forward at the New Historic Starting Point],” *Xinhua wang* 新华网, August 7, 2007.

international security. The NHMs have since come to be referred to in China’s state-owned media as “the three provides, and one role,” (san ge tigong, yi ge fahui 三个提供，一个发挥), and have evolved into the central focus of China’s military modernization strategy beyond its longstanding focus on Taiwan.\(^{825}\)

Hu Jintao’s 2004 speech prompted a wider domestic debate about nontraditional security and eventually led the PLA to embrace the concept of military operations other than war (MOOTW; feizhanzheng junshi xingdong 非战争军事行动). This concept, which was previously alien to Chinese strategic thought, was appropriated directly from U.S. military research. In fact, MOOTW entailed a number of nontraditional security operations that were actively promoted by America and its allies and security partners but with which the PLA had negligible previous experience. These operations included humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, maritime security cooperation, military diplomacy, anti-piracy and other forms of sea-lane security, and participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations.\(^{826}\) Since 2004 China appears to have gradually embraced the associated operations. In recent years, the Central Military Commission’s leading think tank has identified MOOTW as a key component of military operations.\(^{827}\) The 17\(^{th}\) Party Congress (2007) even enshrined MOOTW in the CCP Constitution.\(^{828}\)

Why have China’s leaders begun to order the PLA to “play an important role in maintaining world peace and promoting common development?” The PLA’s orientation toward an expanded focus on MOOTW poses an especially salient puzzle for international relations

\(^{825}\) “Zai Xin de Lishi Qidian.”


\(^{827}\) Cited in Bickford, Holz, and Velluci, Jr., \textit{Uncertain Waters}, 54.

theory, which has traditionally presumed that under international anarchy states will be compelled to invest growing wealth efficiently in expanding their military power in order to enhance their ability to fight and win wars with other states and to gain zero-sum advantage over competitors. China’s civilian leaders have ordered the PLA to increasingly emphasize the associated operations and to contribute to international security despite the fact that they simultaneously recognize that the PLA has neither achieved even basic military modernization goals nor resolved any of its core strategic objectives—above all “reunification” with Taiwan. As far as preparation for warfighting is concerned, as discussed below some of these investments in non-traditional security operations and ‘soft power’ appear to be minimally useful, even distractions.

Beijing’s decision to significantly expand the PLA’s involvement in overseas MOOTW appears to be driven in part by a desire among China’s leaders to enhance China’s international standing through increasing conformity to what they understand to be great power behavioral norms in the military domain. In other words, an important goal seems to be to seek to ‘play a role’ in order to gain recognition from the international community—especially the United States—as a ‘responsible great power.’ As Admiral Tian Zhong, then commander of the Northern Fleet, wrote in an internal PLA journal in 2008, “molding a positive image [is] the important task of the PLAN carrying out MOOTW operations.” Tian called on the PLAN to “during operations reveal China’s fearlessness and image[s] of [its] peaceful rise and as the model of a mighty military and model of civilization.” [emphasis added] Not coincidentally,

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830 Ibid.
the associated shifts in China’s military policies lag similar shifts in U.S. military policy by just a few years and appear to be largely emulative.\textsuperscript{832}

This section briefly examines the evolution of China’s military policies in three core categories of nontraditional security operations: UN peacekeeping operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and anti-piracy operations. Despite longstanding ideological opposition to overseas deployments and stiff resistance from within the PLA itself, China’s military has begun to engage actively in these missions. Although the scale of China’s contribution remains far lower than many in Washington and at the UN might like, it is also important to recognize what shifts have occurred, as well as trend lines. Each of these missions represents a change in the way that China develops and employs its military power. Although it is still early in China’s rise, available evidence suggests that the continued expansion of the PLA’s involvement in these missions, especially multinational security cooperation, and provision of other global public goods would not only be welcomed by the leading state: the United States. It would also go far toward enhancing China’s claim to great power status. It is important to stress that the associated pathway is categorically different from that of rising powers in other eras (i.e., different normative contexts) and supports SAT’s core claim that the markers and behaviors associated with membership in the great power club are socially contingent and shaped largely by the contemporaneous leading state’s own behavior and rhetoric.

Because overseas MOOTW are primarily a naval responsibility, this section will focus largely, though not exclusively, on China’s navy, aka the PLAN.\textsuperscript{833}

\textsuperscript{832} For example, PLA leaders have even noted explicitly the overlap between China’s concept of “multiple military tasks” (多样化军事任务) and the six core mission areas of the U.S. military as delineated in the “Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review” (DOD, 2009). General Caihou Xu, “The Chinese Military: A Force for Multiple Military Tasks” (presented at the Statesmen’s Forum: Gen. Xu Caihou, Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 26, 2009), http://csis.org/event/statesmens-forum-general-xu-caihou.

UN Peacekeeping Operations

The rapidity and scope of the transformation of China’s role in UN Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO) from fervent, ideologically-opposed dissenter as recently as the mid-1990s to a leading global contributor today has been remarkable. For most of the post-1978 ‘Reform and Opening Up’ period, China’s leaders were deeply skeptical of UNPKO. They consistently refused to participate actively in associated operations because of a long-standing principle of “non-interference in other countries’ internal affairs” (buganshe neizheng 不干涉内政).\(^{834}\) As China’s rise accelerated and domestic and overseas calls for it to become a responsible player in international society proliferated, however, Beijing’s ideological opposition to UNPKO began to soften. Nevertheless, Beijing was still willing to use its third- and fourth-ever UNSC vetoes to prevent proposed UNPKO in Guatemala (1997) and Macedonia (1999) due to issues related to those countries’ policies toward Taiwan.

As China’s economic and industrial wherewithal surged to new heights in the new millennium and precipitated a gradual embrace of an identity as a ‘rising power,’ however, China’s stance vis-à-vis UNPKO appears to have undergone a fundamental shift. A major turning point in China’s stance toward UNPKO occurred when, for the first time, Beijing stated that it would accept UNPKO with an enforcement mandate (i.e., Chapter VII operations, which authorize “all necessary means”).\(^{835}\) Since 2001, and especially since the promulgation of the “New Historic Missions” in 2004, China’s policy toward UNPKO has experienced a series of

\(^{834}\) Other historical factors were lingering resentment of the UN given its role in the Korean War and the fact that Taipei held China’s seat on the Security Council until 1971.

rapid and significant changes.\textsuperscript{836} China has established a Peacekeeping Affairs Office within its Ministry of Defense (MND); become the largest contributor of manpower among permanent members of the UN Security Council, increasing its contribution of personnel from only 106 observers and police and zero troops in 2001 to 1924 peacekeepers—including 1800 troops—in 2011;\textsuperscript{837} created specialized PLA units for UNPKO; established a dedicated training facility at the MND (2009);\textsuperscript{838} and deployed a PLA officer on a 3.5-year assignment to lead a UNPKO force in Western Sahara (2007-2011).\textsuperscript{839} China has supported every mission since International Force East Timor (INTERFET) in 1999\textsuperscript{840} and has overcome strong resistance from within the PLA—whose leaders have long been concerned about casualties—not only to vote in favor of UN resolutions authorizing military force, but also to participate in UNPKO involving the use of force.\textsuperscript{841}

Further shifts have occurred in the second decade of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. In 2010, Beijing for the first time authorized the participation of its peacekeepers in PKO within a country that recognizes Taiwan—Haiti—a characteristic that only a decade earlier appeared to be sufficiently offensive to Beijing to warrant a rare veto at the UN Security Council. In doing so, China’s leaders de facto violated another cardinal principle of post-1949 Chinese foreign policy. During this deployment, Chinese peacekeepers even engaged in joint patrols with their American counterparts.\textsuperscript{842} In another major departure from decades of past practice, in January 2012, China

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Pang} Pang, “Issues,” 51-52.
\end{thebibliography}
deployed a PLA combat unit overseas for the first time since its 1979 invasion of Vietnam: to participate in the UNPKO in South Sudan. That was followed by China’s deployment in 2013 of a contingent of several hundred combat troops from the PLA’s 16th Army to support a UNPKO mission in Mali. Thus, in the span of a year, Beijing twice—and for the first times ever—violated its decades-old pledges to never place combat troops on foreign soil—and it only did so to support a UN- (and U.S.-sanctioned) military operation of a type that its leaders had opposed categorically, and ideologically, only a few years earlier. All told, in the span of three years China’s embrace of UNPKO resulted in the de facto violation of two core tenets of China’s post-1949 military policies, both for reasons with at best negligible connections to its material interests. As Chambers argues, China’s growing involvement in UNPKO has already begun to shape the structure of the PLA; and will continue to do so in the future. Although the scope is relatively small, these PKO missions nevertheless constitute an important, constructive contribution to international security.

What accounts for this change in China’s perspective on and its completely voluntary embrace of a greater role in UNPKO? Available evidence suggests that the desire to role-play is a primary driver. According to MND, China’s participation in UNPKO “is no other than an embodiment of China’s courage to assume international security responsibility” (sic.) and part of its effort to “fulfill responsibilities of a great power” (sic.). Many Western and Chinese scholars concur with this assessment of the causal mechanism at play, noting the magnitude of this major foreign policy shift in the context of China’s past policies and principles. They also

identify the key catalyst as China’s changing self-image as a rising power, its desire to be seen as a responsible player in international affairs, and the resulting “sense of obligation” to adopt the role expected of it by its peers. For example, Ma Xiaojun, a professor in the International Strategy Department of the CCP’s influential Central Party School, argues that “global great powers” have obligations to “give back” (hui kui 回馈) to the international community by providing public goods. To fulfill this role, he has called on China to adopt those responsibilities. Similarly, Pang Zhongying writes that China’s expanding role in UNPKO is best understood as “Beijing’s early experiment in undertaking more international responsibilities” and as “the benign projection of power by a rising nation.”

To be sure, China remains cautious and continues to focus on relatively “easy” parts of UNPKO in order to avoid egregious violations of its long-standing (but apparently weakening) principle of “non-interference.” Nevertheless, in the post-Iraq War era in which even the U.S. public is increasingly reluctant to intervene militarily (e.g., Syria in 2013), this hardly makes China an egregious outlier. It is also important to note that China participates exclusively in operations receiving the explicit authorization of and conducted under the UN Security Council. Nevertheless, as evinced by the rapid quantitative increase of and qualitative shift in the nature of China’s participation in UNPKO over the past fifteen years, including unprecedented deployments of PLA combat units to participate in operations in South Sudan and

850 Dennis J. Blasko, “U.S. and Chinese Approaches to Peacekeeping and Stability Operations,” in Goldstein, Quite Complementary, 88.
Mali in 2012 and 2013, respectively, and symbolic joint patrols conducted by Chinese and U.S. peacekeepers in Haiti in early 2010, the general trend is clear. In a major departure from past practice foreign policy principles, China’s leaders appear to have embraced UN peacekeeping operations as a component of China’s push for status as a “great power” and as its gradually expanding role as a supporter of international security.

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

Until recently, the idea that states could, much less should, employ major military assets in support of humanitarian assistance and/or disaster relief operations simply did not exist. In other words, no such precedent, much less a norm, of military force employment existed. In fact, until recently even ostensibly ‘humanitarian operations,’ such as the Berlin Airlift, were driven overwhelmingly by geopolitics and concrete military threats to material interests. Over the past decade, however, the U.S. military’s rapidly expanding involvement in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) operations across the globe has effectively generated a new norm concerning the development and employment of military assets by great powers—one which runs directly counter to the more traditional thinking that has dominated mainstream IR theory.

A particularly salient turning point in this regard was the normative demonstration effect of the U.S.-led multinational HA/DR operation in response to the massive earthquake and tsunami that devastated Southeast Asia in December 2004. Using this disaster as a starting point, this section briefly discusses the establishment and gradual consolidation of the nascent

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associated great power force employment norm, as well as the manner and extent to which it appears to have begun to shape recent changes to China’s recent military policies.

The U.S. military’s response to the tragic December 2004 earthquake and tsunami that struck off the coast of Sumatra and caused over 200,000 deaths was rapid. Immediately after the tsunami occurred, U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) set up an Operations Planning Team. The next day President George W. Bush authorized an HA/DR operation. The following day, PACOM formed Joint Task Force 536 (later Combined Support Force 536) to plan and implement the multinational HA/DR mission that became known as Operation UNIFIED ASSISTANCE (below, ‘OUA’). Under U.S. leadership, within a week CSF 536 involved a coalition of military forces provided by Australia, Japan, Singapore, France, Malaysia, and Russia. Although these countries made significant contributions, the U.S. military was far and away the leading player. Over the next month, the U.S. military alone deployed to the region more than 13,000 personnel; more than two dozen ships—including an aircraft carrier strike group, an expeditionary strike group, numerous military sealift command ships, including the USNS Mercy hospital ship; and over 100 (45 fixed-wing, 68 rotary) aircraft, which flew a total of more than 3500 missions; and delivered more than half a million pounds of relief supplies. All told, OUA was far and away the largest-scale (and most expensive) HA/DR effort in history.

As a testament to the significance of this unprecedented operation for prevailing ideas, OUA appears to have marked a clear turning point in the U.S. civilian and military leadership’s own understanding of the potential for the non-kinetic employment of military power—and

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852 Ibid., vii.
853 Ibid., 8.
HA/DR operations specifically—to be a major source of ‘soft power.’

Concrete evidence of these changing norms of force employment soon manifest in authoritative U.S. military publications, such as the *Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* (2007). In an unprecedented development the *Cooperative Strategy* defined both cooperative maritime security to mitigate threats short of war and HA/DR as two of only six “core capabilities” of U.S. maritime power. Subsequent HA/DR operations have further confirmed the powerful and positive humanitarian and diplomatic effects of these operations. A salient example is the large-scale, and hugely successful, employment of U.S. military assets, including—again—an aircraft carrier, during *Operation Tomodachi*—the U.S.-Japan joint response to the devastating March 11, 2011 earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear incident in northeast Japan. Another example is a similar operation in the Philippines following Typhoon Haiyan in 2013.

*China Responds*

After *OUA*, both U.S. and Chinese military officers drew sharp contrasts between the U.S. military’s ability to deploy in overseas HA/DR operations and the PLA’s inability to contribute anything—even in its own backyard. Indeed, it was primarily because of China’s lack of the necessary platforms and its inability to interoperate with foreign navies that the U.S. government did not even invite China to join the multinational *OUA* in the first place. The PLA’s inability to contribute was reportedly a source of great embarrassment among China’s leaders and strategists; and PLAN leaders in particular reportedly felt upstaged by the U.S. Navy’s carrier-

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855 Author’s meeting with retired U.S. naval officer; Newport, R.I. January 2012.
858 Author’s email exchange with former senior U.S. government official, December 2012.
led response.\textsuperscript{859} One key takeaway from OUA for Beijing appears to have been that China had a huge soft power gap with America in Southeast Asia.

As it concerns associated changes to force development policies, although it is of course not the sole driver, since 2004 PLAN procurement patterns, as well as China’s growing involvement in overseas HA/DR, suggest that a desire to ensure that China can contribute may be shaping decisions about developing and employing military power. For example, the director of the PLAN’s Naval Research Institute reportedly concluded from the U.S. Navy’s tsunami relief missions and subsequent HA/DR operations that large naval vessels, including aircraft carriers and amphibious ships, are necessary for MOOTW-related “heavy tasks.”\textsuperscript{860} Numerous U.S. analysts suggest that OUA may even have been a primary cause of China’s change of heart on surface ships, including aircraft carriers.\textsuperscript{861} Interviews in Beijing suggest a similar driver at play.\textsuperscript{862} The dubious utility of some of the associated platforms in China’s most likely high-intensity military conflicts (see later section) provides additional support for this possibility.

As it concerns associated changes to force employment policies, despite decades of ideological opposition to any involvement in ‘humanitarian’ operations, in recent years China has also become involved in and supportive of international humanitarian assistance (IHA). In 2008, just one year after the U.S.’ Cooperative Strategy for 21\textsuperscript{st} Century Seapower identified HA/DR as one of the six “core capabilities” of U.S. maritime power, the PLA’s General Staff Department followed suit by also identifying IHA operations as one of the PLA’s top

\textsuperscript{862} Author’s meeting with Chinese military officer in Beijing, April 2013.
China has gradually begun to deploy military assets overseas to contribute to HA/DR efforts within and outside East Asia. Recent examples include deploying rotary aircraft to support relief efforts in the wake of major floods in Pakistan and, despite extremely tense political relations due to the existence of volatile bilateral territorial disputes, surprising, albeit limited, offers to could-be adversaries Japan and the Philippines in the wake of major natural disasters in 2011 and 2013, respectively. The PLA has also expanded its involvement in bilateral and multilateral HA/DR exercises with the United States and its allies. In 2014 the PLA will for the first time join multilateral HA/DR exercises at the U.S.-led RIMPAC 2014, the world’s largest international maritime exercise.

China’s increasing procurement of platforms necessary for and to support HA/DR operations overseas suggests another shift in the manner in which Beijing develops and employs military power with potential long-term consequences, and one that also appears to be shaped by a desire to play a role as a more active contributor to international security. Until recently, China’s leaders—especially within the PLA—showed very little interest in cooperative security, or “soft power,” and were staunchly opposed to any military operations abroad, especially those missions carried out under the alleged ‘guise of humanitarianism.’ Yet their views appear to have undergone an important, albeit gradual, change since the U.S.-led OUA in 2004-2005. Although the impact is difficult to measure, some Chinese military experts also point to “enormous public pressure” from within China to participate in these HA/DR missions as a means to stake China’s

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claim to great power status.\textsuperscript{866} Foreign analysts assess that China’s growing embrace of HA/DR appears to be aimed at achieving two mutually-reinforcing objectives: enhancing China’s reputation as a “responsible power” by engaging in the “normal practices of respected major powers”\textsuperscript{867} and presenting a “positive face to its military development”—both overseas and at home.\textsuperscript{868}

\textit{Force Development and Employment Case Study: China’s first-ever purpose-built hospital ship}

In addition to relying heavily on aircraft carriers and amphibious assault ships to carry out overseas HA/DR operations, another major and unprecedented force employment decision made by the U.S. government during \textit{OUA} was the deployment of USNS \textit{Mercy}—one of the U.S. Navy’s two hospital ships. The decision to deploy appears to have been viewed by the Navy internally as very important, as it effectively represented a major shift in thinking about the purpose of these ships. An after-action report commissioned by the U.S. Navy noted the significant obstacles that militated against \textit{Mercy}’s deployment, including opportunity costs during a period in which the U.S. was actively fighting two wars overseas, economic costs, and significant institutional and normative obstacles within the U.S. government and military.\textsuperscript{869} As a “deployable ‘national asset,’” \textit{Mercy} belonged to a category of ship intended exclusively for use in instances when the U.S. government wants to “put the world on notice in time of war.” Accordingly, \textit{Mercy}’s deployment to support \textit{OUA} was not only unprecedented, it also required direct presidential authorization. Among U.S. military leaders the prospect of using a hospital ship in an international HA/DR operation was reportedly very controversial. Accordingly, debate

\textsuperscript{866} “China’s Military Launches Diplomatic Charm Offensive.”
\textsuperscript{867} Scholar Ron Huisken of the Australian National University, quoted in Ibid.
\textsuperscript{869} Elleman, \textit{Waves}.
over whether to give the order to deploy to Southeast Asia generated a high level of interest.\textsuperscript{870} Were it not for the persistent lobbying of the Pentagon by Admiral Thomas Fargo, who recognized the potential political and diplomatic significance of \textit{OUA}, \textit{Mercy} probably would not have been activated and deployed.\textsuperscript{871}

Coupled with the humanitarian accomplishments and the diplomatic benefits of the mission, \textit{Mercy}’s successful deployment to Southeast Asia in effect generated a new norm concerning force employment.\textsuperscript{872} The mission’s positive impact on America’s image in the region—for example, \textit{Mercy}’s accomplishments reportedly brought the leader of Indonesia’s military to tears—and its political relations with the affected countries convinced some U.S. military officers that a “hospital ship can be the best diplomat of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century.”\textsuperscript{873} \textit{Mercy}’s commanding officer assessed that the mission became a powerful political symbol of America’s ability and willingness to assist countries in need—one of the hallmarks of responsible great power behavior in the contemporary era.\textsuperscript{874} Subsequent deployments of U.S. hospital ships to participate in HA/DR missions around the world have accelerated the consolidation of this nascent norm.

Consistent with the argument of the previous section, the deployment of \textit{Mercy} in early 2005, as well as the subsequent overseas deployments of \textit{Mercy} and (fellow hospital ship) USNS \textit{Comfort} as parts of both \textit{Pacific Partnership} (a U.S.-led multinational humanitarian assistance initiative established after the 2004 tsunami relief effort) and \textit{Continuing Promise}, appears to have shaped China’s leaders’ own thinking about force development and employment.\textsuperscript{875}

\textsuperscript{870} “China, U.S. Launch Rival Mercy Aid Ships,” \textit{Australian Associated Press}, June 20, 2011.
\textsuperscript{871} Elleman, \textit{Waves}, 80.
\textsuperscript{872} Ibid., 79.
\textsuperscript{873} Quoted in Ibid., 96.
\textsuperscript{874} Ibid., 80.
Approximately four years after the end of *OUA*, China commissioned its first-ever purpose-built hospital ship, *Peace Ark* (*heping fangzhao* 和平方舟/AHH 866). Well aware of the symbolic significance of this procurement, upon its commissioning China’s state-owned media informed the Chinese public that a large hospital ship like *Peace Ark* is “considered an important division of a modern navy” and that its procurement would attain for China de facto membership in the exclusive group of military powers with a long-range medical capability. Less than one year after a group of Chinese civilians and military personnel visited and observed USNS *Comfort* during one of its (by then frequent) overseas humanitarian deployments (*Continuing Promise 2009*), Beijing deployed *Peace Ark* on its own blue-water humanitarian mission: *Harmonious Mission* (*hexie shiming* 和谐使命) 2010. This mission was unprecedented and marked not only China’s first-ever operational deployment of a hospital ship abroad but also its first-ever naval humanitarian assistance mission. *Peace Ark* deployed again on overseas *Harmonious Missions* in 2011 and 2013, in addition to participating in its first-ever overseas disaster relief operation in the Philippines in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan—also in 2013.

Both the commissioning of *Peace Ark* and its deployments overseas to participate in HA/DR operations appear to be aimed explicitly at enhancing China’s status as a great power and responsible stakeholder, with the U.S. Navy’s own hospital ships and missions serving as its exemplars. Indeed, a retired U.S. naval officer who has had extensive dialogue with the Chinese navy on related issues assesses that *Harmonious Missions* are prime examples of the

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876 The ship has a medical staff of 600, a crew of 200, 500 beds, and 8 surgical operation rooms. “Largest Chinese Hospital Ship Tests Its Mettle,” *People’s Daily Online*, March 24, 2009, http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/6620335.html#. It is important to note that there is some evidence to suggest that *Peace Ark* was already under construction at the time of the 2004 tsunami. Averitt, “China’s Growing Maritime HA/DR Capabilities.”


878 Averitt, “China’s Growing Maritime HA/DR Capabilities.”

879 “China, U.S. Launch Rival Mercy Aid Ships.”
PLAN “taking a page out of the U.S. Navy playbook.” The PLA’s mimicry of the U.S. military is at times striking. A case in point was Peace Ark’s role in Harmonious Mission 2011, during which it appears to have literally followed USNS Comfort to the Caribbean on a three-month operational deployment, making port calls at the very same ports that the U.S. hospital ship had visited only a few weeks earlier.

Each of the Peace Ark’s deployments abroad have been given widespread coverage in China’s state-run media and appear to be widely popular among the public. In an interview upon the Peace Ark’s deployment for Harmonious Mission 2013, Rear Admiral Shen Hao explained to a Chinese audience that the mission was a “strategic deployment by Chairman Hu and the CMC to show [China] to be the paragon of a responsible great power.” As a symbol of the potential for cooperation between the U.S. and Chinese militaries in this area and testament to this force employment norm’s non-confictual nature, during its most recent deployment the Peace Ark even offered medical service to the flagship of the U.S.-led Combined Task-Force 151 (CTF-151).

Gulf of Aden Anti-piracy Deployment

In a remarkable departure from six centuries of past practice, on December 26, 2008 three PLAN ships departed China’s Sanya naval base to participate in an anti-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden near Somalia, 4400 nautical miles away. Beijing’s decision to deploy these ships

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880 Author’s meeting with retired U.S. naval officer; Newport, RI, January 2012.
marked a major turning point in the history of China’s military. The mission was not only China’s first operational naval deployment outside its immediate region since an Imperial edict in 1433 AD brought an end to the voyages of the Muslim eunuch Zheng He—out of concern for the “corrupting influence” of international exchange. The deployment also marked the first-ever operational involvement of China’s military in a multinational operation.\textsuperscript{884} As of this writing, the mission is six years old. China has dispatched sixteen task forces to the Gulf on a rotational basis, during which they have engaged in 500-plus escort missions for roughly 5000 Chinese and foreign merchant ships. The PLAN task forces have also executed cooperation and exchange with other foreign escort forces.\textsuperscript{885}

Beijing’s decision to deploy the PLAN to the Gulf of Aden evinced a shift in strategic orientation and appears to have been a concrete manifestation of changes to China’s force development and employment policies under the fourth ‘New Historical Mission.’ Because of deep-seated, and longstanding, PLA opposition to any unnecessary over-extension that would distract from its pressing strategic priorities and actual threats closer to home, Beijing’s initial decision to deploy the first task force surprised many overseas PLA experts and senior U.S. government and military officials.\textsuperscript{886} There were undoubtedly multiple factors at play in the top leadership’s decision to deploy, including material interests. For example, prior to deployment, several Chinese commercial ships had been attacked by pirates and insurance costs had increased. There were also potential benefits to gaining experience deploying naval vessels far away.\textsuperscript{887}


\textsuperscript{886} Author’s meeting with former U.S. government official, April 2013.

\textsuperscript{887} For example, there is some evidence to suggest that at least a partial motivation of the PLAN dispatch to the Gulf of Aden was to enhance PLAN capabilities. As Maj. General Jin Yinan, then Director of the National Defense University’s Institute for Strategic Studies, argued, PLAN dispatch would serve to enhance the PLAN’s ability to
Nevertheless, the threat to China was marginal in any material sense, and participation was clearly optional. The threats to commercial shipping would have been just as effectively addressed by the U.S. Navy and other militaries in and/or already deployed to the region.

Furthermore, resistance to deployment within the Chinese system appears to have been significant. China’s leaders reportedly tried for over a year to find alternative ways to make a contribution without using the PLAN.\textsuperscript{888} Only one month prior to the deployment order, MFA spokesman Qin Gang had responded to statements welcoming China’s participation in NATO missions in Afghanistan, declaring that “never sends a single troop abroad,” except for UNPKO.\textsuperscript{889} Given these circumstances, it appears puzzling that China’s leaders would choose this arguably unnecessary mission to reverse six centuries of categorical opposition to operational military deployments overseas.

What ultimately caused Beijing to green-light the mission? It appears that over time the calculus of China’s leaders changed. One salient factor in paving the way appears to have been Beijing’s changing assessments of the likely domestic and international reaction to overseas PLAN deployment. On the one hand, polling revealed that an overwhelming majority—86-percent—of Chinese agreed that “China should send warships to fight international pirates and protect cargo ships of China.”\textsuperscript{890} On the other hand, contrary to Beijing’s own expectations international pressure to contribute to the multi-national mission was also significant. Beijing had a track record of turning down previous offers for cooperative anti-piracy missions out of conduct counter-piracy and “open ocean quasi-combat” operations. Andrew S. Erickson, “Chinese Sea Power in Action: The Counterpiracy Mission in the Gulf of Aden and Beyond,” in \textit{The PLA at Home and Abroad}, ed. Roy Kamphausen, David Lai, and Andrew Scobell (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2010), 301.

\textsuperscript{888} Ibid., 300.


\textsuperscript{890} Data cited in Erickson, “Chinese Seapower,” 354 FN 33.
concern that the established powers—especially the United States—would oppose it. Yet in this case the U.S. government called on Beijing to deploy the PLAN to demonstrate its role as a ‘responsible stakeholder’ and to help contribute to the security of global sea lanes. Once it became clear that domestic pressure demanded action and the international community, especially the United States, had expressed its support, however, China’s leaders gave the green light. To many close watchers of China’s military, Beijing’s decision to deploy the PLAN to support a multinational anti-piracy operation halfway across the world was surprising, especially in light of the mission’s unprecedented nature and because widespread thinking within the PLA held that because of more pressing strategic priorities closer to home unnecessary overextension was dangerous. In the end, however, it appears that “international image concerns” proved to be an important factor in Beijing’s decision to deploy China’s navy to the “Far Seas” (yuanhai 远海) for the first time in 575 years.

Aspects of the debate among influential military and foreign policy thinkers supports the argument that image concerns played a key role in China’s decision. For example, a retired Major General and former top adviser to the CMC and Politburo Standing Committee advocated dispatch in order to enhance the PLAN’s ability to interoperate with foreign navies. While acknowledging internal criticism of the dispatch given the mission’s “extreme costs,” he argued that it was China’s responsibility to “exercise [its] great power duty, international duty” and to

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891 For example, Moscow invited the PLAN to send ships to counter-piracy mission, but China refused, not wanting to risk being seen by the West as forming a counter-NATO military alliance with Russia. Erickson, “Chinese Seapower,” 354 FN 32
892 Author’s meeting with former U.S. government official, April 2013.
893 Author’s meeting with former U.S. government official, April 2013.
accede to the U.N’s request.\textsuperscript{894} Meanwhile, researchers at the Navy Military Studies Research Institute, the PLAN’s strategic think tank, were ordered to confirm that dispatch would not violate any international laws.\textsuperscript{895} Indeed, PLAN dispatch had explicit authorization from the UN Security Council based on four UN Security Council Resolutions (1816, 1838, 1846, and 1851).\textsuperscript{896}

In short, the concerns about China’s domestic and international image that were initially a major obstacle to deployment by December 2008 seem to have evolved into a key catalyst. It would be the PLAN’s failure to act that would threaten CCP legitimacy on the home front and hurt its international image. A particularly salient driver appeared to be a desire to attain a reputation as a “responsible great power” by ending China’s exceptional status as the only member of the UN Security Council that had not contributed to international maritime security operations.\textsuperscript{897}

Developments following the order to deploy suggest further evidence of the role of status concerns as the major factor shaping Beijing’s decision to deploy the PLAN to the Gulf of Aden. On December 26, 2008, the day of the dispatch, PLAN Admiral Wu Shengli, member of both the top-level decision-making CMC and the CCP Central Committee, explained the decision to deploy to the Chinese public as a “full reflection of our nation’s active fulfillment of international duties and image as a responsible great power […] and […] of our military’s active
approach to safeguarding international and regional peace and security.” Similarly, PLAN Rear Admiral Xiao Xinnian explained the dispatch as “fully reflecting the Chinese government’s positive commitment to its international obligations and demonstrating the image of a responsible great power.” Statements by the MFA and MND explained the motivations of the dispatch as safeguarding sea lanes and protecting “ships of international organizations that are carrying humanitarian supplies to Somalia.” PLAN participation in the anti-piracy effort reportedly became a great source of public pride. On the fourth anniversary of the dispatch, state-run media described the mission as “highlighting China’s role as a great power.”

Whereas the initial deployment had been cautious and intended only to protect ships from the PRC, Hong Kong and Taiwan, most likely out of fears that the PLAN would not be able to perform effectively, its mandate was later broadened to protect foreign ships on a much larger scale.

International reaction to the PLAN’s deployment to the Gulf of Aden was similarly positive and, according to commentary in Chinese media, proved to be significantly more encouraging than many in China had expected. Chinese observers recognized that their primary fear—that deployment would exacerbate the so-called ‘China threat theory’ (zhongguo weixielun 中国威胁论)—was misplaced. On the contrary, the signal that China’s leaders received from Washington and the rest of the international community was that participation in multinational

901 Ibid., 328.
902 “Review of Chinese Navy’s Escort Missions.”
903 Author’s mail exchange with American PLAN expert; January 2014.
security operations can be a source of prestige and enhance China’s image as a “responsible stakeholder” and great power. As subsequent commentary in the Chinese media explained to the Chinese public, contemporary norms call on great powers to oppose piracy and other “collective evils.”

As further apparent evidence of both the role of status-seeking driven socialization to contemporaneous norms in shaping China’s force employment policies as well as the international expectations that rising China will emerge as an active contributor to international security, the vast majority of criticisms of China’s role in the anti-piracy mission since it deployed in 2008 from within and outside the U.S. government and military have criticized Beijing not for deploying but for not doing more to contribute. As evidence of the possibility for enhanced international cooperation in the years ahead through further embrace of MOOTW and cooperative security as normatively associated with China’s coveted great power status, by 2012 the PLAN had held more than a dozen joint naval exercises with foreign navies in the Gulf of Aden and had even engaged in training African militaries in minesweeping. In 2010, two U.S. ships helped the PLA relieve a Chinese vessel under attack, and in September 2012 the two countries conducted their first-ever bilateral anti-piracy exercise. In 2013, the PLAN task force even began cooperating with the multinational Combined Task Force (CTF)-151. To be sure, the extent of direct cooperation remains limited, but it is also important to recognize that it starts from a base of zero only a few years earlier.

904 Erickson, “Chinese Seapower,” 328.
905 Various author’s meetings (2011-2013).
Summary

In the new millennium, and especially since China’s civilian leadership ordered the PLA to “play an important role in maintaining world peace and promoting common development” as part of the “New Historic Missions” promulgated in 2004, a greater contribution to international security through nontraditional security operations has been assigned to the PLA as one of its key “roles.” This push appears to have caused important changes in China’s military policy profile, most notably participation in several unprecedented global security missions, ranging from its first-ever involvement in a multinational military operation and first far-seas operational deployment of naval power in more than half a millennium (anti-piracy in the Gulf of Aden) to a gradual embrace of nontraditional security operations such as peacekeeping and HA/DR. Although the extent of these contributions remains limited, in all cases the associated shifts represent important departures from past policies and more traditional thinking among China’s leaders about military power. From a Realist or materialist perspective, these shifts also represent at best costly distractions from efforts to address what China’s own leaders see as significantly more urgent military threats to China’s territory and other material interests, not to mention pressing domestic and social problems. Not coincidentally, and in no small part because of the normative demonstration effects of U.S. policies and rhetoric, top Chinese political and military leaders often identify non-traditional military operations as part of China’s “responsibility” (zeren 责任) as an aspiring great power. In important cases, these shifts constitute direct mimicry of the U.S. military’s own changing mission set and have occurred despite resistance from the PLA itself.
A Continental State in Pursuit of a Blue-water Navy?

Until very recently, for both ideological and practical reasons, China’s leaders have been staunchly opposed to the development of naval power. As Deng Xiaoping told the senior leadership group of the PLAN in 1979, “our strategy is near-seas operations. We don’t go meddling everywhere like a hegemon.”\(^\text{909}\) Deng also stated, “Our Navy should conduct coastal operations. It is a defensive force. Everything in the construction of the Navy must accord with this guiding principle.”\(^\text{910}\) Consistent with China’s geographical position and longstanding strategic orientation focused on unresolved ‘core interests’ (e.g., Taiwan) and perceived strategic threats on its immediate periphery, as recently as the late 1990s civilian leaders in Beijing identified China as a strictly “continental” and “coastal power,” as they had for the previous six centuries.\(^\text{911}\) Accordingly, the PLAN remained a small coastal defense force whose sole task was to support PLA ground forces in a land war.

Since a 2003 meeting of the State Council at which China’s top leaders approved a formal decision to “construct [a] maritime great power” [sic.] (\textit{jianshe haiyang qiangguo} 建设海洋强国),\(^\text{912}\) however, the pace, scale, and orientation of China’s naval development appears to have undergone a fundamental, albeit nascent, shift. One especially significant development is Beijing’s apparent interest in developing a blue-water navy more than half a millennium after China ‘quit the seas.’ Leading Western analysts have referred to the resulting change in China’s


\(^{912}\) \textit{ZHFB 2010}, 482.
strategic orientation as “a remarkable if not singular event in the history of the last two millennia.” What is driving it?

To be sure, China’s expanding global interests suggest that a desire to develop the ability to project hard military power to safeguard these interests may be a major factor. Yet at least so far, in important cases procurement patterns suggest a focus on procuring the trappings of a major naval power without major investments in capabilities further afield necessary either to defend these ships against capable adversaries or to actually project power overseas in a manner necessary for any high-intensity conflict of the sort for which a blue-water navy may be useful. Furthermore, conspicuous (and expensive) procurement decisions represent puzzling investments in obsolescent capabilities of dubious utility for actually safeguarding those interests against any capable adversary, not least of all the U.S. military. An example of the former is China’s apparently minimal investment in advanced anti-submarine warfare capabilities, despite decades of de facto or explicit warnings from both foreign and Chinese analysts and the PLA itself that this weakness represents the Chinese navy’s ‘Achilles Heel’ (see below). Examples of the latter are Beijing’s apparently limited investments in a logistical tail, allies, partners or overseas bases necessarily to actually project power outside its immediate environs. For example, China’s entire fleet possesses one replenishment ship and despite having scores of submarines has only one submarine tender; the PLAN’s lift capacity remains very limited; and China has no allies, much less overseas military bases. These trends lead some analysts, both within and outside China, to comment that the PLAN “has no idea what it’s doing” and to suggest that that the first-order driver of important investments in naval power is to shrink a perceived “prestige gap”

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914 Author’s meeting with U.S. defense analyst in Honolulu, HI, February 2013.
915 Author’s meeting with U.S. PLAN expert, Beijing, April 2013.
with the United States and other countries in a manner that has left operational and intelligence gaps largely unaddressed. 916

Coupled with these observable capability gaps is a wealth of rhetorical evidence that suggests China’s push for a blue-water navy and status as a “maritime great power” is driven to a large degree by domestic factors: most significantly, nationalism and status-seeking flowing from its identity as a rising and aspiring great power, exacerbated by the leadership’s search for means to unify the nation in the context of worsening domestic unrest. As has been the case in other past rising powers (see Chapter 6), naval nationalism appears to be one key means by which leaders pursue this objective. 917

For example, PLAN Commander Wu Shengli and political commissar Hu Yanlin wrote in the Central Committee’s official journal in 2007 that only a powerful navy can “bring the rise of the nation.” 918 Similarly, a 2010 government report on China’s maritime policy describes the development of a blue-water navy as “a symbol of the beginning of China’s stride toward a new historic phase and the comprehensive construction of a maritime great power.” The report identifies “China’s historic task in the whole world” (sic.) as “enter[ing] the ranks of the mid-level maritime great powers.” The report concludes that “the rejuvenation of the Chinese People in the twenty-first century requires venturing out into the open seas, [and] constructing a maritime great power is the only way (biyouzhilu 必由之路) to achieve national

916 Author’s meeting with U.S. defense analyst, Honolulu, HI, February 2013.
917 For a similar argument along these lines, see Ross, “Naval Nationalism.” Ross appears to take the argument too far, however. For a cogent critique, see Glosny, Saunders, and Ross, “Debating China’s Naval Nationalism.”
rejuvenation.” The vagueness of the stated rationales suggest that an abstract, nationalistic and status-seeking objective may be an important driver of this shift.

Some of the military policy implications of this unprecedented shift are ironic. While exploiting the weaknesses in U.S. naval power projection capabilities has been a central focus of China’s efficient, asymmetric defense planning since the mid-1990s, as China embarks on this push to acquire its own blue-water navy and to enter the ranks of the “maritime great powers” some of the associated procurement decisions appear to be moving toward develop similar vulnerabilities, with rapidly diminishing (and obsolescent) returns.920

The symbolic push for greater international status as a maritime great power is an abstract objective; to achieve it, China’s leaders must make specific force development decisions. In the naval domain, the platform most widely associated with prestige and status as a military great power in the contemporary system is the aircraft carrier (below, ‘CV’). China’s CV program represents perhaps the most remarkable reversal of China’s past military strategy and is of the potentially greatest real-world significance. Indeed, leading foreign experts on China’s military have identified it as the “bellwether of China’s evolving capabilities and intentions.”921 It also has the potential to be one of the single most expensive programs in the history of China’s military.

Force Development Case Study: China’s Aircraft Carrier Program

In 1971, a senior Chinese official told an audience that “Aircraft carriers are tools of imperialism, and they’re like sitting ducks waiting to be shot. China will never build an aircraft

919 ZHFB 2010, 482.
921 Participant F, Ibid.
carrier.” Four decades later, China’s leaders have decisively changed their tune. As Lt. General Qi Jianguo, then Assistant to the Chief of the General Staff and the following year promoted to Deputy Chief of the General Staff and to the CCP Central Committee, declared in 2011,

“All the great powers in the world, including [other] permanent members of the UN Security Council, have aircraft carriers; it seems that aircraft carriers are a marker of a great power. So I say the Chinese people, as they make their way out into the world, also must pass through this stage.”

As the juxtaposition of these two statements indicates, China’s pursuit of aircraft carriers marks a remarkable about-face for a regime whose leaders previously rejected proposals for these hulking vessels, frequently disparaging the allegedly obsolescent platforms as wastes of money and “floating coffins.” Even setting aside the potentially enormous economic opportunity costs associated with the development of CV battlegroups, procurement has also been staunchly opposed on strategic grounds. For example, in the 1990s, President Jiang Zemin rejected CMC Vice Chairman Liu Huaqing and others’ push for an CV program not only because of the platforms’ dubious military utility in the conflict scenarios that China was most likely to face but also because he saw them as likely to send the wrong signals about China’s strategic intentions to its neighbors and, most importantly, to Washington. Jiang reportedly went so far as to fire the commander of the South Sea Fleet for advocating the use of CVs to resolve China’s territorial disputes.

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922 “China’s Military Modernization a Cause for Concern?,” CNN.com, June 17, 2011.
923 Quoted in “Zhongguo Hangmu Zai Jian.”
Less than a decade later, however, Jiang’s successors appear to have broken the erstwhile vow never to build an CV. In 2004, the Politburo reportedly approved the construction of China’s first-ever aircraft carrier. And in 2009, 87 years after the world’s first purpose-built CV went into service and six years after China’s State Council made a formal decision to become a “maritime great power,” the top leadership reportedly made another major decision concerning China’s CV program. While the specific content of the decision appears to be highly classified, some sources suggest that it sanctioned multiple hulls. Recent Chinese media reports suggest that multiple indigenous hulls may already be under construction.

China’s fledgling CV program is clearly a major departure from past military policy. The question is what explains this shift? Is it a prestige-driven status symbol or something else? The extreme opacity of China’s decision-making, coupled with the program’s nascent nature, prevents any decisive conclusions. The following sections weigh the evidence available to date.

*Seeking Membership in the Exclusive ‘Aircraft Carrier Club’?*

Since the first half of the 20th century, CVs have been widely seen as modern-day capital ships, a leading indicator for determining a state’s ranking in the global naval hierarchy, and symbols of great power status. As a testament to this apparent social fact, before and after Beijing officially acknowledged its CV program in 2011, and without China having proven any actual military capability, many contemporary analysts from various countries, both independent and government-affiliated, had already assessed that China’s procurement of an CV would

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925 A recent book on Liu Huaqing suggests that the original decision to procure China’s first aircraft carrier can be traced back to 2004. Changxue Shi 施昌学, Haijun Siling Liu Huaqing 海军司令刘华清 [Naval Commander Liu Huaqing] (Changzheng Chubanshe, 2013), 384.
926 ZHFB 2010, 482.
927 Author’s meetings in Beijing, April 2013.
provide symbolic “proof” of its status as a “great power.” China’s leaders appear to agree, as numerous voices within and outside the PLA have argued that CV are necessary to “enhance China’s status” (tisheng diwei 提升地位) as a “maritime power” and to gain for China the international respect that it deserves. Others have inverted this logic to argue that it is “because [China’s] global status is rising” that it “needs an aircraft carrier.” As one U.S. defense analyst argued, the primary goal of China’s procurement of these “legacy systems” appears to be “[to be able] to sit with the cool kids at lunch.”

With remarkable consistency, identification of these massive platforms as a necessary condition for China to be achieve recognition as a great power and frequent references to the aircraft carriers of the United States and the other members of the UN Security Council—i.e., China’s aspirational referent group of great powers—permeate Chinese and foreign writings on the CV program. The idea that China’s lack of an CV was an unnatural state of affairs given its growing international standing in other domains is reflected in Defense Minister Liang Guanglie’s 2009 statement that as long as all other great powers have carriers, China should have them, too. The fact that Liang chose to make this statement during a meeting with his

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931 Author’s meeting with Chinese military officer; Beijing, October 2012.
933 Author’s meeting with U.S. defense analyst in Honolulu, HI, February 2013.
counterpart from Japan (which, as discussed in Chapter 4, has explicitly eschewed both a blue-water navy and aircraft carriers) serves to drive home the point. Several months before his promotion to Deputy Chief of the General Staff and member of the CCP Central Committee, General Qi Jianguo, quoted above, stated that the CV was a “marker” (biaozhi 标志) of “great power” (daguo 大国) status and a necessary step on the path to China’s coming-of-age as a global player.\footnote{Quoted in “Zhongguo Hangmu Zai Jian.”}

High-ranking current and former PLA officers regularly point to the CV as a “symbol” of China’s naval power and emerging great power status, and, appearing to express concerns about exclusion, argue that “China should at least be on the same level as other permanent members of the UN Security Council who have carriers.”\footnote{“China’s First Aircraft Carrier ‘Starts Sea Trials,’” BBC News (Beijing, August 10, 2011).}

The possibility that China’s CV program is a status symbol is further supported by official government publications. For example, the Chinese government report that appears to have first revealed the Politburo’s 2009 decision, which may have launched a multi-hull CV program explained aircraft carriers as the leading “marker” of China’s “new historical phase [of development] and [its] opening strides toward the comprehensive construction of [status as a] maritime great power” (sic.).\footnote{ZHFB 2010, 482.} Similarly, a 2011 article carried in the People’s Daily stated explicitly that “owning CVs is usually one of the symbols of a major country’s march toward a great power.”\footnote{“China’s First Aircraft Carrier Reflects Arms Buildup,” People’s Daily Online, August 16, 2011, http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90786/7570227.html#.} Importantly, these judgments have largely been confirmed by the international response to China’s public acknowledgment and subsequent launching of its first-ever CV. An article in the Naval War College Review by three leading U.S. experts on China’s military called
the launching of China’s first CV for sea trials a “coming-out party for China as a great power on the rise.”

The importance of both force development and even force employment norms in shaping China’s decision-making are encapsulated in Major General Qian Lihua’s November 2008 statement that “The navy of any great power . . . has the dream to have one or more aircraft carriers” and that “the question is not whether you have an aircraft carrier, but what you do with [it].” In a potentially significant shift in mindset, top leaders appear to have concluded that in the 21st century these platforms are a necessary condition for China to emerge as a “responsible great power” by sharing burdens and providing global public goods. Indeed, both leading PLA experts and even the Dean of the Naval Warfare Studies at the U.S. Naval War College point to Beijing’s embarrassment after it was unable to make a military contribution to the 2004 tsunami relief effort in Southeast Asia as an important “turning point” in the Chinese civilian leadership’s thinking about CVs. Discussion of the utility of carriers in MOOTW permeate the Chinese-language literature.

Significantly, in the case of China’s CV program there is evidence of both top-down and bottom-up forces driving decision-making, yet they share a common link: appeals to popular nationalism and a widely-held belief that China’s standing in international society depends on its possession of CVs. This is not especially surprising, as the logic of naval nationalism has always been to focus on big capital ships, which are big, obvious, and symbolic. Prior to Beijing’s

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944 For one brief review, see Erickson, Collins, and Denmark, “Beijing’s ‘Starter Carrier,’” 46.
945 Author’s meeting with U.S. PLAN expert, Newport, RI, May 2013. As discussed in Chapter 6, similar factors, in important cases primarily distinct from security threats or material interests, have driven major naval buildups in
announcement of its aircraft carrier program, grass-roots and other fund-raising campaigns launched by self-described “patriotic” (aiguozhe 爱国者) public groups called on China’s leaders to procure a CV to confirm China’s status as a great power. Efforts ranged from online polls revealing that more than 80-percent of respondents would donate their own salaries to help finance an CV program, to proposals for the creation of a special lottery to raise funds to subsidize the government in order to procure one.\footnote{946} It is worth noting that this groundswell of support occurred in a country where the year after the Politburo decided to launch an CV program the annual average per capita disposable income of more than half of the population (700 million rural residents) amounted to $898.\footnote{947}

The idea that nationalism and a desire for international status—all intimately linked to China’s self-image as an aspiring great power—as opposed to sober-minded contingency-driven defense planning could be the primary drivers of China’s CV program seems to find additional support in the public reaction to even the mildest criticism of the program. For example, a March 2007 article by a Peking University scholar arguing that China should set aside the construction of an CV because of the program’s immense cost sparked a nationalist uproar.\footnote{948} When China’s widely-rumored CV program was officially announced in August 2011, and in an obvious attempt to exploit this nationalism, Beijing’s official news agency referenced the Opium War and China’s suffering as a result of “more than 470 offenses and invasions that came from the past rising powers—such as Wilhelmine Germany’s obsession with battleships and the U.S. government’s policies vis-à-vis the “Great White Fleet.” It is too early to judge whether this is also true in the case of contemporary China; the point here is that there is historical precedent.\footnote{946} “As Military Balks, Chinese Public Pushes for Aircraft Carriers,” \textit{McClatchy Newspapers}, November 8, 2007, http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2007/11/08/21181/as-military-balks-chinese-public.html; “Wangyou Reyi Zhongguo Jian Hangmu 网友热议中国建航母 [Netizens Enthusiastic About China Building A/C],” \textit{Zhongguo Xinwenwang 中国新闻网}, April 3, 2009, http://news.qq.com/a/20090403/000147.htm. \footnote{947} Tobin, “Inequality in China.” \footnote{948} “Jiaoshou Cu Huan Jian Hangmu Zao ‘Paohong’ 教授促缓建航母遭‘炮轰’ [Professor Bombarded for Calling for Deferment of Aircraft Carrier],” \textit{Wenhuibao 文汇报}, March 3, 2007.
The connection—in operational terms—to China’s CV, however, is dubious, at best, as even military leaders recognize. PLA officers privately acknowledge the powerful role of nationalism as a driving force behind procurement, noting that the government and military are mindful of the expected domestic political benefits. When asked in 2009 at a massive naval parade commemorating the PLA Navy’s 60th anniversary—a testament to the existence of naval nationalism in itself—whether China would acquire aircraft carriers, PLAN Admiral Wu Shengli reportedly responded simply “Ask the people.” Publications by PLA researchers refer to China’s acquisition of an CV as the “dream of the Chinese people.” A major general at the PLA Academy of Military Sciences notes that the launch of the CV boosted national morale. Retired PLA General Xu Guangyu, then director of the government-affiliated China Arms Control and Disarmament Association argued in 2007 that building CVs has “more political meaning than military meaning” but would help to “raise [China’s] national confidence” and achieve its goal of a navy “commensurate with its economic power and national defense capacity.” Leading foreign experts on the PLAN similarly note that “national pride/status” is the key driver of the PLAN’s development of CVs. These judgments appear to be sound—the degree to which China’s CV program has captured the attention of the Chinese public is difficult to explain to those who are not exposed regularly to Chinese traditional and social media.

950 “Military Balks.”
951 Meeting in Beijing, September 2011.
952 Meeting with U.S.-based PLAN expert, November 2013.
953 “China One Step Closer.”
954 (Unnamed) Major General at PLA Academy of Military Science, “A/C Fills Gap.”
955 “Military Balks.”
956 For example, Cole, Great Wall, xix.
Seemingly every development, however small, makes headlines in national newspapers, online, and on television.  

Possible Alternative Explanations for China’s Blue-water Navy/CV Program

As noted above, the leading alternative explanation for China’s nascent push to develop a blue-water navy and achieve status as a “maritime great power” is straightforward: China’s expanding global interests and increasing reliance on sea lanes for maritime commerce have created a demand-side pull, while its growing material (economic, industrial, technological) capabilities have enabled procurements and missions that, while long coveted by China’s leaders, were not feasible previously. As the following analysis demonstrates, however, some of China’s most conspicuous investments in blue-water naval power to date appear to be—at best—inefficient from any Realist or materialist perspective. A case in point is the symbol of PLAN’s blue-water ambitions: aircraft carriers. CVs appear to be of dubious military utility in those conflict scenarios which China’s civilian and military leaders have long identified as most likely, are immensely vulnerable to weapons held by any capable adversary and even most of its conventionally-inferior adversaries, and are hugely expensive.

Limited Military Utility

The late PLA General Liu Huaqing, widely considered the “father of China’s aircraft carrier” (zhongguo hangmu zhi fu 中国航母之父) and its primary champion in China for two decades, famously said “Without an aircraft carrier, I will die with my eyelids open; the Chinese Navy needs to build [CV].” Perhaps not coincidentally, China’s government first publicly acknowledged the decision to procure a CV a few months before Liu passed away in January

957 Author’s experiences living in Beijing intermittently, 2011-2013.
958 Some observers also include reduced continental threats as an enabler of the shift toward the sea. Glosny, Saunders, and Ross, “Debating China’s Naval Nationalism,” 161–164.

2011 at the age of 94. Liu presented at least three ostensibly interest-based rationales for why CVs were “extremely necessary” for China: to safeguard China’s most pressing territorial and maritime interests in its immediate periphery; to safeguard global sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) to protect China’s maritime commerce; and to gain an edge in a future naval war.\textsuperscript{959} CVs arguably made some military sense for China when Liu originally tabled these rationales thirty years ago. For a number of reasons, however, not the least of which are the increasing vulnerability of CVs to rapidly changing military technology in the information age, as well as their exponentially rising economic costs,\textsuperscript{960} beginning a potentially multi-hull aircraft carrier program from scratch today appears to be a dubious investment for Beijing.

With regard to Liu’s first rationale, big-deck CVs appear to be—at most—of limited marginal military utility for China’s most likely military conflicts; i.e., potential clashes on its periphery over the status of Taiwan or other territorial or maritime interests in the South China Sea (SCS) and East China Sea (ECS). First, in all three scenarios the offensive capabilities provided by Chinese CVs appear to be largely redundant given the geographical proximity of the theater. Fighters, bombers, and China’s rapidly proliferating, long-range precision-guided conventional missiles launched from land bases would achieve China’s military goals more effectively \textit{and} less expensively. They would also be significantly less vulnerable to enemy countermeasures than a massive surface fleet in submarine-infested waters. Civilian officials and PLA officers, as well as most foreign analysts, recognize that the marginal military utility of CVs in China’s most likely conflict scenarios is negligible, and in some cases, \textit{negative}.\textsuperscript{961} In short,

\textsuperscript{960} The current class of U.S. carriers costs $13.5 billion per ship. See below.
Liu’s first rationale appears to be increasingly anachronistic today, much less by the time China develops a meaningful operational capability years from now.

With regard to the second rationale, the idea that China needs to develop, or is even capable of developing, blue-water naval power sufficient to protect its maritime commerce on global SLOCs is dubious.962 Threats to China’s maritime commerce are negligible given major structural changes to the global trading system, the cooperative, interconnected, and interdependent nature of political and economic relations between all major actors, and China’s relatively low vulnerability to an interruption of maritime trade, even at putative “choke points” such as the Malacca Strait.963 The leading threat to maritime commerce is pirates—against which air superiority is irrelevant. Furthermore, most of China’s maritime commerce is not even carried by Chinese-flagged ships. Consequently, it would be almost impossible for any state military—even that of the United States—to carry out a blockade without causing significant collateral damage to itself, its allies, and the entire global trading system.964 Some Chinese government reports explicitly recognize these changes to the global trading system and the fallacy of claims to the contrary.965 For example, a 2005 National Energy Security Report not only argues against

962 In a controversial argument, defensive realist and China expert Robert Ross has called China’s pursuit of a blue-water navy, especially CVs, for the purpose of protecting SLOCS a “pseudo-nationalist interest argument.” Ross, “Naval Nationalism,” 65.
963 For an excellent overview of China’s growing perceptions of energy insecurity, obsession with “maritime rights and interests” (海洋权益) and concerns about sea lane security, “choke points,” and territorial disputes, as well as a critique of their logic due to, inter alia, the openness of the contemporary international trade system, see Liebman, “Timing of Power,” 115–145.
attempts to use the military to secure energy supplies, it also notes that “for the foreseeable future it is impossible that the sea lanes of communication will be cut.”

Moreover, it is doubtful that the PLAN could actually secure global SLOCs against conceivable major power challengers. Even setting aside both the immense cost of building a blue-water navy capable of engaging in high-intensity warfare across the globe and the fact that China relies on the freedom of the very sea lanes of communication it supposedly would need to “secure,” PLA aircraft carriers would pose a minimal threat to any potential adversary with the military capabilities necessary to maintain a blockade of China’s trade in the first place—an extremely short list that basically includes only the U.S. Navy. Since the late 18th century, the United States has repeatedly used force to keep international sea lanes open. Consequently, the ability to challenge U.S. naval forces is a necessary condition for protecting the very maritime rights and interests that the China’s leadership claims are driving its naval push. Yet the PLA recognizes—correctly—that its CV(s) are unlikely to ever pose a meaningful threat to the U.S. Navy in blue water (see vulnerability section below). At least from this perspective, this strategic rationale for developing a carrier fleet therefore appears to be nonsensical. Indeed, it is not surprising that U.S. military analysts are generally very happy that China may have decided to waste its energies and tens, potentially hundreds, of billions of yuan on aircraft carriers. After

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966 Cited in Ibid., 135–136. For a debunking of the choke points fallacy and the use of energy and resources as justification for naval power by a government energy and resource analyst, see Zhao, Hongtu 赵宏图. “‘Maliujia Kunju’ Yu Zhongguo Nengyuan Anquan Zaisikao ‘马六甲困局’与中国能源安全再思考[Rethinking China’s Energy Security and the ‘Malacca Dilemma’].” Xiandai Guoji Guanxi [Contemporary International Relations], no. 6 (2007): 36–42.
967 Erickson, Collins, and Denmark, “Beijing’s ‘Starter Carrier,’” 47.
all, Chinese CVs would pose a negligible threat to the U.S. military, yet are extremely vulnerable to it.\textsuperscript{970}

With regard to Liu’s third rationale, technological advances over the past several decades have rendered the major power naval conflict in the open seas that Liu supposedly feared an extremely improbable, if not fantastical, scenario. For starters, China and three of its most likely major adversaries (the U.S. India, Russia) possess powerful nuclear and conventional deterrents. Surface fleets—especially hulking CVs—are immensely vulnerable to submarines in deep water found in the South China Sea, and U.S. and Japanese sub-surface attack capabilities are second-to-none. In stark contrast to, say, the situation in December 1941, advances in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR)—especially satellites—make it very difficult to hide hulking CVs from capable adversaries. In short, to the extent that the goal of being able to win a future naval war with a major military power informs decision-making in Beijing today it may be a case of investing scarce resources in hugely expensive planning for an extremely unlikely contingency long before it has yet to finish even modernizing the PLA sufficiently in preparation for more realistic (and more probable) conflicts closer to home.

\textit{Vulnerability}

In widely-cited testimony in 1982 U.S. Admiral Hyman Rickover famously recognized the severe vulnerabilities of aircraft carriers against capable adversaries, noting that U.S. CVs would survive about two days in a war with the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{971} Three decades later, the severe vulnerabilities of these platforms have become even more salient because of the proliferation of increasingly-advanced anti-ship missile and submarine technology, inter alia.

\textsuperscript{970} Multiple author’s meetings; Newport, Washington, Honolulu, Beijing, 2011-2013.  
\textsuperscript{971} Steven Strasser et al., “Are Big Warships Doomed?,” \textit{Newsweek}, May 17, 1982.
Nor is the threat to flat-tops limited to major power adversaries; numerous analyses by U.S. military analysts confirm the vulnerability of aircraft carriers to various kinds of asymmetric attacks from conventionally inferior adversaries. Two separate sobering analyses (2011, 2013) by U.S. Navy captains—the former written by the Dean of Naval Warfare Studies at the U.S. Naval War College—further suggest that in the 21st century even the U.S. Navy’s peerless CVs are obsolescent. The traditional roles that for decades justified America and other countries’ massive investment in flat-tops, even the “capital-ship role,” are increasingly obsolete in the age of modern anti-ship missiles and satellite imagery.972 In his view, extremely expensive carriers will increasingly become “narrowly useful role player[s].”973

These views of U.S. strategists are consistent with those of some Chinese analysts, who have argued that China’s investment in CVs is an extremely inefficient allocation of resources aimed at acquiring a marginally useful capability against conventionally feeble adversaries, and one that is useless against the most realistic threats to SLOCs: pirates and other non-state actors, all of whom lack the air power or large surface ships that CV-embarked planes are designed to destroy. In addition to the dubious military utility of CVs for any state, they are an especially bad choice for China given that the PLAN is decades away from being able to develop naval capabilities as good as those which the United States deploys today.974 It is therefore not surprising that the only other country (aside from America) with a CV the size of the Liaoning is Russia. Yet Russia’s Kuznetsov CV almost never leaves port. In sum, the days since CVs status

974 For example, the non-nuclear-powered Liaoning—commissioned in 2012—has a ski jump rather than steam catapults, which makes it basically useless in high-intensity combat given its inability to launch fixed-wing ISR assets, cargo planes, or aerial refueling tankers.
as “sovereign of the seas” appear to be numbered, if they have not already passed. As one U.S. defense analyst assessed bluntly, an aircraft carrier “is big. It’s impressive. [But] It’s also going to sink. It’s going to die.”

Ironically, the Chinese leadership is clearly aware of the immense vulnerabilities of large surface ships such as aircraft carriers. In fact, since the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis the PLA has arguably done more than any other military over the past two decades to render massive surface ships (such as the CV) of the United States and other potential adversaries’ navies extremely vulnerable in contested environments of the sort where most conceivable high-intensity conflicts in which China might find itself are likely to occur.

For example, recognition of the vulnerability of CV battle groups to submarines led the PLA to make counter-carrier submarine operations “the focal point of [China’s] doctrinal development” in the mid-1990s. Additional weaknesses explicitly recognized by China’s military experts include CVs’ large size; exorbitant price tag; and vulnerability to relatively inexpensive mines, armor-piercing munitions, high-speed ballistic and (and relatively cheap) cruise missiles, electro-magnetic pulse, and swarming by unmanned aerial vehicles. U.S. Navy Captain Henry Hendrix, USN, argues that even with a conservative estimate of USD 11 million per missile, for the expense of a single U.S. Ford-class aircraft carrier China could produce 1,227 cutting-edge anti-ship ballistic missiles. Assessing that only one such missile would be necessary for a ‘mission kill,’ Hendrix concludes that even in the case of the U.S. Navy’s peerless flat-tops

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975 Rubel, “Future,” 27.
976 Author’s meeting with U.S. defense analyst, Honolulu, HI, February 2013.
977 It has done so through its huge investments in submarines, anti-ship cruise missiles, and development of the first-ever anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM), inter alia.
a sober-minded cost/benefit analysis of the utility of aircraft carriers in contested environments does not bode well for the platform’s future.979

For these and other reasons, many Chinese analysts have argued that CVs are obsolete, “floating coffins;” 980 “extremely expensive [platforms] that will make China broke;” and merely “targets” for increasingly advanced precision-guided land- and air-launched missiles, land-based fighters and submarines.981 Teng Jianqun, a retired naval officer and senior research fellow at the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ think tank, has spoken out on state media against China constructing aircraft carriers, describing the platforms as a “long[-held] dream” of China with symbolic significance but one that is “an old combination of technologies” from a century ago that is vulnerable to missiles and submarines.982 It appears likely that across East Asia existing counter-carrier capabilities are likely to proliferate rapidly over the coming decade—long before China has mastered advanced carrier operations or commissioned its future carriers.983 In short, in an era in which Vietnam has acquired advanced Russian submarines and fighters and when even destitute North Korea is developing high-speed, ground-launched anti-ship cruise missiles,984 China’s leaders appear to be on the verge of investing billions of dollars developing from scratch the very platforms that its own military has consistently identified as severely

979 Hendrix, At What Cost?, 8.
981 For example, see Zicheng Ye 叶自成, “Zhongguo Haiquan Xu Congshuyu Luquan 中国海权须从属于陆权 [China’s Sea Power Should Be Subordinate to Land Power],” Guoji Xiangduaobao 国际先锋导报, March 2, 2007.
983 Roger Cliff et al., Entering the Dragon’s Lair: Chinese Antiaccess Strategies and Their Implications for the United States (RAND Corporation, 2007), 71–76.
984 “N.Korea Developing Anti-Ship Missile,” Chosun Ilbo, October 14, 2013.
vulnerable to asymmetric attack by even conventionally inferior—not to mention conventionally superior—militaries.\footnote{Nan Ying 迎南, “Hangmu de Biduan Ji Fanhangmu Zuozhan 航母的弊端及反航母作战 [Aircraft Carrier Weaknesses and Anti-Carrier Operations],” Xiandai Junshi 现代军事, January 1998, 13–15.}

\textit{Limited investment in defenses}

Given these widely-recognized and increasingly severe vulnerabilities of large surface ships in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, the puzzle of China’s nascent aircraft carrier program deepens still further once one realizes that China’s leaders appear to have neglected to make a major effort to improve the PLAN’s ability to operate CVs effectively in an actual military conflict. This is particularly odd in light of the fact that leading PLA experts note that the PLAN only actively considers the (far superior) U.S. Navy in its defense planning.\footnote{Bernard D. Cole, “Right-Sizing the Navy: How Much Naval Force Will Beijing Deploy?,” in Kamphausen and Scobell, \textit{Right-Sizing the PLA}, 525.} Especially salient limitations on China’s ability to effectively utilize CVs in a military conflict include limited practice deploying with support ships, enhanced logistical integrated air support, and C4ISR, all of which are capabilities that may take the PLAN decades to master.\footnote{Townshend and Joshi, \textit{Troubled Waters}.} But perhaps the most glaring vulnerability of China’s fledgling blue-water navy is the PLA’s limited, albeit slowly improving, anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capabilities.

The technology necessary for even minimally effective ASW (e.g., passive detection) has been available for more than forty years, and the PLAN’s vulnerabilities are so glaring that even leading U.S. analysts have been pointing them out in open-source publications for decades.\footnote{For recent examples, see Cole, \textit{Great Wall}, 98–104; 109; 193–194; Cole, “Right-sizing,” in Kamphausen and Scobell, \textit{Right-Sizing the PLA}, 529, 535; Erickson, “China Maritime Power?,” 91–92.} Yet China appears to have still not invested heavily in developing a competent ASW capability. This is especially puzzling given that the attack submarine forces of regional navies—especially
those of the United States and Japan—pose a clear and present danger to Chinese submarines and surface ships.\textsuperscript{989} The PLA’s airborne ASW assets, including fixed-wing (e.g., maritime patrol aircraft) and rotary (ASW helicopters) capabilities, are too few and obsolescent to be effective.\textsuperscript{990} Meanwhile, PLAN submarines are so few in number and noisy, while their crews are reportedly so inexperienced, that the submarines are unlikely to survive “once the shooting started.”\textsuperscript{991} This is especially true if they face off against the vastly superior ASW capabilities of the U.S. Navy and/or Japan Maritime Self-defense Forces. Remarkably, PLAN officer’s manuals reportedly do not even assign ASW to the submarine force.\textsuperscript{992} No such ASW training takes place.\textsuperscript{993} The situation has become so severe that some Chinese ASW experts have begun to publicly vent frustrations with the status quo. As a case in point, the cover story of the July 2011 issue of the military journal “Modern Ships” (\textit{Xiandai Jianchuan 现代舰船}) was “China’s Aircraft Carrier Anti-submarine Warfare Crisis” (\textit{zhongguo hangmu fanqian weiji 中国航母反潜危机}). Even if the leadership decided to address this issue tomorrow, the process of mastering the necessary operations would likely take years, if not decades, by which point large surface fleets and CV battle groups are even more likely to be obsolescent for high-intensity conflict.

In sum, in an era in which China’s most likely adversaries already possess, or are in the process of developing asymmetric countermeasures, the military cost/benefit utility of expensive, massive aircraft carriers in contested environments (such as the South and East China Seas), much less on open blue water, appears to be declining rapidly. Given that the PLA is well aware

\textsuperscript{989} Author’s meeting with American PLAN expert, Newport, RI, May 2013. Even Vietnam has procured highly capable, and quiet, Kilo-class submarines from Russia.
\textsuperscript{990} Cole, \textit{Great Wall}, 147. Maritime patrol aircraft, such as the P-8 (U.S.) and P-1 (Japan), are widely considered to be the primary means of effective ASW.
\textsuperscript{992} Cole, \textit{Great Wall}, 147.
\textsuperscript{993} Author’s meeting with American PLAN expert, Washington, DC. January 2012.
of the huge vulnerabilities of even U.S. peerless CV and other large surface ships, having
invested heavily in asymmetric capabilities designed to exploit these weaknesses for more than
twenty years, and has studied 20th-century ASW campaigns extensively, it would appear that a
primary purpose of China’s CV and other blue-water surface ships may be symbolic. As one
American expert on the PLAN noted, for China to attempt to use its CV in any kind of future
high-intensity conflict would be “pure suicide.”

Economic Costs

The economic argument against CVs is long-standing, especially within China. It also
increasingly permeates robust debates in Washington and beyond about the U.S. Navy’s own
current and future force structure. For decades, China’s leaders have expressed concerns about
the risks of concentrating capital in a single, very expensive ship, especially one which they
recognized more than two decades ago was already vulnerable even to the earliest generation of
precision-guided missiles used by the U.S. military in Operation Desert Storm. While a
detailed breakdown of the likely economic costs of China’s CV program is beyond the scope of
this chapter, a basic explanation is in order.

In order to be effective in a crisis China would probably need to procure at least three
aircraft carrier battle groups for each battlegroup that it wishes to be able to deploy operationally.
U.S. Navy doctrine states that an effective combat capability requires two battle groups operating
in the same place at the same time, which suggests that in order to have an effective operational

994 Michael McDevitt, “The Strategic and Operational Context Driving PLA Navy Building,” in Right Sizing the
People’s Liberation Army, ed. Roy Kamphausen and Andrew Scobell (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S.
Army War College, 2007), 507. Ying, “Hangmu de Biduan.” Lyle J. Goldstein, Miguel Martinez, and William S.
Murray, “China’s Future Airborne Antisubmarine Capabilities: Light at the End of the Tunnel?,” in Chinese
995 Author’s meeting with American PLAN expert, Washington, DC. January 2012.
996 Hendrix, At What Cost?.

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CV capability China would need to procure a minimum of six battle groups. Developing such a force structure would not come cheaply. Even conservative estimates, which factor in the relatively low technology and cheaper costs of the Liaoning—basically a refitted 1970s-era Soviet carrier that was obsolete at conception—suggest that a single CV battle group would cost China at least $10 billion dollars. More capable ships, *sine qua non* for efficacy in any actual conflict, would cost significantly more.

It is also important to stress that China’s CVs, themselves hugely expensive, also come with many additional costs. In order to be even minimally effective its carriers will require Beijing to spend billions of dollars on research and development, maintenance, training, fuel, far-flung afloat logistics and, most expensively, air wings, personnel, and support ships. In total, these costs could ultimately add tens, if not hundreds, of billions of dollars to the price tag of each of these battle groups over their lifetimes. Furthermore, mastering the ability to fly jets off carriers is difficult, and very costly. For example, despite decades of previous experience operating CVs during both peacetime and wartime, between 1949 and 1988 the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps lost 12,000 aircraft and 8500 crew in the process of learning how to fly jets off flat-tops at sea. Finally, expensive and robust defense capabilities are *sine qua non*; yet as discussed above, huge, slow-moving CVs are very difficult to defend, particularly from rapidly proliferating sub-surface threats (and relatively inexpensive) high-speed cruise and ballistic missiles. They therefore require—at a minimum—hugely expensive escort ships and submarines, any one of which costs hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars. They also necessitate

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998 Author’s meeting with U.S. defense analyst, Honolulu, HI, February 2013.
extensive training in defense operations of the sort discussed earlier, such as anti-submarine warfare.\footnote{Participant F, \textit{Conference on Far-Seas Operations}.}

Summary

The primary, most conspicuous, and most expensive aspect of China’s apparent push for a blue-water navy—China’s burgeoning aircraft carrier program—consists of platforms that are widely criticized both domestically and overseas as legacy, prestige systems: very vulnerable, immensely costly, and of dubious military utility in any high-intensity 21\textsuperscript{st} century conflict that China is likely to face. As one leading foreign PLAN expert has argued, when it comes to its investments in CVs, China “is trying to catch up in an area of limited potential.”\footnote{Participant F, Ibid.} These platforms provide an extremely expensive capability that just fifteen years ago China’s own leaders had dismissed as anachronistic in light of the rapidly advancing “Revolution in Military Affairs.” For nearly two decades the PLA has identified and trained to exploit the numerous vulnerabilities in the surface ships of the U.S. and other modern navies. Yet it does not yet appear to be investing heavily in developing defenses for its own, much less the logistical tail necessary to actually project naval power far from home. Even setting aside the opportunity costs for Chinese society in terms of lost ‘butter,’ the requisite procurements appear to take significant resources away from other PLA services and what civilian and military leaders have consistently identified as China’s more urgent strategic priorities and material threats on its immediate periphery. It is therefore not surprising that even some Chinese government-affiliated scholars criticize China’s CV program as an expensive distraction that does little to achieve the PLA’s
stated goals of military modernization and preparation for an actual war.\textsuperscript{1003} Especially revealing of the negligible military benefits of the program is the fact that numerous active and former/retired U.S. government and military officials privately express their hope that China’s leaders will continue wasting money on these hugely expensive and increasingly vulnerable platforms.\textsuperscript{1004}

It is early in China’s rise and it is impossible to divine the long-term strategic intentions of China’s leaders—to the extent that even they themselves understand these intentions today. Yet the available evidence suggests that an emotional and nationalistic desire for greater prestige and international standing, coupled with a widely-held belief in China that a blue-water navy and aircraft carriers are necessary trappings of status as a “great power” in the contemporary world, may be a key driver of key aspects of China’s gradual push since 2003 to enter the ranks of the “maritime great powers.” Regardless of the intentions of China’s leaders, some U.S. naval strategists have expressed concern that even a prestige-driven Chinese naval buildup could become a possible strategic disaster in the making.\textsuperscript{1005} The apparent desire of China’s leaders to construct by the middle of the century a blue-water navy capable of sailing far beyond the “Near Seas” may prove a twenty-first century version of a tried and true custom of some past Type A, status-seeking rising powers: the “prestige fleet.”\textsuperscript{1006} How this all plays out remains to be seen.

\textit{Wrap-up: China’s Pursuit of Status as a ‘Military Great Power’}

Some important military policy shifts during its rise so far suggest that, seen from Beijing, China’s rapid economic and industrial development checks only one of two boxes necessary to achieve its coveted status as a ‘great power.’ China’s leaders have long seen comprehensive

\textsuperscript{1003} Hwang, “PLA’s Assessment,” 84.
\textsuperscript{1004} Multiple author’s meetings; Newport, Washington, Honolulu, Beijing, 2011-2013.
\textsuperscript{1005} Author’s meeting with retired U.S. naval officer; Newport, R.I., November 2013.
\textsuperscript{1006} See Chapter 6.
national power as an important metric for calculating “the status hierarchy in world politics,”

and appear to believe that “strong military power” is the other box which China’s rapid
economic growth and industrial development has yet to check.

Beginning in the 1990s and throughout the period examined in this chapter efficient
investments in enhancing the PLA’s ability to assert China’s longstanding sovereignty claims on
its immediate periphery continued apace, as reflected in the effort to develop asymmetric
capabilities—especially its remarkable conventionally-tipped ballistic missile program. This is a
very important focus of China’s force development. By the early 2000s a status-seeking drive
also began to manifest increasingly in leaders’ explicit identification of China as a “rising power.”
This changing identity appears to have caused some unprecedented shifts to force development
and employment policies concomitant with leaders’ calls for military power “commensurate with
its international standing” as an economic giant, and to attain status as a “maritime great power”
and as a “responsible great power.” Especially salient in this pursuit are what Chinese leaders
appear to have identified as the trappings and missions normatively associated with such status in
the contemporary world; including MOOTW and nascent development of a blue-water navy.

Importantly, China’s abstract pursuit of membership in a notional club of ‘first-rank’ great
powers appears to be driven to a significant degree by domestic political and emotional
objectives. China’s leaders increasingly appeal to nationalist slogans of “national rejuvenation”
and a putative shared vision of attaining status as a great power as the “greatest dream of the

1008 Cited in Ibid., 216.
1009 “Renmin Jundui.”
nation.” 1011 In the context of worsening domestic instability resulting from rapid economic and industrial development, these calls also appear to have domestic political payoffs. Civilian and military leaders, as well as state-affiliated media, explicitly identify appeals to and policies in pursuit of this goal as “one of the greatest unifying forces in contemporary China.” 1012 Few sober-minded analysts believe that lacking many of the associated capabilities—e.g., CVs—or continuing to forsake the associated missions—e.g., UNPKO or anti-piracy operations halfway across the globe—would leave China’s strategic interests outside of its immediate periphery (especially the Near Seas) at risk. 1013 Although admittedly starting from a low base, some important aspects of China’s military development appear to be increasingly characterized by a shift toward mimicry of and, for better or worse, convergence with the policies and behavior of contemporaneous great powers—especially the United States. This is true in some cases even when the resulting policies may bring negligible, or negative, material benefits to China and/or actually make its military more vulnerable to potential adversaries. Some aspects of China’s military trajectory appear devoid of clear strategic underpinnings; a phenomenon identified explicitly by U.S. military analysts and even reflected in statements by China’s top leaders, government reports, and analyses in internal PLA journals. 1014

1012 “Xi Jinping Jiangshu Weida Zhongguo Meng Changtan Minzu Fuxing 习近平 江苏 伟大中国梦 江苏畅谈民族复兴 [Xi Jinping Discusses the Great China Dream, Chats About National Rejuvenation].”
1013 Joffe, “The ‘Right Size’ for China’s Military, 563
1014 Numerous author’s meetings with U.S. military and civilian analysts with expertise on China’s military, 2011-2013. For example, the goal of becoming a peer competitor by 2050. Or the goal of increasing military spending at an almost arbitrary rate in order to “make up for past neglect” but to a degree and manner that appear delinked from clear strategic objectives. For an example of the ‘compensatory’ rationale, see Ruixin Huang 黄瑞新 and Yongjun Xiao 肖永军, “Lun Zhongguo Junfei de Buchangxing Zengzhang 论中国军费的补偿性增长 [On China’s Military Spending’s Compensatory Growth],” Military Economic Research 军事经济研究, no. 11 (2007): 5–7. For a critique of China’s “blind” mimicry of the U.S. and other militaries, see Zhang, Qu, and Bai, “Jiantan Tigao Wuqi Zhuangbei Caiban Xiaoyi,” 29.
The more general foreign policy underpinnings of China’s leaders’ embrace of MOOTW in the military domain appear to be traceable to a concomitant uptick in interest among civilian leaders in another new concept—and one which also originated in the United States: “soft power.” The concept of “soft power” was introduced in the 1990s by former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense and chairman of the National Intelligence Council Joseph Nye. Nye developed the concept more fully in 2004.\textsuperscript{1015} It has since proven to be very popular in Chinese leadership circles. In fact, at the 17\textsuperscript{th} CCP Congress (2007), three years after Nye’s book was published, Hu Jintao identified the enhancement of China’s soft power as an urgent foreign policy objective. High-level government foreign policy think tanks, including the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations and the Institute of Strategic Studies of the CCP’s Central Party School, were subsequently tasked with carrying out multiple studies on the concept.\textsuperscript{1016} Four years later, at the 2011 annual plenum of the CCP Central Committee, China’s leaders identified bolstering the nation’s soft power as a top priority.\textsuperscript{1017} As scholar Li Mingjiang points out, many Chinese strategists identify soft power as a central facet of the “comprehensive power” that all great powers are “expected to possess,” as “an important indicator of a state’s international status and influence,” as “inseparable from China’s rise,” and as a condition for China to gain international recognition as a great power.\textsuperscript{1018}

Accordingly, and following the U.S. lead, Beijing appears to have come to see proactive involvement in MOOTW as one of the markers of normatively expected great power behavior and a key source of soft power. Especially significant in shaping China’s views in this regard

was the U.S.-led response to the 2004 tsunami, which created a new norm for the use of military platforms as a tool of “soft power”-based image-building.\textsuperscript{1019} As discussed earlier, a 2007 report published by the U.S. Naval War College captures the significance of the impact that recent U.S. HA/DR operations have had in subsequently shaping norms about the employment of military power:

“During the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, the very thought that sea powers might regularly use naval platforms to deliver humanitarian aid, as opposed to cutting off and starving an enemy’s supply lines, would have seemed alien. In the twenty-first century, however, national power and prestige are more and more characterized by ‘soft power.’”\textsuperscript{1020}

Subsequently, China’s leaders appear also to have come to explicitly recognize recent changes in global norms governing the development and employment of military power. As General Xu Caihou put it in 2009,

“We have an old saying in China: ‘Armies are to be maintained in the course of long years but to be used in the nick of time.’ Now, it seems more relevant to change it into, ‘armies are to be maintained in the course of long years and to be used for long years.’”\textsuperscript{1021}

China’s leadership has since elevated “diversified military tasks” to rank alongside war-fighting and deterrence as one of three core foci of China’s military\textsuperscript{1022} and has made MOOTW a major focus of the PLAN’s current Outline of Military Training of Evaluation, in effect since January 2009.\textsuperscript{1023} As discussed earlier, the growing importance of MOOTW to China’s military

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1019] Meeting with U.S. defense analyst; May 2013.
\item[1020] Elleman, \textit{Waves}, 117.
\item[1021] Xu, “Chinese Military.”
\item[1022] Scobell and Stevenson, “The PLA (Re-)Discovers NTS,” in Goldstein, \textit{Quite Complementary}, 42–43.
\item[1023] Cole, \textit{Great Wall}, 116.
\end{footnotes}
policies is especially evident in the PLA’s increasing involvement in HA/DR—a type of nontraditional security operation that since the 2004 tsunami relief effort has come to be seen by some U.S. military officers as the “core” of soft power and as a means to prevent war by building partnerships with other countries.\textsuperscript{1024} The normative demonstration effect of U.S.-led Operation Unified Assistance appears to have had an impact on subsequent force development and force employment decisions. In developments that would have been unthinkable a decade ago and although from a low base of zero only a few years ago, the militaries of the United States and its allies have begun to conduct various bilateral and multilateral exercises with the PLA, including joint patrols during peacekeeping operations, joint maritime search and rescue training exercises, anti-piracy exercises (including in the Gulf of Aden), and HA/DR exercises.\textsuperscript{1025} In short, U.S. military policies appear to have shaped global norms in such a way that non-traditional security operations and multinational cooperation are now seen by China’s leaders as role-appropriate behaviors in the military domain for aspiring great powers and important sources of soft power. Accordingly, associated operations have evolved into means by which Beijing can enhance China’s own international status and pursue its coveted recognition from Washington as a great power.\textsuperscript{1026}

\textit{Blue-water Navy and Aircraft Carrier Program}

China has neither strong maritime traditions nor a foundation in strategic maritime thought.\textsuperscript{1027} As recently as the 1990s China’s leaders and strategists continued to identify China

\textsuperscript{1024} Salenga, \textit{Developing Soft Power}.
\textsuperscript{1026} Whether this will happen or not, of course, remains to be seen.
\textsuperscript{1027} Bickford, Holz, and Velluci, Jr., \textit{Uncertain Waters}, 7.
as a strictly continental state. Accordingly, the PLAN remained a small riverine and coastal
defense force tasked primarily with supporting PLA ground forces. Given this background, the
2003 decision of China’s civilian leaders to develop and employ blue-water naval power in
pursuit of status as a “maritime great power” suggests a remarkable, and historic, ‘about-face’ in
strategic orientation. It is also a potentially immensely expensive proposition for this developing
country of 1.3 billion people, which has an estimated per-capita income (PPP) that ranked 122nd
in the world (2011) and whose leaders face severe, and worsening, domestic challenges, not
to mention numerous unresolved strategic threats to perceived core interests closer to home.

Although the ‘true’ motivations of China’s push are unknowable given the government
and military’s severely limited transparency, as the preliminary analysis in the previous section
suggests, the flagship of China’s nascent naval buildup, its aircraft carrier program, appears to
provide marginal and obsolescent military benefits, consists of platforms that are increasingly
vulnerable to even asymmetric attack from conventionally-inferior adversaries, especially in the
contested waters of China’s periphery, and are extremely expensive. An additional puzzle stems
from the fact that despite growing interest among Chinese strategists in Far Seas operations (up
to and beyond 1000 nautical miles away from Chinese territory), by most accounts the
concept seems devoid of concrete objectives to aid planning and is occurring in a strategic
vacuum. Accordingly, some analysts conclude that the push is aimed first and foremost at merely
adopting the superficial trappings of a “world-class” navy. As one expert on China’s navy
summarizes, the PLAN “is a developing navy in search of a mission.”

factbook/geos/ch.html.
1031 Meeting in Beijing, April 2013.
Yet even in this regard it appears that China’s decision-makers are acting rationally, responding to domestic political incentives out of a desire to enhance the legitimacy of CCP rule during a period of worsening popular discontent and domestic instability. As manifest in the extensive media attention given to such events as the PLAN’s 60th anniversary parade and seemingly every development concerning China’s CV program, however minor, public “navalism” in contemporary China appears to be gaining steam. In this domestic political context, Beijing may be exploiting deepening nationalism by appealing to an apparently widely-held belief that a “world-class” navy is a necessary condition for widely coveted status as an independent “great power of the ‘first rank’” and as a ‘necessary step’ along the path to “military power commensurate with China’s international standing.” The political symbolism and link between a naval buildup and China’s coveted status as a great power is manifest in state-sanctioned television documentaries, the writings of leading Chinese strategists, and active-duty and retired PLA officers, some of whom have even explicitly acknowledged that China’s CV program is driven more by a “political dream” than a strategically-informed military modernization effort.

To the extent that China plans to actually employ its fledgling, but growing, blue-water naval capabilities, the evidence available so far suggests that these platforms may be limited to non-combat and low-intensity operations (e.g., especially HA/DR, and anti-piracy,

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1032 Participant E, Conference on Far-Seas Operations.
respectively). Even some of those naval platforms traditionally associated with high-intensity naval conflicts between great powers—including CVs—are of dubious utility in China’s conceivable conflict scenarios today, and are likely to have even less military utility in the decades ahead. Accordingly, leading PLAN experts assess that these platforms are much more likely to be utilized for political signaling (“showing the flag”), MOOTW, and status-building diplomatic visits around the world. Moving beyond softer roles such as regional diplomacy and HA/DR would be extremely expensive and very difficult. This is not to say that this shift will definitely not occur in the future. But doing so would require huge increases in the PLAN’s budget, significantly expanded investments in capabilities—defenses (e.g., ASW), replenishment, and logistics—that the leadership has heretofore shown little interest in developing. It would also necessitate a fundamental reorientation of foreign policy to allow for allies and overseas military bases. To date, however, there are no clear signs of such a shift taking place.

Alternative Explanations

Power-maximization Hypothesis

China’s general military trajectory during its rise appears to contradict most basic expectations of the power maximization and offensive realist alternative explanation. First, international anarchy has not compelled China to utilize its growing economic and industrial wherewithal to maximize its hard military power, to expand territorially, or to behave

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1037 Erickson, Collins, and Denmark, “Beijing’s ‘Starter Carrier,’” 37–38.
1039 Participant F, Conference on Far-Seas Operations.
aggressively in order to survive. Despite the fact that its military is significantly more powerful than it was even a decade ago, the PLA has not used force kinetically against another country since 1988 and has not fought a war since 1979.

Second, China’s efforts to assert its territorial and maritime sovereignty claims on its immediate periphery, while certainly problematic and destabilizing, should not be considered military or territorial expansionism of the sort in which theories associated with this hypothesis expect rising powers to engage. Until 2001, the PLA was the front-guard, responsible for asserting China’s interests and claims in its exclusive economic zone. Yet since the early 2000s Beijing has held the PLAN back from front-line operations and has instead typically relied on non-military vessels to further or otherwise support its claims. To point this salutary trend out is not to defend China’s vast and ambiguous sovereignty claims, nor to downplay the risk of a conflict due to China’s apparent continued willingness to assert them coercively. Rather, the point is two-fold: first, as China grows more military powerful it is asserting its contested sovereignty claims in a manner increasingly—and (frustratingly) cleverly—consistent with prevailing norms governing the non-use of kinetic military force. This shift is in stark contrast to earlier periods of its history when China did not enjoy obvious conventional superiority yet did employ kinetic force against its neighbors to assert these same claims (e.g., in deadly maritime clashes with Vietnam in 1974 and 1988, and a land war in 1979). Second, the sovereignty claims themselves, however dubious, have remained constant for decades (South China Sea, at least since 1949; Taiwan, at least since 1949; East China Sea, at least since 1971 (when Washington was in the process of returning administrative control of Okinawa—and the Senkaku/Diaoyudao islands—to Tokyo). For these reasons, as problematic and destabilizing as

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1040 Author’s meeting with U.S. defense analyst in Honolulu, HI, February 2013.
China’s behavior in the Near Seas may be for actors outside China, any description of trends as evidence of military or territorial expansionism tantamount to the sort expected of rising powers by this category of alternative explanation seems inappropriate and ahistorical. Tactics such as blackmail, bait and bleed, or bloodletting do not appear to be in China’s policy repertoire.

Third, there is little evidence that Beijing’s efforts to gain wealth are for the purpose of enhancing its military power. Despite headline-making increases to defense spending in recent years, the budget is largely in sync with the trend in overall GDP growth. After a decade of rapid increases, China’s official defense budget remains at roughly 1.3-1.5 percent of GDP each year—a proportion lower than the budgets of even most U.S. European allies. Even when calculated based on high-end foreign estimates of what some analysts judge to be China’s “actual” total defense spending, this figure still accounts for less than three-percent of GDP—a far cry from the levels of defense spending of the cases of the past ‘revisionist’ 19th- and 20th-century rising powers that have informed related scholarship advocating this paradigm.1041

Fourth, several recent shifts in China’s force development and employment policies appear to be aimed at image-building in ways that have negligible benefits for its ability to actually prosecute a high-intensity war. (see discussion of the security-maximizing hypothesis, below) Outside its contested periphery, China’s military appears to be gradually deepening military cooperation with the U.S. military, as well as with those of other countries. Seen from the perspective of Washington and other leading states, over the past two decades China’s violations of international norms governing ‘appropriate’ use of kinetic military force stem from primarily what it has not been willing to do (e.g., support UN resolutions authorizing the use of

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1041 On sustainability of China’s defense spending, see Andrew S. Erickson and Adam P. Liff, “China’s Military Development, Beyond the Numbers,” The Diplomat, March 12, 2013, http://thediplomat.com/2013/03/12/chinas-military-development-beyond-the-numbers/?all=true; Liff and Erickson, “Demystifying.”
force against abusive authoritarian regimes), as opposed to what China’s military actually has
done. Even if some of the platforms China is developing as part of its blue-water naval push are
theoretically useful for power projection, at least to this date there is little evidence that Beijing
is investing heavily in developing the logistical tail, allies, partners, overseas basing, defenses
(e.g., ASW), and lift capacity necessary to actually project military power to a degree useful in a
high-intensity military conflict beyond its immediate environs.  

To be sure, China’s rise is not complete and its military policies could shift again in the
future. As it becomes more militarily powerful it may about-face and begin to pursue a trajectory
that conforms more closely to the expectations of the power maximization/offensive realist
hypothesis. Yet at this moment in time a claim along those lines does not appear to be supported
by the available empirical data and is conjectural.

Security-maximizing Hypothesis

As noted earlier, the security-maximizing hypothesis appears to provide significant
explanatory power as it concerns the important and efficient investments that China’s leaders
have made to develop military power to asymmetrically contest its vast sovereignty claims on its
immediate periphery. The Second Artillery Force’s conventionally-tipped ballistic missile
program is an important case-in-point. Furthermore, there is also evidence of the kind of security
dilemma that defensive realists would expect between a rising and established great power,
which is exacerbated significantly by China’s apparently willful lack of military transparency.  

From China’s perspective, at least rhetorically fear of an alleged U.S. ‘hegemonic’ threat

1042 Andrew S. Erickson and Adam P. Liff, “A Player, but No Superpower,” Foreign Policy, March 7, 2013,
http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/03/07/a_player_but_no_superpower_china_military?page=full.
1043 G. John Ikenberry and Adam P. Liff, “The Rise of Security Dilemma-Driven Conflict in East Asia?,” Working
manifests in widespread claims in Beijing that Washington is intent on “containing China’s rise.” These important trends should not be overlooked, as they have very important implications for the possibility of either a direct U.S.-China conflict or of a military clash between China and its neighbor(s), which may also ultimately entrap the U.S. military.

Nevertheless, as the empirical analysis of this chapter has shown, over the past decade there are also some important changes to China’s military policy profile gradually taking place that appear to depart from the expectations of this hypothesis. These shifts could potentially shape China’s medium- to long-term military trajectory in a manner with significant, even salubrious, consequences for international peace and stability. In several cases, China’s leaders appear to also be investing in costly and unnecessary capabilities and missions with dubious links to what its own leaders identify as its most pressing strategic interests, yet which come with expected benefits for China’s claim to status as a ‘military great power.’

Even if one sets aside the domestic opportunity costs of these investments—i.e., lost ‘butter’ from money not spent addressing severe, and worsening, domestic and social problems—from the perspective of this alternative explanation these scarce resources would have been better spent achieving base levels of modernization and developing forces and training for those high-intensity conflict scenarios which China’s own leaders identify as most probable—above all, a hegemonic war with the United States. After all, China’s own leaders frequently state that the PLA’s capabilities remain inferior to those of its most likely adversary—the U.S. military. Although the gap is closing and the PLA enjoys important ‘pockets of excellence,’ this remains true today.

The PLA’s growing roles in nontraditional security operations are cases-in-point of behavior that is puzzling from the perspective of the security-maximizing hypothesis, yet which
has potentially significant salubrious implications for the likelihood of China’s emergence as a ‘responsible stakeholder’ and contributor to cooperative security. China’s involvement in UNPKO appears to have little direct relevance to its material interests, nor does the PLA’s participation in these operations generally cultivate skills applicable to warfighting. Overseas HA/DR operations are costly and are among the most complicated operations that militaries conduct, yet the ‘spin-off’ benefits to warfighting are limited given how vastly different planning, training, and execution are from those useful for a kinetic military conflict. While China’s procurement of a hospital ship could conceivably have been driven partially by assessments of its possible usefulness treating wounded in the event of a low-intensity military conflict, maintenance and deployment costs necessary to send it on blue-water humanitarian missions around the world cannot be explained as a response to security threats.

As for China’s unprecedented involvement in global anti-piracy operations, especially its now six year-old deployment to the Gulf of Aden, although a desire to contribute to securing sea lanes appears to have been an important part of the story, evidence that suggests these missions are not primarily driven by an unspoken desire to develop distant warfighting capabilities is the PLA’s reported resistance to participating in the anti-piracy mission in the first place. The mission is seen by at least some PLA leaders as “a huge drain of scant resources and [as having] low priority compared to war preparation.” A group of analysts at the U.S. National Defense University assess that the experience and know-how that the PLAN gains from these operations are:

1044 Chambers, “Framing,” 51.
1047 Author’s meetings with U.S. PLA experts in Honolulu, HI, and Beijing, February and April 2013.
“not directly transferable either to a Taiwan contingency or an out of area MCO [major combat operation]. This implies that time spent on conducting nontraditional out of area deployments for a PLA navy unit is time away from combat training for a Taiwan contingency or preparing for major combat operations out of area. The larger implication for U.S. policy is that naval cooperation with China will do exactly as advertised—contribute to the maritime security of the global commons—and not inadvertently help the PLAN become more lethal in a Taiwan contingency.”

Nor are these missions cheap. This group of analysts assesses that these missions have been “extremely expensive for the PLA,” in terms of economic, personnel, and force structure, as well as training and other opportunity costs. Even top Chinese military leaders, including the chief of the PLA Headquarters of the General Staff, have reportedly acknowledged these costs and even considered ending the mission as a result.

Beyond nontraditional security missions, the ostensible strategic/material rationale for the other shift examined in this chapter—China’s nascent push for a blue-water navy—appears dubious given the evolution of the global trading system; the low risk of state-based attacks against or blockades of commercial trade; the demonstrated ability and willingness of the U.S. Navy, together with its allies, to provide the public good of safeguarding the security of the global maritime commons from both state and non-state threats; the proliferation of ISR and weapon technologies (especially quiet diesel submarines and precision-guided missiles) that make large surface fleets immensely vulnerable not only to conventionally superior adversaries but also to asymmetric attack from relatively weak ones; and the fact that Beijing does not appear to have yet made major investments in the most obvious measures (e.g., ASW) necessary

1049 Yung et al., COoANO, 35–38, 54–55. Quote from 54-55.  
1050 Ibid., 44. Author’s meeting with American PLAN expert, Washington, DC. January 2012.  
1051 Author’s meeting with American PLAN expert, Washington, DC. January 2012.
to mitigate what its own military recognizes as huge vulnerabilities. Additionally, China’s strategic geography—especially its borders with fourteen countries, including four* nuclear powers, and territorial and maritime disputes; China’s numerous alternatives to maritime commerce for resources (e.g., oil), its resource portfolio, the persistence of its main strategic direction—Taiwan—and the fact that it faces no major naval threats beyond its immediate periphery, all would also seem to militate against such a major strategic reorientation for a developing country of 1.3 billion people.

Specific to China’s fledgling aircraft carrier program, leading defense and military officials in the country that both the PLA and the security-maximizing hypothesis expect to be China’s primary military adversary posing an existential threat—the United States—are generally dismissive of the threat posed by China’s CV program. In fact, some even hope that China will invest in building more aircraft carriers given that they are seen as “sitting ducks” and will divert China’s resources away from more efficient (and effective) platforms that could pose serious threats to the U.S. Navy.1052 As a sign of the growing obsolescence of these platforms, even the U.S.’s peerless supercarriers—generations ahead of what China can realistically hope to field in the coming decades even with tens, if not hundreds, of billions of dollars in investment—are increasingly criticized by leading U.S. strategists as hugely expensive symbols of national power that are strategically or operationally unnecessary to safeguard U.S. territory or material

interests abroad. As one U.S. Navy captain wrote recently, CV are “big, expensive, vulnerable – and surprisingly irrelevant to the conflicts of the time.”

In short, in China’s most likely conflict scenarios, CV battle groups appear to offer at best marginal increases in capability for an extremely large ‘buck.’ They are widely seen as inefficient militarily and economically, especially relative to less conspicuous, less expensive alternatives such as quiet diesel submarines, ballistic and cruise missiles, amphibious assault ships, or helicopter carriers. All of these latter platforms are not only arguably better suited to China’s most likely contingencies but also are significantly less likely to cause major diplomatic fallout with China’s neighbors. What SLOC challenges do exist are primarily nontraditional security threats, most efficiently met through use of much smaller surface ships, diplomacy and international cooperation.

**Domestic Institutions/Interest Group Politics**

With the significant caveat that the inner workings of China’s military policy decision-making process are unknown, domestic political, especially bureaucracy-oriented explanations, seem to provide unconvincing alternative explanations of the military policy shifts examined in this chapter.

First, generally speaking, the PRC’s Leninist system of tiao (vertical links within each bureaucracy) and kuai (horizontal linkages across the state, party, and military) poses a significant obstacle to the kinds of major shifts in policy examined in this chapter. Bureaucratic actors working within this system are exceptionally well-situated to prevent other bureaucratic

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1054 Hendrix, *At What Cost?*.
1055 Erickson, Collins, and Denmark, “Beijing’s ‘Starter Carrier,’” 42.
actors from hijacking policy decision-making. Actors of equivalent bureaucratic rank cannot compel others to do their will. In short, diffusion of power throughout China’s political system provides infertile ground for log-rolling.

Second, there is evidence to suggest that far from being able to ‘hijack’ force development and employment policy-making the PLA is increasingly tightly controlled by the civilian CCP leadership. For example, in contrast to circumstances before China’s post-Cold War rise, at present zero military officers belong to China’s ultimate decision-making body—the Politburo Standing Committee. Additionally, since 1998 only two of the twenty-five seats on the larger Politburo have been assigned to PLA officers—another significant departure from past practice and a historic low.

Even during periods in which the military appears to have been relatively more influential, there is evidence of major policy changes imposed on the military by top civilian leaders, often against the PLA’s wishes. To put it simply, despite belonging to the oldest institution of the current CCP regime, PLA leaders seem to have traditionally had a relatively poor track record of getting what they want. A case-in-point is the leadership’s response to what many observers see as the PLA’s poor performance in China’s most recent war—the 1979 war with Vietnam. An important post mortem on the war circulated among top leaders concluded that the PLA’s equipment had been so backward that it had simply “not been able to conduct a modern war.” Yet civilian leaders forced curtailment of defense spending so extreme that the official defense budget actually declined in real terms during the 1980s. Similarly, civilian leaders have repeatedly overcome stiff resistance from PLA leaders to impose not only multiple

1059 Document referenced in Joffe, PLA After Mao, 57.
rounds of downsizing of the powerful ground forces but also to force the PLA to divest most of its lucrative commercial enterprises in 1998. Another example is President Jiang Zemin’s firing of the commander of the South Sea Fleet for advocating aircraft carriers in the 1990s. In short, as time has passed and the “old guard” of Revolutionary military leaders has retired or passed away, the civilian leadership appears to have further strengthened its control of the military.  

Third, both the recent genesis of the perceived great power norms associated with the PLA’s new nontraditional security missions and the unprecedented nature of the PLA’s involvement suggests that there was no built-in constituency within the government or military to champion these missions for bureaucratic political reasons. In fact, there is at least anecdotal evidence that these operations have been opposed by conservative PLA leaders, who have been concerned about unnecessary overextension, casualties, and distractions from their assigned primary strategic objectives. Furthermore, significant cultural and institutional obstacles existed to all of these operations given the long-standing continentalist, self-interested, and Realpolitik strategic orientation of China’s leaders, especially those belonging to the PLA. The PLA is arguably the most conservative institution within a Leninist system replete with them, and has a risk-averse culture that avoids sticking its neck out. This seems to support the contention that the civilian leadership, not the PLA or a rogue bureaucracy within it, has been the primary champion of the military’s changing mission set during the period examined in this chapter.

Fourth, the primary benefactor of many of the military developments discussed in this chapter—the PLA Navy—has traditionally been weak organizationally relative to the long-dominant ground forces. This unfavorable internal power balance is reflected in the facts that the China’s armed forces are still called the People’s Liberation Army (rather than “Military”); early

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1060 Li, Civil-Military Relations Post-Deng, 13–14.
1061 Author’s meeting with U.S. defense analyst in Honolulu, HI, February 2013.
leaders of the PLAN were appointed because of their “redness” and success in ground campaigns, not naval background or expertise;\textsuperscript{1062} and the PLAN’s mandate was for decades limited strictly to “coastal defense,” i.e., supporting ground forces in a land war. As a testament to the continued dominance of the ground forces in internal decision-making, to this day each PLA Military Region is headed by a ground force commander. Even Liu Huaqing, the so-called “father of China’s modern navy” and the primary champion of China’s aircraft carrier program, was an Army general appointed by Deng Xiaoping to head the PLAN directly from his post as assistant chief of staff of the PLA. Despite his putative status as the most influential PLAN leader in PRC history, during Liu’s tenure as commander of the PLAN and later as CMC vice chair during the 1982-1997 period, the only major naval combatants that he succeeded in procuring were two Luhu-class missile destroyers. Additionally, his efforts to convince civilian leaders to launch an CV program reportedly failed, and the PLAN’s buildup did not begin in earnest until several years after his retirement.\textsuperscript{1063} As further evidence of the PLAN’s relative weakness in the decision-making hierarchy, it was not until 2004 that the PLAN commander became a member of the CMC—the military’s top-level decision-making body. While this promotion likely strengthened PLAN influence over decision-making, it is important to stress that it was the civilian leadership that decided to promote the PLAN commander to this position in the first place. It therefore appears to be a symptom, not a cause, of the Politburo’s 2003 decision to pursue status as a “maritime great power.” Additionally, the simultaneous promotion to the CMC of the PLAN commander’s counterparts in the Air Force and Second Artillery severely mitigated any otherwise disproportionally enhanced influence for the navy. Lastly, even the decision to procure aircraft carriers was made by the civilian-dominated Politburo.

\textsuperscript{1062} Cole, Great Wall, 7.
\textsuperscript{1063} Li, “Evolution,” 157.
4. Conclusion

As the empirical analysis of this case study has shown, the effect of the status-seeking driven socialization mechanism posited by SAT is clearly not determinative of China’s military policies. Indeed, the security-maximizing hypothesis performs particularly well in accounting for several very important shifts in China’s military policies since the early 1990s designed to enhance the PLA’s ability to contest longstanding sovereignty claims on its immediate periphery. Given Beijing’s continued investments in this area, the possibility of a military clash—intended or not—over Taiwan or volatile sovereignty disputes with China’s neighbors remains very real.

Due in no small part to widely-shared memories of China’s history of subjugation by ‘Western great powers’ (including Japan) during the 19th- and early 20th-centuries, reflexive opposition to and skepticism of policies normatively associated with ‘Western’ or ‘great power’ status has essentially been baked into the DNA of both the CCP and the PLA. The fact that the relevant leading states today are advanced liberal democracies appears to be another salient obstacle to the socialization of China’s political and military leaders to contemporaneous great power norms promoted in rhetoric and by example by the United States in particular. For these and the other reasons specific to this case contemporary China is an extremely hard case for the status-seeking driven socialization posited by SAT. Any analysis of whether, and/or the extent to which, a socialization process is taking place should begin from this baseline.

Nevertheless, in recent years China’s rapidly increasing economic and industrial wherewithal, coupled with numerous social cues from within and outside the country, appears to have catalyzed a gradual change in national identity. As we have seen, although it remains heavily contested domestically, by the early 2000s China’s leaders began to explicitly identify
China as a rising and aspiring “great power.” With this new identity comes a very different package of associated constitutive and behavioral norms in the foreign policy domain, as well as a new aspirational reference group as they pursue China’s coveted status: the leading states in the system—above all, the United States.

As China’s identity as a rising power has consolidated, its military trajectory appears to be ‘bending away,’ albeit gradually, from the expectations of existing theories of rising powers. Although this trend is not the main thrust of China’s military development at present, its leaders seem to have begun to gradually adopt new force development and employment policies in accord with their perceptions of what is normatively expected of an aspiring great power in the contemporary international system. For example, a desire of leaders for China not to be excluded or seen as an outlier among its self-identified aspirational peer group seems to be an important factor in both China’s nascent aircraft carrier program and its gradual implementation of cooperative maritime security and other nontraditional security operations. Salient examples of the latter category include the PLA’s growing involvement in UNPKO, overseas HA/DR operations, and the now six year-old deployment of PLAN ships to participate in a multinational anti-piracy task force to protect international shipping off the coast of Somalia. To be sure, the associated policy shifts may still be ‘at the margins.’ Yet history demonstrates that the margins can matter. Decisions to (or not to) implement even seemingly minor shifts to force development and employment policies in the medium- to long-term have been of immense significance for international peace and stability in past cases of rising powers. Although beginning from a low base, in China’s case these margins may also grow in the years ahead.

China’s rise is ongoing and the future is of course uncertain. Its peaceful rise is by no means guaranteed. Looking forward, however, the causal mechanism central to SAT is of
potentially immense significance for China’s future military trajectory. Due in large part to the different content of the military policies and rhetoric promoted by the United States and other leading states today, if recent trends continue it suggests the possibility that status-seeking driven socialization to contemporaneous great power norms may contribute significantly to shaping China’s military trajectory in a manner that sees it gradually emerge as a ‘responsible stakeholder’ and supporter of the prevailing global order. In contrast to the relatively pessimistic expectations of some existing theories of rising powers and status-seeking in international relations, an effort on the part of Beijing to enter the ranks of the ‘great powers’ through conformity to associated norms as they exist today is likely to decrease the likelihood of military conflict, to say nothing of the sort of hegemonic war that has defined the end state of some—but not all—past rising powers’ military trajectories.

How this all plays out, of course, will be heavily contingent on the policy choices of leaders in the years ahead, especially those in Beijing and Washington. Accordingly, the analysis in this chapter is necessarily preliminary and should be updated as new data emerge. A few possible implications of this study’s findings for China’s rise, as well as some preliminary lessons for how the United States and other states may be able to exploit this status-seeking drive to help to shape China’s emergence in a peaceful and international order-sustaining manner, are discussed in Chapter 7.
Chapter 6: Secondary Cases

“The march of events rules and overrules human action [...] the war [with Spain] has brought us new duties and responsibilities which we must meet and discharge as becomes a great nation on whose growth and career from the beginning the Ruler of Nations has plainly written the high command and pledge of civilization.”

-- William McKinley (President of the United States; 1897-1901), 1898

“Your map of Africa is certainly very beautiful, but my map of Africa lies in Europe. Here lies Russia and there lies France, and we are in the middle. That is my map of Africa.”

“The Foreign Office can either get rid of colonies, or get rid of me.”

-- Otto von Bismarck (Chancellor of Germany; 1871-1890)

“Peace policy is a sober task. I, too, try with the means at my command to pave the way for the prevalence of reason in my own country and in the world: that reason which demands that we seek peace because the absence of peace has come to mean extreme lack of reason. War is no longer the ultima ratio but rather the ultima irratio. Even if this is still not a generally held view, I personally understand a policy for peace as a genuine Realpolitik of this epoch.”

-- Willy Brandt (Chancellor of Germany; 1969-1974), Nobel Lecture, 1971

In the interest of providing a preliminary test of the generalizability of shadowing/avoiding theory beyond the three primary cases examined in Chapters 3-5, this chapter analyzes the decision-making behind major military policy decisions widely considered to be of significant historical consequence in three additional rising powers during the modern era. The three relatively brief secondary case studies in this chapter include two candidate Type

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1064 Quoted in Dobson, America’s Ascent, 120.
1066 Quoted in Kennedy, Anglo-German Antagonism, 203.
A, status-seeking rising powers (late 19\textsuperscript{th}/early 20\textsuperscript{th}-century United States and Germany), which are often cited in support of the claims of leading—especially Realist—alternative explanations, and one candidate Type B, status-avoiding rising power (late 20\textsuperscript{th}-century Germany). As discussed in Chapter 2, the comparative approach employed in this study of six rising powers, coupled with the chronological and geographical diversity of the cases themselves, allows for a robust measurement of the relative explanatory power of both SAT and the leading alternative explanations across time and space, as well as cultural, political, normative, and strategic contexts. In light of this diversity, even if variation in the strength of the effect exists, the discovery of a generalizable pattern of cause and effect would nevertheless have especially significant implications for international relations theory.

1. Late 19\textsuperscript{th}/early 20\textsuperscript{th}-century United States—Type A, Status-seeking Rising Power?

In 1897, America was almost universally not recognized as a ‘great power’ despite having the world’s largest economy, industry, and share of worldwide foreign trade. It had not fought a major interstate war in fifty years, had no colonies or significant overseas territorial possessions, and had no empire of which to speak. Yet the following year all of that changed. The U.S. defeat of Spain in the 1898 Spanish-American War and the subsequent acquisition by the United States of colonies and imposition of foreign rule on the Philippines and other territories using military force caused Britain and other established ‘great powers’ to immediately recognize it as a fledgling member of their exclusive club. By the time the so-called “Great White Fleet” set sail less than a decade later, few contemporary observers doubted that America had finally attained recognition and acceded to the highest tier of first-rank great powers. A review of the empirical record of military policy decision-making at key strategic
decision points reveals that the manner in which the United States pursued greater prestige and status as a great power was largely mimetic. The model for U.S. colonial pursuits and naval power was the British Empire.\textsuperscript{1068}

The sea changes in U.S. military policy that occurred during this period have been identified by IR scholars as providing strong evidence to support Realist claims about anarchy compelling all states to maximize power and/or to survive in a dangerous world through military buildup and territorial expansion.\textsuperscript{1069} Yet this interpretation does not appear to fully comport with the empirical record. In the U.S. case, in some of the most historically significant shifts, assumptions associated with the Realist paradigm appear to do far less of the causal work than the existing literature would suggest. In fact, from this perspective what is most puzzling about the major military policy shifts that, in aggregate, attained for the American public its coveted status as a great power, is the fact that they were primarily implemented for reasons largely divorced from structural imperatives, external threats to U.S. territorial security, and, to a significant degree, even perceived overseas material interests. As cases in point a war with Spain, arguably the most significant turning point in the history of U.S. foreign policy prior to 1917 when it occurred in 1898, was resisted for years by both President Grover Cleveland (second-term Democrat; 1893-1897) and President William McKinley (Republican; 1897-1901) as not in U.S interests. Far from being a war of necessity, it was a war of choice. The primary arguments \textit{against} what Secretary of State John Hay called a ‘splendid little war’ were economic, and Cuba was largely irrelevant for U.S. security. For its part, the annexation by force of the Philippines—America’s first-ever colony—was opposed by even crusading future president Theodore

\textsuperscript{1068} Dobson, \textit{America’s Ascent}, 134.
\textsuperscript{1069} A seminal work in this vein is Zakaria, \textit{FWTP}.
Roosevelt as outside the U.S. sphere of influence and interest.\textsuperscript{1070} And it was annexed with no real plan for what the United States would do with it.

Far from being of marginal significance to the history of international relations and America’s role in the world, these two decision points are arguably the two most significant of the hundred years before 1917. They set America on a military trajectory that was a major departure from past policies and widely considered to betray core foreign policy principles and even the U.S. Constitution. Yet the consequences would be long-lasting and, especially in the case of the colonization of the Philippines, disastrous for U.S. strategic interests. While of dubious strategic or material benefit these shifts did, however, successfully scratch a rapidly worsening chauvinistic itch among the public and some leaders to respond to America’s surging economic and industrial wherewithal to adopt the mantle of a ‘great power’ based on the British imperialist model.

Economic growth during the decades following the Civil War was so rapid that the size of the U.S. economy had surpassed that of Britain by 1895. Given the extent to which this rapidly industrializing and urbanizing rising power’s domestic conditions were “in a state of upset,”\textsuperscript{1071} the available evidence suggests that McKinley and other Republican leaders judged that failure to respond to growing calls for America to adopt the mantle of a ‘great power’ risked their being thrown out of power, just as McKinley’s staunchly anti-war, anti-imperialism Democratic predecessor had been. The resulting military policy shifts, themselves major departures from longstanding U.S. foreign policy traditions and in large part aimed at staking America’s claim to widely coveted status as a great power, contributed significantly to

\textsuperscript{1070} Dobson, America’s Ascent, 117.
\textsuperscript{1071} Ernest R May, Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America as a Great Power (Chicago: Imprint Publications, 1991), 268.
buttressing popular support for the Republican Party, including saving the McKinley administration from what appear to be sincere fears of a possible revolution in 1898.\textsuperscript{1072}

In short, at the turn of the century a growing self-identification as a rising power owing to rapid industrialization, economic growth, and domestic and international social cues effectively caused a surge in chauvinistic sentiment centered on a push for the United States to enter the ranks of the great powers.\textsuperscript{1073} Widespread domestic unrest owing to the negative externalities of rapid economic growth and industrialization accelerated this push, providing leaders with clear domestic political incentives to adopt military policies that they otherwise probably would not have. The view that America deserved its ‘rightful place’ among the great powers appears to have been widespread in the United States by the 1890s, as was the belief that a great military victory and the acquisition of colonies—to contribute to sharing the “white man’s burden”—were necessary conditions for enhancing national prestige sufficiently to gain this coveted status. As even one well-known opponent of colonialism and imperialism, Independent Republican Carl Schurz, conceded in 1893, “to see his country powerful and respected among the nations of the earth, and to secure to it all those advantages to which its character and position entitle it, is the natural desire of every American. In this sentiment we all agree.”\textsuperscript{1074}

In the language of shadowing/avoiding theory, this status-seeking driver effectively socialized this rising power to contemporaneous great power norms. A core driver of this push for great power status was what historian John Dobson refers to as a “psychological and

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\textsuperscript{1072} They may also have contributed to ensuring continued Republican control of the White House and both houses of Congress until 1911. Both houses of Congress were majority Republican from 1895 to 1911—i.e., containing the entire period covered in this section. Meanwhile, a Republican was in the White House from 1897 to 1913 (McKinley; McKinley/Roosevelt; Roosevelt; Taft).

\textsuperscript{1073} As Jonathan Renshon argues, there was severe 'status dissatisfaction' in the U.S. given the huge gap between what he calculates as its global diplomatic (status) rank, which was very low, and its material capabilities, which were the greatest in the world. Renshon, “Fighting for Status,” 91.

\textsuperscript{1074} Dobson, America's Ascent, 90.
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emotional” desire to enter into “an exclusive club” of states. The members of this club were widely perceived to share specific behavior credentials. This process resulted in major changes to military policies after three decades of what even the U.S. Department of State now accurately characterizes as having been “the least active period in American foreign relations.” It was also a period of time during which, given the absence of any major threat, U.S. naval power had declined precipitously (see below). This socializing mechanism was sufficiently powerful to cause shifts in military policy that were unprecedented and fundamental, and widely seen as a betrayal of longstanding foreign policy traditions, most notably, isolationism. They were also considered by many to be a betrayal of the ‘national character’—most importantly, a widely-held identity as a democratic and strictly non-imperialist nation.

Some scholars have argued that the latent material power of the United States made its rise to great power status “a virtual inevitability.” Yet what is perhaps most remarkable about these unprecedented policy shifts is that they do not appear to have been implemented as part of some grand strategic plan. Far from it. U.S. leaders implemented these shifts despite immense concern about the potential (and actual) costs and widespread recognition among leaders that the associated policies were not likely to serve the strategic and/or economic interests of the United States. This suggests that the decision of the leaders of perhaps the most secure, materially well-endowed rising power in history was not compelled by the self-help imperative to survive under anarchy to expand militarily, nor were these shifts even primarily driven by greedy pursuit of material interests. Rather, the military trajectory of the United States during this period

1075 Ibid., 3.
1077 For example, a number of contemporary observers considered colonialism to be unconstitutional. Dobson, America’s Ascent, 94.
1078 For example, Kennedy, Rise&Fall, 242. See also Dobson, America’s Ascent, 2.
constituted of a series of *choices*, choices made largely out of a desire for status as a great power rather than necessity. To attain that status, leaders needed to play the great power game as defined by the contemporaneous leading states; i.e., their aspirational referents.

The policy shifts adopted in pursuit of this status-seeking goal were largely successful in the sense that despite its material capabilities it was not until the United States conformed to these contemporaneous great power norms that leaders in the European great powers—above all, the widely recognized leading state, Great Britain—finally recognized it as a member of the club. America achieved this goal by, inter alia, defeating an established great power (Spain) in a war and seizing its first-ever colonies. These first expansionist steps, though taken primarily for purposes of prestige and status, effectively launched America on an entirely new military trajectory that would have long-term and far-ranging implications for its global role. Ironically, although not caused by overseas security concerns and interests in the first order, the effect of these shifts would nevertheless be to *create* costly overseas security concerns and interests that would, inter alia, contribute significantly to tensions with another rising Asia-Pacific power—Imperial Japan.

**Strategic Decision Points**

**1898: The Spanish-American War and the America’s acquisition of its first-ever colonies**

Despite years of steady economic and industrial expansion, during the mid-1890s economic depression befell the United States, beginning with the ‘Panic of 1893.’ During this period of domestic upset, in February 1895 Cubans rebelled against Spanish rule. The situation in Cuba worsened over time, and a major riot occurred in Havana in January 1898. The riot was brutally suppressed and, in response to widespread domestic agitation in the U.S. for a response,
Washington deployed the battleship *U.S.S. Maine* to Havana harbor for a ‘friendly’ port call. On February 15 an explosion of unknown origin blew up the *Maine*, killing two officers and 264 crew. After a report on the cause of the incident released by the U.S. Naval Court of Inquiry concluded (dubiously) that the explosion was caused by Spanish malfeasance, tensions mounted in late March.\(^\text{1079}\) After a series of failed negotiations, on April 21 Spain severed diplomatic ties with the United States and declared war two days later. Congress subsequently passed a declaration of war, retroactive to April 21. The Spanish-American War lasted until August 13. It was most notable for U.S. Admiral George Dewey’s legendary defeat of Spanish forces in Manila Bay on May 1. U.S. forces landed on Cuba in late June.

The U.S. decision to launch the war was not a foregone conclusion, nor was it insignificant. This ‘splendid little war’ was entirely a war of choice, yet in the words of a history published by the U.S. State Department itself, the conflict constituted a “a major departure from […] traditional American practice […]with] far-reaching consequences.”\(^\text{1080}\)

U.S. leaders had largely ignored unrest and oppression in Spanish Cuba for decades. Why act now?

By the mid-1890s, decades of rapid economic growth had fomented growing nationalism among the population, which in turn caused many to argue that the time had come for America to finally take its rightful place among the great powers. Severe domestic instability and economic displacement due to the depression worsened domestic political conditions, exacerbating leaders’

\(^{1079}\) Although perhaps not surprising that the Spanish inquiry concluded that Spain was not at fault, some historians argue that the weight of evidence favors the Spanish argument. Spain’s inquiry determined that the explosion was the result of combustion of coal stores inside the *Maine*. Lawrence Lenz, *Power and Policy: America’s First Steps to Superpower 1889-1922* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2008), 71. As the U.S. court’s finding shows, this interpretation is contested. Regardless of the true cause, however, the important point is that the U.S. public did not seem to be very concerned with the report’s findings. Such was the state of agitation in the U.S. that many called for war long before even the U.S. side had reached a judgment on Spain’s culpability.

\(^{1080}\) “Rise to World Power, 1867-1913.”
sensitivities to popular sentiment. Despite domestic agitation for conflict, McKinley’s immediate predecessor, President Cleveland, had avoided war with Spain at all costs—despite awareness that it would cost him severely politically. During Cleveland’s second term the growing chorus of Jingoist calls for war with Spain had become so powerful that even Fitzhugh Lee, who anti-war/anti-colonialism Cleveland had handpicked to be consul-general in Havana because of Lee’s reputation as “someone ‘free of imperialist or jingo biases,’” advised Cleveland that war with Spain “might do much toward directing the minds of the people away from imaginary ills.”

Yet Cleveland refused to change his mind. This refusal to pick an unnecessary fight with Spain contributed to the Democratic Party’s loss in the 1896 presidential election.

Realizing the potential costs and minimal upside to a war with Spain, Republican President William McKinley, Cleveland’s successor, also desperately sought alternatives to war. Significantly, he continued to do so even after the explosion of the Maine. At a February 25 Cabinet meeting, McKinley revealed that even if there turned out to be proof that Spain had in fact blown up the Maine, in order to avoid war he would have been willing to settle for a cash indemnity. Yet the nationalist outcry ultimately forced McKinley’s hand. As Daniel Markey convincingly argues, the primary impact of the Maine explosion was as a humiliation—an insult to the U.S. national honor and prestige so powerful that even those who were opposed to war in general felt it was necessary to regain lost prestige.

The available evidence suggests strongly that McKinley’s first-order concern in launching the war was (political) self-preservation in the context of immense jingoist pressure; i.e., his primary objective was to maintain his and the Republican Party’s control of the

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government. Having seen the issue of Cuba used against his Democratic predecessor he was determined to avoid a similar fate for himself and his party. In this extremely volatile domestic political climate, McKinley and other leading Republicans became convinced that any “pacific” administration risked rebellion within the Congress or even the country.\footnote{May, Imperial Democracy, 1991, 116–117.} Republicans importuned the administration to launch the war “for the sake of party survival and domestic peace.”\footnote{Ibid., 129, 147.} In other words, jingoist pressure for war was so high that McKinley and other Republican leaders believed that failure to act not only risked the Party’s grip on the levers of power in the executive and legislative branches, but could even threaten national stability and the U.S. political system itself. In sum, as historian Ernest May writes, McKinley’s final decision to pick a fight with Spain was based on his belief that, as president, “his highest duty lay in keeping his own country united, and […] the alternative to war might be domestic crisis tantamount in his eyes to revolution. For these reasons he led his country unwillingly toward a war that he did not want for a cause in which he did not believe.”\footnote{Ibid., 159.}

The jingoists got what they wanted. America’s remarkable victory in the 1898 Spanish-American War led to its immediate recognition as a fledgling member of the great power club. The response was especially remarkable in Great Britain. As John Hay, U.S. ambassador in England, wrote to McKinley about the European response to U.S. victory over Spain: “We have never in all our history had the standing in the world we have now.”\footnote{Quoted in Zakaria, FWTP, 159.}
1898-1899: America’s Imperialist Turn: Decision to Annex the Philippines and Embrace Colonialism

Despite the dubious security or economic benefits of ‘the great power game,’ not to mention the extremely high potential costs, once the U.S. public and its leaders had tasted victory in a great power war and seen the extent to which this unprecedented flirtation in great power-esque behavior had led to immense international prestige from Britain and others, they appeared to hunger for more. For their part, McKinley, Roosevelt, and other leaders in the Republican Party appeared to have an additional, more instrumental incentive to continue down this path. Given the contemporaneous normative context in which these events were playing out, they seemed to conclude that such swagger on the international stage could contribute greatly to facilitating national cohesion and mitigating threats to their grip on power at home. Despite stiff ideological resistance from leading politicians and thinkers at the time, U.S. behavior nevertheless changed to increasingly conform to the military policy norms associated with its coveted status as a full-fledged great power.

The apparent pace and scale of the shift in national mindset caused by the prestige lavished on America as a result of its victory over Spain is remarkable. In pursuit of this new mantle as a great power, traditional U.S. foreign policy principles were effectively abandoned by a critical mass of the country, almost overnight. As a case-in-point, even the traditionally anti-imperialist Chicago Times-Herald noted the pace and scale of the change, pointing out that “the people now believe that the United States owes it to the world to accept the responsibilities imposed upon it by the fortunes of war [...] We now find that we want the Philippines [...] We also want Puerto Rico [...] We want Hawaii now [...] We may want the Carolines, the Ladrones,
the Pelew, and the Marianna groups.” Even McKinley—the same leader who had tried to avoid war with Spain—quickly signed on to the nascent great power’s new ‘responsibilities.’ As McKinley noted in instructions to the U.S. negotiators of the Treaty of Paris (December 10, 1898), which would ultimately compel Spain to cede the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico to the United States,

“The march of events rules and overrules human action [...] the war has brought us new duties and responsibilities which we must meet and discharge as becomes a great nation on whose growth and career from the beginning the Ruler of Nations has plainly written the high command and pledge of civilization.”

In short, McKinley, many of his fellow leaders, and much of the American public had effectively become overnight imperialists. Contrary to its core foreign policy principles and erstwhile identity as a democratic, strictly non-imperialist nation the United States was soon to become a colonial power. After years of domestic opposition to annexation of Hawaii, McKinley called for immediate annexation, and began actively supporting a bill to do so that only a year before he had assured opponents would not pass. He faced far less opposition, which had largely disintegrated after America became identified by the world as a fledgling great power upon its defeat of Spain. In fact, the House of Representatives introduced a joint resolution to annex Hawaii only three days after Admiral Dewey’s victory in Manila Bay. In a landmark decision that marked a seminal shift in U.S. foreign policy, McKinley soon authorized an expeditionary force to take by force America’s first-ever colony: the Philippines.

1088 Ibid., 159–160.
1089 Quoted in Dobson, America’s Ascent, 120.
1090 May, Imperial Democracy, 1991, 244.
1091 Lenz, Power and Policy, 51.
Impassioned defenders of U.S. anti-colonial traditions, such as the Anti-Imperialist League, which included among its members such staunch opponents of annexation of the Philippines as former Presidents Benjamin Harrison and Cleveland, Mark Twain, and Andrew Carnegie, saw this imperialist turn as a major violation of American character and the Constitution, and even a threat to democracy at home.\(^{1092}\) As Cleveland would later write of his “constant opposition” to annexation of Hawaii during and after his two terms as president, “I regarded, and still regard, the proposed annexation of these islands as not only opposed to our national policy, but as a perversion of our national mission.”\(^{1093}\) Yet he and his anti-colonialist colleagues ultimately proved helpless to prevent it. Once the events of 1898 had further elucidated the pathway to great power status, it was too late—the ‘great power’ switch had already effectively been flipped. America proved a phenomenally quick learner of the great power imperialist ethic under the British imperium. Within a year of global recognition, even praise, from Great Britain for defeating Spain, the United States had annexed or otherwise occupied Hawaii, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Wake Islands, Samoa, and the Philippines.

As mentioned above, the U.S. embrace of colonialism by military force constituted a major departure from past practice. As discussed in the alternative explanations section below, security or economic considerations do not appear to provide convincing explanations of the first-order causes of this major military policy shift. To be sure, a popular, though flawed, economic idea of ‘glut theory’ was an important factor in shaping the views of some American advocates of colonialism during this period.\(^{1094}\) But the empirical record shows that the economic interests and security concerns pointed to by advocates of the alternative explanations were not

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\(^{1092}\) Dobson, *America’s Ascent*, 121.

\(^{1093}\) Ibid., 73–74.

\(^{1094}\) The glut theory explanation for depression gained influence during the mid-1890s depression. Advocates of the glut theory argued that capturing foreign markets would lead to recovery. Ibid., 52.
the primary driving force behind the political decision to shift course. In short, existing theories of rising powers do not provide a convincing primary explanation of this second major shift in U.S. military policy. Far from being compelled by structural or material imperatives, the U.S. embrace of colonialism far beyond the Americas was a choice, caused primarily by an upsurge in nationalism and a desire to conform to perceived great power norms in the British-led new ‘age of imperialism.’

As was the case with contemporaneous rising powers Japan and Germany, America’s own embrace of colonialism took place in an ideational context characterized in large part by a glorification of racialized imperialism and a widespread belief that it was incumbent upon aspiring ‘civilized’ great powers to expand and ‘civilize’ races seen as ‘inferior.’ Accordingly, Social Darwinist thinking permeated the debate about whether America should or should not become a colonial power. The inspiration appears to have been the rhetoric and behavior of the then widely-recognized leading state: Imperial Britain.

In keeping with the Social Darwinist and imperialist ethic, the founder of the U.S. Naval War College wrote in 1891 that war was a “sword” that would cut “the path of human progress.” Key leaders, including Roosevelt, future President William Howard Taft, and Secretary of War Elihu Root, as well as many of their colleagues, believed that imperialism was, as British poet and novelist Rudyard Kipling had famously called it, the “White Man’s Burden.” They promoted colonial acquisition in order for America to carry out its duty as a “civilizing function.” Media commentary similarly captured the popularity of this civilizing mission. As an 1898 Atlantic Monthly article argued, Americans had a “responsibility not to man only, but to

1095 Ibid., 17–18.
1096 Ibid.
God, […] to act as trustees and guardians of inferior races.” A famous January 1898 cartoon by Louis Dalrymple in the magazine *Puck* depicts Uncle Sam teaching a class of children how to be civilized. Seated in the front row are the ‘troublemaker’ students, representing the Philippines, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. Six months after the signing of the Treaty of Paris, a famous June 1899 political cartoon titled “The Filipino’s First Bath” depicts President McKinley bathing a Filipino infant in the waters of “civilization.”

Colonies were also widely identified as a means by which the United States should shake off its inferior status as an ‘adolescent power’ and finally stake its claim to great power status. A popular journal wrote in 1893 that America's failure to pursue colonies in the past was “a policy more selfish and timid than it was broad and enlightened” and that its reluctance left the great powers “puzzled and bewildered.” The author called upon Congress to show a “sense of the national dignity and the national destiny.” A cognate perspective informed the “large policy” championed by Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge and Roosevelt during this period, which conceived of colonies as a key means by which to boost U.S. global prestige.

So powerful were the socializing effects of these great power norms that they led America to abandon not only longstanding foreign policy traditions but also principles of democratic governance. Ironically, the U.S. military’s actions in America’s most significant overseas territorial acquisition during this period—the Philippines—mirrored the policies of Spain in Cuba that had so offended (in theory, at least) the American public and which had served as the ostensible driver of the public agitation for the Spanish-American War in the first

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1097 Ibid.
1101 Dobson, *America’s Ascent*, 53.
place. In yet another manifestation of a tragic pattern in the ‘civilizing missions’ of other rising powers, such as that of Meiji Japan in Korea and Taiwan (see Chapter 3), the racism and arrogance that defined the imperialist ethic of the day led the American ‘civilizers’ to pay mere lip service to calls for self-government and independence for indigenous populations. Despite McKinley’s self-righteous claim in 1899 that “Our flag has never waved over any community but in blessing,” in practice the U.S. mission was de facto military conquest.

The consequences were tragic. Popular resistance to the America’s attempt to assert control over the indigenous population led to a major crackdown including martial law, atrocities, and imposition of various egregiously non-‘democratic’ controls. The Philippine-American War between U.S. occupation forces and Filipino nationalists—who resented being passed as a trophy from one colonial power to another—lasted three years. During that time, U.S. forces reportedly engaged in indiscriminate killing, burned villages and crops, tortured suspected guerillas, and ‘concentrated’ roughly 300,000 civilians. The conflict would ultimately cause the deaths of an estimated 4200 American and 20,000 Filipino combatants, as well as approximately 200,000 Filipino civilians. In addition to the severe loss of human life Washington also spent roughly $170 million the United States spent to bring ‘civilization’ to the population.

These were large prices to pay for a colony that McKinley reportedly could not even find on a map and did not even want, and whose annexation Roosevelt had opposed as not in the U.S. sphere of influence or interest. Yet McKinley cynically calculated—correctly it turned out—that colonial acquisitions would buttress his domestic support by helping to attain for America the status its people felt it so well deserved.

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1102 Ibid., 180.
1103 Lenz, Power and Policy, 109.
1105 Dobson, America’s Ascent, 122.
years were not enough, the U.S. ‘trophy colony,’ which made America a de facto ‘resident power’ in East Asia, would soon become a major strategic liability and contribute significantly to the tensions leading up to the outbreak of the Pacific War between the United States and Japan. Indeed, McKinley may have been unintentionally prescient when he said, while wrestling with what to do about the islands, “If old Dewey had just sailed away when he smashed the Spanish fleet, what a lot of trouble he would have saved us.”

1898-1907: Buildup of Naval Power and the “Great White Fleet”

As President McKinley’s instructions to the negotiators of the Treaty of Paris suggests, it appears that once America had gained status as a fledgling great power it came to be widely believed that it was thenceforth incumbent upon it to conform to associated regulative norms—i.e., it needed to behave like a great power. As one contemporary noted, it was especially incumbent upon America to “cast aside our traditional attitude of isolation.” In addition to acquiring overseas colonies, another key constitutive characteristic of a great power in the age of Mahan (see below) was the possession of a battleship-centered navy—just like that of the British Royal Navy. In the wake of the Spanish-American War, and now with far-flung colonial territories to defend, the United States began to move to procure exactly such a fleet. The sixteen battleships constructed over the next several years would become known around the world in 1907 when President Theodore Roosevelt (Republican; 1901-1909) deployed them on a 42,000-mile, fifteen-month global joy ride as the “Great White Fleet.” During this mission the Fleet, which consisted of the U.S. Navy’s entire inventory of battleships and 14,000 sailors, made twenty port calls on six continents.

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1107 Quoted in “Rise to World Power, 1867-1913.”
The U.S. procurement of a battlefleet represented a major departure from past practice. Despite having emerged as an economic and industrial powerhouse by the 1880s, U.S. leaders avoided developing significant blue-water naval capabilities. Indeed, given America’s extreme geographic isolation and security from all other major powers, despite decades of rapid economic and industrial growth before the 1890s leaders had opted to significantly reduce the size of its navy. Long present, navalist agitation for a mighty navy befitting a great power was largely ignored by civilian leaders due in no small part to the absence of threats to its territory and the immense costs associated with building up a navy. Between 1862 and 1880 the size of the American navy shrunk precipitously, from 671 ships (71 ironclads) to 142 ships (24 ironclads). And even this limited fleet was reportedly so poorly maintained that it could not even carry out its basic missions: commerce raiding and coastal defense. When in 1881 the United States decided to reinvest in the navy, its procurements were limited to ships tasked with fulfilling these two basic missions.¹¹⁰⁸

In his famous 1889 Annual Report, Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Tracy called for the United States to begin a massive naval buildup. He argued that despite U.S. material potential far greater than European great powers, it—to his apparent frustration—did “not rank as a naval power.” Yet the report did not identify any new threats or adversaries against which this fleet would be directed. Rather, it appeared to be seen primarily as a way for America to achieve status as a great power.¹¹⁰⁹ Evincing a similar frustration, an 1890 report to the Policy Board by the Secretary of the Navy noted that the U.S. Navy was “insignificant and totally disproportionate to the greatness of the country.”¹¹¹⁰ Yet neither Congress nor big business

¹¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Zakaria, *FWTP*, 128.
¹¹¹⁰ Quoted in Ibid., 129.
appeared enthusiastic about the proposed battleship program.\footnote{1111} Over the course of the decade, however, circumstances changed and Congressional resistance to a major naval buildup began to crumble.\footnote{1112} This phenomenon appears to have been due in no small part to the popularity of ideas about sea power expressed in \textit{The Influence of Sea Power upon History}, a seminal 1890 analysis by the president of the U.S. Naval War College, Alfred Thayer Mahan, of naval power as a factor in the rise of the British Empire. Mahan’s treatise—read around the world from Newport to Berlin to London—argued that a great navy, colonies, spheres of influence and control were required characteristics of great powers.\footnote{1113} These ideas gained popularity in America in the mid-1890s, a time of economic depression and social unrest. In this context, already growing nationalism resulting from growing latent power created a more fertile environment for navalism. Coupled with other prevailing views related to glories of national expansion, colonialism, and Social Darwinism, navalism also affected subsequent decision-making in Washington.

In the aftermath of the Spanish-American War, at which point the United States had only four battleships,\footnote{1114} Washington launched a major naval buildup. In the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, who took office in September, 1901, immediately following McKinley’s assassination, naval nationalism found its ultimate champion. A major agitator for the Spanish-American War, Roosevelt believed that economic power alone was insufficient for America to “take the position to which it is entitled among the nations of the world” and to “do the great work of a great world power.”\footnote{1115} Accordingly, he set about to ensure that during his time in office the world came to fully appreciate the United States as a full-fledged military great power.

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\item[1111] Lenz, \textit{Power and Policy}, 33.
\item[1112] Zakaria, \textit{FWTP}, 145–146.
\item[1114] Lenz, \textit{Power and Policy}, 156.
\item[1115] Quoted in Zakaria, \textit{FWTP}, 164–165.
\end{footnotes}
The Great White Fleet was of central importance to achieving the prestige Roosevelt coveted.\textsuperscript{1116} In addition to these drivers, some historians link the Fleet in part to political expediency. Morison and Polmar suggest that the deployment of the Great White Fleet, which coincided with a major financial scare, the Panic of 1907,—was intended at least partially as a means by which to distract the public.\textsuperscript{1117} Although this view does not appear to be widespread among historians of America’s rise, there appears to be something close to a consensus that a primary driver of the Great White Fleet was “status-seeking”—a desire for the great powers to recognize the United States as having attained membership in their exclusive club.\textsuperscript{1118}

As addressed in greater detail below, even this massive buildup of naval power is puzzling from the perspective of leading alternative explanations. Roosevelt’s decision to deploy the nation’s entire battlefleet on a thirteen-month global voyage of peace, leaving homeland defenses significantly weakened for such a long time, suggests that homeland defense was not a major driver. Furthermore, the costs of the mission were so exorbitant that even some key politicians one would expect to support a naval buildup were opposed. For example, the chairman of the Senate Naval Appropriation Committee, Senator Eugene Hale, threatened to cut the Fleet’s funding.\textsuperscript{1119} To be sure, as discussed below it is also clear from the historical record that Roosevelt intended the Great White Fleet to serve at least partially as a signal to Japan not to interfere with America’s new territorial holdings in the Pacific. Yet, as explained in the previous section, these territories—the Philippines above all—were not even acquired primarily for strategic or economic reasons in the first place. Furthermore, as discussed in the alternative

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\footnote{Samuel Loring Morison and Norman Polmar, \textit{The American Battleship} (St. Paul, MN: MBI, 2003), 42.}
\footnote{For one example of a historian who uses this explicit phrase, see Dobson, \textit{America’s Ascent}, 2.}
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explanation section below, some puzzling aspects of the circumstances of the deployment suggest that threat perceptions were not the first-order objective of the deployment.

Despite the dubious security demand, clear economic costs, and strategic risks of the deployment, the Great White Fleet achieved its primary objective: If America’s victory in the Spanish-American War and emergence as a colonial power had gained it fledgling status in the club of great powers in 1898, the Great White Fleet made it official. By the end of the Roosevelt Administration, Americans widely regarded their country as having attained international status as a full-fledged ‘great power.’

**Alternative Explanations**

At first glance, the power-maximizing hypothesis appears to be the strongest candidate to explain the major military policy shifts explored in this case study. Indeed, leading IR scholars of this persuasion are on solid ground when they argue that in 1898, due in no small part to its immense resources and geographic isolation, America was arguably the most secure country in history. In other words, the security concerns central to the security-maximizing hypothesis do not appear to provide convincing explanations of the first-order causes of these major shifts—all of which resulted in expansion of a sort for which there was at most a negligible security imperative. As Dobson sums up America’s strategic environment between Reconstruction and 1914, the United States “enjoyed an independence from international political alliances, a great abundance of resources, and a blissful freedom from fear.”

Yet when evaluated against the empirical record of decision-making, the power-maximizing hypothesis seems to perform relatively poorly in identifying the causal mechanisms

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1121 Dobson, *America’s Ascent*, 5.
behind the specific military policy decisions examined above. First, there is little evidence that any international anarchy-determined ‘self-help imperative’ compelled the United States to become expansionist. Furthermore, as the case-by-case analysis below shows, both security and economic interests do not appear to be first-order causes of these shifts. Second, as Fareed Zakaria astutely points out in his seminal critique of Classical Realism’s poor explanatory power of U.S. foreign policy in the 1870s and 1880s, despite decades of surging latent material capabilities U.S. leaders held fast to a longstanding tradition of isolationism. During this period U.S. leaders identified and debated “clear opportunities to expand” and decidedly rejected them.\textsuperscript{1122} It was not until the 1890s—long after America ranked among the most materially powerful countries in the world—that U.S. leaders chose to expand into non-contiguous territory. This presents a major challenge to a true power-maximizing hypothesis, which would expect the United States to have begun expanding far earlier, concomitantly with its rapidly growing wealth and industrial wherewithal. Yet it did not.

Apparently seeking to reconcile core Classical Realist assumptions about the inevitable expansionist tendencies of rising powers with the puzzle of late 19\textsuperscript{th}/early 20\textsuperscript{th}-century America, Zakaria attributes the America’s reluctance to expand during earlier periods to the weakness of its central government, in particular the executive branch. His theory of “state-centered realism” contends that once the power of the executive branch increased in the 1890s to such a degree that it was able to “bypass Congress or coerce it into expanding American interests abroad,” the U.S. finally conformed to the natural, structurally-determined path of all rising powers: that growing wealth begets growing material power begets overseas expansion.\textsuperscript{1123} Although intriguing, Zakaria’s study and his essentially power-maximization-esque argument appear to have two

\textsuperscript{1122} Zakaria, \textit{FWTP}, 5, 8.
\textsuperscript{1123} Ibid., 11.
major problems. First, Zakaria does not evaluate the relative explanatory power of his theory of state-centered realism against any non-Realist, much less sociological, alternative explanation of state behavior. In fact, the only alternative explanation his study considers is another strand of Realism, which he refers to as ‘defensive realism’—essentially tantamount to this study’s security maximizing hypothesis. This methodological ‘selection effect’ seems to significantly bias his conclusions.

Second, and in no small part because of the former issue, as it concerns the three major decision points under examination in this study the empirical evidence in support of Zakaria’s argument is far weaker than his analysis suggests. While this study agrees that the presidency of William McKinley, in particular the war against Spain and his annexation of the Philippines and other overseas territories, effectively (in Zakaria’s words) “launched the United States on a different path,”1124 this study points to a very different primary causal mechanism at play: status-seeking driven socialization to contemporaneous great power norms. In contrast, Zakaria attributes this seminal shift in U.S. foreign policy to the combined effect of “structural pressures” and the belated emergence of a powerful executive that at long last allowed the United States to pursue its expansionist destiny. He even specifically cites the Spanish-American War as “an excellent example” of the effect these structural pressures have on rising power foreign policy decision-making.1125

Yet this study’s analysis of the case of late 19th/early 20th-century United States shows that the primary cause of these shifts seems to be largely unrelated to structural imperatives. The available evidence (and history of the next fifty years) suggests that America would have been wealthier and far more secure had it not implemented these shifts. They were the direct

1124 Ibid., 182.
1125 Ibid., 154–155.
consequences of choices made by policymakers, and primarily shaped by a status-seeking mechanism that effectively provided U.S. leaders with strong incentives to mimic the behavior of imperial Britain, *despite* simultaneously recognizing the negligible security or material benefits of doing so.

To be sure, the power of the executive branch did increase in power during the 1890s. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the U.S. president himself—first Cleveland, then McKinley—was staunchly opposed to the idea of fighting Spain. In other words, the policy outcome was against the wishes of the executive. It is even more remarkable that despite his growing institutional power McKinley was nevertheless compelled by a chauvinistic, status-seeking public to launch a war he did not want. These policy shifts were adopted in large part because of shifts in popular preferences and Congressional pressure and McKinley’s fear of an overthrow of his Party’s control of government—either at the ballot box or through a revolution. In other words, if anything these shifts—especially, the Spanish-American War—appear to be an examples of the *weakness* of the executive branch, not of its strength. Zakaria’s analysis tends to overlook the causal impact of leader’s expectations of the popularity of these shifts as a first-order cause of their implementation. It was surging nationalism and McKinley’s weakness, not his strength, that appears to be of greatest importance here. Congress was out in front of the executive, pulling it against its will. In short, it was largely changing public preferences concomitant with growing identification as a ‘would-be great power’ and recognition of prevailing great power norms associated with that coveted status that drove leader’s policy shifts. Leaders judged they had powerful domestic political incentives to engage in force development and employment policies seen as befitting a state with ‘great power status.’
The omitted variable bias in Zakaria’s study and its focus on executive power seems to distract his analysis from recognizing more fundamental causal forces at play. Both Zakaria’s study and the contemporary discourse he cites heavily define America as a great power based on what it does (i.e., the foreign policies it adopts) rather than based on material indicators. This practice, which essentially attributes a socially-contingent status label of ‘great power’ to the United States because it adopts certain military force employment policies (behavior) and acquires certain platforms (trappings) is fully consistent with shadowing/avoiding theory (SAT).

In sum, and as the subsequent case-by-case breakdown will demonstrate further, as it concerns the shifts examined in this study, relative to SAT the power-maximizing hypothesis provides relatively weak explanatory power. This is an especially significant finding since U.S. expansionary policies at the turn of the 20th century are supposed to provide ‘most-likely’ cases for this alternative explanation. Indeed, as far as it concerns the United States, as Zakaria himself recognizes, Washington showed remarkable restraint during the pre-1890 and post-1917 periods, despite being the most powerful country in the world—at least in latent material power terms. These major shifts were shaped primarily not by structural imperatives but by the choices of its leaders.

As for the third category of alternative explanations of these shifts, it also performs poorly relative to SAT. Economic material considerations or the actions of domestic interest groups with influence on the White House also may make sense theoretically, but when weighed against the empirical evidence of decision-making they do not provide a convincing alternative explanation of the observed outcomes. This is especially true in the case of the largest and most consequential shift explored in this chapter—the Spanish-American War and the colonization of the Philippines. Generally speaking, historians credit McKinley with significantly consolidating
control of foreign policy decision-making in the White House.\textsuperscript{1126} No rogue bureaucracy, such as the Navy, appears to have come close to hijacking policymaking during this period. Institutional power within the government had shifted heavily toward the president in the 1890s and after 1896 conflict between the executive and legislative branches (where Republicans dominated) was limited. Both houses of Congress were majority Republican from 1895 to 1911—a period that includes all three major military policy shifts examined in this section.\textsuperscript{1127} Far from losing power, the executive branch during this period became far stronger than it had been previously.\textsuperscript{1128} While the extent to which leaders caved to popular pressures showed how weak they truly were, this does not appear to be due to a weakness of the executive relative to other institutions of government or interest groups (see analysis below) and thus does not provide support for the third alternative explanation.

The following sub-sections offer a more detailed critique of the alternative explanations specific to the three decision points examined in this section.

**SDP-by-SDP breakdown**

**Spanish-American War**

With regard to the first two Realist alternative explanations, neither the idea that America fought Spain to safeguard the security of its citizens and property (security-maximizing hypothesis), nor the claim of a more power-maximization hypothesis that U.S. decisions were aimed at achieving greater security in the short-term and the ability to project military power

\textsuperscript{1126} May, \textit{Imperial Democracy}, 1991, 114.
\textsuperscript{1127} Zakaria, \textit{FWTP}, 154.
\textsuperscript{1128} As Zakaria notes, McKinley “so brazenly expanded presidential power that some have called him the first modern president.” Ibid., 163.
overseas in the medium to long-term, appears to stand up very well to empirical scrutiny.\textsuperscript{1129}

With regard to the first possibility, Spain’s leaders did not appear to have any intention of attacking U.S. territory, nor of threatening its interests in the Americas. With regard to the second possibility, even if the United States gained significant military and political power as a result of the war and its territorial gains, these outcomes were not causes of the decision to fight the war in the first place. In other words, an argument along the lines of the second alternative explanation makes sense in theory, but does not appear to comport closely with the empirical record. McKinley not only did not want the war in the first place, he also did not identify a desire to expand U.S. global power and influence as a rationale for picking the fight with Spain.\textsuperscript{1130}

Also puzzling for any Realist theory of IR is the fact that far from antagonizing Great Britain, the effective socialization of America to employ military power in this way did not lead to a worsening of tensions between this rapidly rising power and the established leader of the international system. It led to Great Britain explicitly recognizing America’s ‘coming-of-age’ as a fledgling member of the great power club. Most remarkably, rather than resulting in a spiral of tension and conflict, much less hegemonic war, the U.S. victory over Spain created unprecedented ‘friendship’ out of theretofore tense Anglo-American bilateral relations. Praise for U.S. actions swept through the British public.\textsuperscript{1131} The American consul-general in London wrote to McKinley that the War had caused an upsurge in “extremely friendly feeling” toward the United States.\textsuperscript{1132} Ambassador Hay articulately, albeit probably unintentionally, captured the de facto challenge to Realist theories of rising powers when he stated during the war “It is a very curious fact that the only power cordially friendly to us on either side of the water is England and

\textsuperscript{1129} The analysis in this section on the Spanish-American War draws from and builds upon the excellent analysis in Markey, “Prestige Motive,” 293–297.
\textsuperscript{1130} Ibid., 295.
\textsuperscript{1131} May, Imperial Democracy, 1991, 55.
\textsuperscript{1132} Quoted in Ibid., 223.
England is the one power which has the most to dread from our growing power and prosperity.”

Also contrary to the expectations of Realist and materialist theories, key arguments within Washington against the Spanish-American War were primarily materially-based, while—as argued earlier—the arguments in favor of the War were not. On this point, Ernest May’s analysis is worth quoting in full:

"The counterarguments in 1897-1898 [against intervention] were mainly practical: conflict with Spain would hurt business and block recovery; it might unite Europe against the United States; it might entail annexation and hence the addition of undesirable racial elements to an already too-mixed population. By enlarging the army and navy and possibly creating a colonial service, it could increase the cost of government and the number of jobs not under civil service."

It is therefore not surprising that no strong evidence seems to exist which suggests that the interest groups one could reasonably expect to be most likely champions of the conflict with Spain, much less a rogue bureaucracy in pursuit of parochial interests, hijacked the policy-making process. In fact, the most likely candidates to do so were opposed to the War. Business interests in McKinley’s political party—the Republicans—were overwhelmingly opposed to any policy that could lead the country to a war with Spain. Many American businessmen believed that conflict with Spain over Cuba would damage trade and upset the stock market. Given that these business groups were McKinley’s primary “national constituency” and the interest group with the greatest influence over him, he therefore had strong political incentives not to do so.

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1135 Others have pointed to profit-seeking yellow journalists as a major driver of the war. Markey effectively debunks this view, demonstrating that these journalists were largely responding to increasingly chauvinistic public sentiment, rather than the other way around. Markey, “Prestige Motive,” 283–293.
anything to antagonize them. Especially in light of the years of economic depression in the wake of the Panic of 1893, which had contributed heavily to the defeat of the Democratic Party’s ticket two years earlier, it was clear that war risked undoing efforts to get the economy back on track—a goal whose success or failure was heavily contingent on business confidence. Remarkably, opposition to the war among these groups was so powerful that even after the Maine exploded business leaders continued to call for McKinley to exercise patience and self-restraint.\footnote{May, \textit{Imperial Democracy}, 1991, 76, 118, 120, 138, 139, 147.} But perhaps the best evidence comes from the fact that the “Rough Rider” and future president Teddy Roosevelt, a man so passionately in favor of the war with Spain that he deserted his post as Secretary of the Navy to fight in it, also noted that the business world was largely opposed. True to type and in a manner largely consistent with the national mood, however, Roosevelt argued in March 1898 that the war should be fought “in spite of the timidity of the commercial interests.”\footnote{Howard Wayne Morgan, \textit{William McKinley and His America} (Kent State University Press, 2003), 277.} The domestic pressure became so overwhelming in fact, that even members of McKinley’s own pro-business party lambasted businessmen on Wall Street as “unpatriotic” for “not let[ting] the nation do its duty to humanity.”\footnote{May, \textit{Imperial Democracy}, 1991, 138.}

In short, leading alternative explanations pointing to structural forces, material interests, and domestic institutions or interest groups perform appear to perform relatively poorly in explaining the decision of U.S. leaders to provoke the Spanish-American War. The primary champion of the conflict was an increasingly chauvinistic public eager for a glorious conflict with Spain, which they hoped would lead to America taking its rightful place among the great powers. Although personally opposed to the war, McKinley nevertheless picked the fight out of
fear that failure to do so not only risked the future of both himself and his Party but perhaps even a national rebellion against the government.

Colonialism

In contrast to core assumptions of the power-maximizing hypothesis, the manner in which the United States annexed the Philippines—without a clear plan about what to do with it—makes clear that the decision was not part of some grand strategic plan, or even a well-thought-out minor one, in pursuit of power, influence, or even material interests. Rather, the primary driver appears to be a surging nationalist, even emotional, urge to behave like a great power—a sentiment so powerful that, as in the case of the onset of the Spanish-American War, leaders judged that to ignore it would possibly be political suicide. As one contemporary observer noted in a speech at the Republican Club in New York, “a strong feeling is spreading over the whole land in favor of colonial expansion. The people are infatuated with the idea […] This feeling is getting so strong that it will mean the political death of any man to oppose it pretty soon.” Others referred to a nascent “popular craze” in favor of annexing territory.\(^{1139}\) Accordingly, McKinley appeared to view colonies as trophies, the acquisition of which was designed in large part to placate public opinion.\(^{1140}\)

The U.S. shift to conform to the destructive imperialist great power ethic of the day and engage in colonial expansion for the first (and last) time in its history was not the result of a structural or other strategic imperative. Indeed, surprisingly little strategic thinking informed McKinley’s decision to procure these quintessential markers of contemporaneous great power status. As he reportedly told the publisher of the *New York Sun*, America should first take the

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\(^{1139}\) Quoted in Ibid., 249.

\(^{1140}\) McKinley once said, “I didn’t want the Philippine Islands… and… I left myself free not to take them; but in the end there was no alternative.” Quoted in Ibid., 259.
Philippines, Puerto Rico, and other territories and then “look them all over at our leisure and do what seems wisest.” Material interests were considered by leaders to be secondary. Even Teddy Roosevelt, the Naval Secretary who had deployed Dewey to Manila Bay, stated his opposition to annexing the Philippines—arguing that they were outside the U.S. sphere of influence and interest. In fact, before Dewey’s victory few high-ranking U.S. officials even knew much about the Philippines at all.

To be sure, there is evidence that the “glut theory” of overseas markets as a cure for domestic economic troubles had grown in popularity in the two decades prior to the economic depression that began in 1893. This ideology—as flawed as it turned out to be—appears to have played a role in shaping the views of some key players. Yet the fact remains that the business interests whose views McKinley cared about most were strongly opposed to the war with Spain—a war without which colonialism, and almost certainly the annexation of the Philippines would probably not have occurred. Furthermore, two of the most passionate advocates of colonial acquisition in Washington—Henry Cabot Lodge and Theodore Roosevelt—expressed marginal interest in economic expansion as a rationale. The potential economic benefits for domestic businesses seem never to have been more than a secondary consideration. Finally, these alternative explanations and their focus on material cost/benefit analyses overlook the remarkable fact that the significant and incalculable costs of colonialism often did not figure prominently in the debate. Particularly salient here are the huge economic expense and strategic liabilities associated with annexing territory, ‘pacifying’ indigenous populations, administering colonies, and defending far-flung colonies half-way around the world. A case-in-point is the

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1141 Ibid., 249.
1142 Dobson, America’s Ascent, 117.
1143 Ibid., 87.
1144 Ibid., 9.
Philippines, located roughly 5500 miles from Hawaii and 7000 miles from San Francisco. Unless the Philippines was expected to bring back huge amounts of money—and we have seen that it was not—it seems safe to conclude that the decision was made to annex it despite recognition that it would become a net loss, or at least that this possibility was not a major concern. The bottom line is that, as Dobson notes, most supporters of imperialism in America saw the “emotional returns [as] far exceed[ing] any material costs.”

In sum, perceived strategic interests, security threats, economic interests, or the ‘hijacking’ of the policymaking process by domestic interest groups do not seem to provide very compelling first-order explanations of the America’s overnight embrace of imperialism during the 1898-1899 period. While U.S. colonial experiments were caused primarily by a non-material desire to play the ‘great power game’ in pursuit of status as a member of the great power club, this does not mean that the economic and strategic consequences of this major shift from past practice were not hugely significant, and negative. Indeed, as naval historian and U.S. Navy Captain (ret.) Bernard Cole writes of this remarkable shift,

“The United States proved to be a rather ineffective imperial power; the colonies almost certainly cost the colonizer more in resources and effort than they yielded in commercial profit or strategic advantage. Guam and the Philippines in particular proved to be a strategic stone around Washington's neck: their militarily vulnerable positions meant that they had to be defended, impairing their ability to serve as a vehicle for execution of a forward strategy in East Asia. The islands also drove American diplomacy for much of the first half of the twentieth century, which worked to the detriment of general U.S. national security, since efforts to secure the Pacific possessions at once appeased Tokyo and encouraged further Japanese expansion.”

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1145 Ibid., 95.
1146 Cole, “Clipper Ships to Carriers,” 51–52. The Taft-Katsuhara agreement of July 1905 recognized Japan’s decision to turn Korea into a protectorate, while the Root-Takahira agreement three years later further recognized Japan’s sphere of influence in East Asia.
Strategically, far from making the U.S. more secure—which, again, does not appear to have been a goal of annexation to begin with—the greatest effect of acquisition of the Philippines was to exacerbate U.S. vulnerability and tensions with Japan significantly by giving Washington something to lose in the Far East. As Roosevelt himself wrote William Howard Taft, his secretary of war, in 1907—the same year the Great White Fleet deployed—the U.S. should try to grant the Philippines “nearly complete independence” as soon as possible. The strategic cost of possessing them was abundantly clear. As Roosevelt wrote, “The Philippines are our heel of Achilles. They are all that makes the present situation with Japan dangerous.”

The Great White Fleet

The U.S. naval buildup and subsequent deployment of Roosevelt’s Great White Fleet appear to have been similarly shaped in large part by a status-seeking drive. Yet, as noted above, it is also important to recognize that another significant motivation of Roosevelt appears to have been a desire to deter Japan from potential ambitions vis-à-vis U.S. interests in East Asia—above all, the Philippines. The Japanese military—to the surprise of the Western world—had just defeated Russia in a major war in 1905. While the Roosevelt administration actually helped to negotiate the treaty to end the Russo-Japanese war, Roosevelt—who, incidentally, historians have pointed out, held fairly condescending views of non-white races—was also reportedly uneasy about the emergence of a new, Asian great power near the Philippines. Although this second driver clearly relates directly to potential great power conflict over territory and security and would seem to support a Realist interpretation, there are several key aspects that

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1147 Dobson, America’s Ascent, 130.
1148 Almost all analyses of Roosevelt’s motivations in deploying a fleet of sixteen battleships on an extremely costly cruise around the world identify the prestige motive and desire to signal to the world the U.S.’ arrival as a military great power as a primary driver.
suggest that the evidence is at best mixed. An argument could even be made that this interpretation is actually only identifying a secondary explanation of the outcome.

The extent to which security concerns and parochial interests do not appear to have been the primary driver of the Great White Fleet’s deployment is reflected in the opposition to the hugely expensive mission from key actors within the government that one would expect to be in favor, as well as the extremely puzzling—from a Realist perspective—conditions under which this extremely risky mission was undertaken. On the first point, even the Chairman of the Senate Naval Appropriations Committee threatened to cut the fleet’s funding given its extreme cost.\footnote{As Dobson argues, at the time of the Great White Fleet America was “utterly free of any threat to its security” and “no one in the U.S. anticipated a conflict in the near future.”\footnote{While one can argue that Dobson’s precise word choice is hyperbolic, the basic point remains sound. Indeed, there is a significant amount of evidence against the idea that a strategic imperative was the primary reason for the fleet’s deployment. If a structural or security imperative had driven the buildup, one would expect to find evidence that during his first six years in office Roosevelt had invested heavily in developing the logistical capabilities necessary to undertake a far-seas deployment of this sort, against Japan or any other adversary. He did not. In fact, when the mission was carried out—a full nine years after the U.S. naval buildup began in the wake of the Spanish-American War—the Navy had to hire 49 foreign coal ships to supply the Fleet during its thirteen-month voyage.\footnote{One would also expect Roosevelt to have exploited this unprecedented opportunity to have the ships train in far-seas combat. He did not—none of the battleship’s massive thirteen-inch guns ever fired. And perhaps most importantly, if the U.S. had...}}

As Dobson argues, at the time of the Great White Fleet America was “utterly free of any threat to its security” and “no one in the U.S. anticipated a conflict in the near future.”\footnote{Dobson, America’s Ascent, 1–2.} While one can argue that Dobson’s precise word choice is hyperbolic, the basic point remains sound. Indeed, there is a significant amount of evidence against the idea that a strategic imperative was the primary reason for the fleet’s deployment. If a structural or security imperative had driven the buildup, one would expect to find evidence that during his first six years in office Roosevelt had invested heavily in developing the logistical capabilities necessary to undertake a far-seas deployment of this sort, against Japan or any other adversary. He did not. In fact, when the mission was carried out—a full nine years after the U.S. naval buildup began in the wake of the Spanish-American War—the Navy had to hire 49 foreign coal ships to supply the Fleet during its thirteen-month voyage.\footnote{Morison and Polmar, The American Battleship, 43.} One would also expect Roosevelt to have exploited this unprecedented opportunity to have the ships train in far-seas combat. He did not—none of the battleship’s massive thirteen-inch guns ever fired. And perhaps most importantly, if the U.S. had...
been significantly threatened by Japan’s military power Roosevelt—a former Naval Secretary—probably would have dispersed his forces—especially while confronting the ostensible Japanese threat in East Asia. He also probably would not have left the homeland ‘vulnerable’ to whatever sea-based threat the naval buildup was supposedly intended to deter. Yet he did not do the former, while he did do the latter. The Great White Fleet deployment entailed the U.S. Navy’s entire battlefleet being sent far away from U.S. territory for thirteen consecutive months.

Remarkably, in response to concerns that the Atlantic Ocean defenses would be weakened as a result of the absence of its battleships, Roosevelt reportedly asked Germany to protect the East Coast of the United States—from what, exactly, aside from Germany itself, it is not entirely clear.\textsuperscript{1152} When none other than German Admiral von Tirpitz warned Roosevelt that Japan might attack while the fleet was away, Roosevelt reportedly agreed with him.\textsuperscript{1153} Apparently, and extremely puzzlingly, that appeared to be a risk he was willing to take to gain the prestige from this global voyage. Neither action is what one would expect from a leader acting in accordance with the self-help imperative under international anarchy.

Given the afore-mentioned empirical record, it seems a stretch to claim that Realist or materialist alternative explanations provide the primary explanation of America’s immensely expensive buildup of a fleet of battleship and its subsequent deployment on a thirteen-month journey around the world. Indeed, the argument that a strategic and/or material imperative was not primary is supported by what happened to the Great White Fleet after it completed its voyage. Four of the battleships were disbanded immediately after returning home in 1909, while none of


\textsuperscript{1153} Lenz, Power and Policy, 158.
them survived as battleships beyond 1922.\textsuperscript{1154} Between World War I and the 1930s U.S. naval power in the Pacific atrophied, suggesting that the 1907-1909 Great White Fleet was effectively a ‘one-off’ symbolic show. None of the sixteen battleships that composed the fleet ever served in combat.\textsuperscript{1155} U.S. naval power in East Asia remained negligible—in the 1930s the Asiatic Fleet consisted of zero capital ships and a single obsolete cruiser.\textsuperscript{1156}

Nevertheless, despite apparently largely being an exercise in pursuit of international prestige, the Great White Fleet had severe long-term negative strategic consequences, beyond the immediate risks of deploying the entire U.S. battlefleet far away from home for over a year. Historians point to the Great White Fleet as having sent a clear signal to Japan’s own navalists that Japan needed to accelerate its own naval buildup.\textsuperscript{1157}

Finally, it is important to recall the circumstances under which the naval buildup and tensions with Japan began in the first place. It was not until after victory in the Spanish-American War and the America’s subsequent recognition as a fledgling ‘great power’ that it began building the battleships that would ultimately constitute the Great White Fleet.\textsuperscript{1158} Second, as argued above, the primary reason that America was in the Philippines in the first place was largely divorced from strategic, security, or material ambitions. In short, it appears that it was primarily the shift in identity toward that of an aspiring ‘great power’ that drove these two earlier decisive departures from past policy, neither of which was due to a causal mechanism posited by Realist or materialist theories, that \textit{created} the ostensible territorial security interest in East Asia in the first place. Third, beyond general concern about the security of the Philippines the most proximal cause of tensions between the United States and Japan immediately prior to the

\textsuperscript{1154} Ibid., 161.  
\textsuperscript{1155} Dobson, \textit{America’s Ascent}, 1.  
\textsuperscript{1156} Cole, “Clipper Ships to Carriers,” 55.  
\textsuperscript{1157} Dobson, \textit{America’s Ascent}, 197.  
\textsuperscript{1158} Ibid., 1.
deployment of the Great White Fleet was racist discrimination against Japanese immigrants in California; not exactly the stuff of Realist great power rivalry.¹¹⁵⁹

The motivations behind the Great White Fleet are widely debated, and probably multifaceted. There is no one single cause. Yet the analysis in this section suggests that, at the very least, the symbolic meaning of the fleet was a major, and arguably even the primary, driver of the America’s unprecedented embrace of naval power and procurement of a battlefleet in the immediate aftermath of the Spanish-American War. To the extent that the fleet was in fact aimed at deterring Japan, this motivation was painfully ironic. After all, as Roosevelt himself had recognized years earlier in opposition to annexation, the Philippines were of little strategic or economic interest to the U.S. in the first place. He not only opposed the decision to annex them, as his letter to Taft reveals, he privately hoped that America could shed this “heel of Achilles” quickly. Yet regardless of the original motive, once this powerful status symbol had been acquired it proved extremely difficult, politically, to give the Philippines up. Ironically, the United States would have to defeat Japan in World War II before that happened.

Conclusion

America’s rise to ‘great power status’ is one of the most remarkable stories of the modern era. The irony of it is that despite massive economic wealth and industrial capability, it was not until the United States.—in important cases against its leaders’ better judgment—opted to conform to contemporaneous great power norms of military force development and employment that it was recognized as a member of this exclusive club. More secure than perhaps any other rising power in the modern era, U.S. leaders nevertheless decided to fight a war with an

established European power, engage in imperialist expansion despite longstanding traditions and principles that militated against doing so, and build up a massive navy and parade it on the world stage for reasons that appear to have been largely—though not exclusively—symbolic.

The military policy shifts examined in this section demonstrate the powerful effects of status-seeking as a driver of rising power socialization to great power norms and, consequently, as a major factor in shaping rising power’s military trajectories. They also effectively illustrate how, depending on the content of the constitutive and behavioral norms associated with this status, conformity does not necessarily make the world a more peaceful or stable place. On the contrary, such nonmaterial drivers can also contribute to clashes between powers for reasons distinct from international anarchy, security concerns, or even material interests. In other words, rising powers can implement major shifts to military policy primarily for reasons of prestige and status that can then create security and other interests and liabilities that antagonize other states, and in the long-term are severely detrimental to international peace and stability. In international social contexts defined in large part by ideas such as those encapsulated in Social Darwinism and inherently conflictual norms, such as colonial expansion, the consequences can be disastrous.

This chapter also demonstrates that the empirical record does not support the idea that international structure or anarchy inevitably compels rising powers to maximize their power and/or security, or to inexorably pursue hegemony. Especially given the recognition of the extremely dubious strategic, security, and material interests at stake, and despite widespread usage of terms such as “preordained,” “bound to,” and “inevitable” in the literature on America’s rise, the analysis in this case study demonstrates clearly that each of these major policy decisions was a choice. This suggests that in important historical cases, ‘grand strategy,’ to the extent it exists, actually develops in fits and starts—often with no clear end game.
It was political expediency in the context of an upsurge in nationalistic chauvinism and 
prestige-seeking in the context of worsening domestic instability through costly overseas 
advances that caused McKinley to go against his better instincts (and, one should note, 
traditional U.S. foreign policy principles and ideology) to start a war, and annex or otherwise 
occupy the Philippines and various other territories. As Ernest May writes, “the process seemed 
to be what the ‘realists’ decried, with public sentiment the driving force.” In sum, McKinley 
“led his country unwillingly toward a war that he did not want for a cause in which he did not 
believe.” Similarly, the decision to annex the Philippines—one of the most significant shifts 
in U.S. foreign policy history—would probably not have been made without McKinley’s 
judgment that it would be immensely popular on the home front.

In the end, it was U.S. leaders’ decisions to develop and employ military power in 
accordance with contemporaneous norms—imperial Britain being an explicit model—during the 
1898-1899 period, not its rapidly increasing—and easily quantifiable—material capabilities, that 
finally earned it recognition as a fledgling member of the “great power” club. Its subsequent 
development and global parade of the Great White Fleet effectively confirmed this status.

Despite its longstanding traditions of isolation and anti-imperialism, not to mention democracy 
and opposition to oppressive political systems, the power of these socializing forces proved 
overwhelming. The year 1898 is one of the most significant in the two-and-a-half centuries of 
U.S. foreign policy. These decisions were not ‘irrational’—at least to the extent that expected 
status and domestic political benefits drove leaders’ decision-making. From the perspective of 
the causal mechanisms central to Realist or materialist theories of foreign policy formulation, 
however, they were. Although the U.S. pursuit of colonies and naval power during this period

1161 Ibid., 159.
proved abortive relative to that its peers, the strategic legacies of these shifts were long-lasting, with ultimately disastrous consequences.

2. Late 19th/Early 20th-Century Germany—Type A, Status-seeking Rising Power?

The rise of imperial Germany during the four decades prior to the outbreak of World War I represents an extremely ‘hard’ case for shadowing/avoiding theory. Along with the Peloponnesian War, Germany’s rise during this period is cited frequently in support of Realist explanations of state behavior and the likelihood of a rising power causing a ‘hegemonic war.’ Rather than being considered sui generis, it is widely considered by historians, military analysts, and even political scientists to be the “quintessential rising power.” When tested against the empirical record, however, the leading alternatives to shadowing/avoiding theory do not appear to perform particularly well in explaining the decision-making behind arguably the two most significant shifts in military policy that this continental power pursued after national unification in 1871: its leaders’ initially reluctant but ultimately alacritous embrace of colonial expansion overseas, and its rapid and enormously puzzling (from a Realist perspective) buildup of the world’s second-largest fleet of battleships. Both these unprecedented shifts in military policy were extremely costly in both economic and strategic terms, and were largely divorced

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1162 The only colony the U.S. ever acquired after 1899 was the Virgin Islands, purchased peacefully from Denmark in 1917 under very unique circumstances—during a war with the aim of preventing their seizure by Germany in the event that Berlin annexed Denmark. Bureau of Public Affairs Department Of State. The Office of Electronic Information, “Purchase of the United States Virgin Islands, 1917,” July 21, 2008, http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/wwi/107293.htm.

1163 Most recently, Germany’s rise prior to 1914 and Athens’ rise in the 5th-century B.C. have been used to support the idea of a “Thucydides Trap,” largely as a warning about a potential clash due to China’s rise today. Allison, “Thucydides’s Trap Has Been Sprung in the Pacific.” For another example in the context of a study of America’s rise, see Zakaria, FWTP, 3.

from Germany’s widely-recognized and far more pressing interests and threats on the European continent.

As Germany’s industrialization and economic growth kicked into high gear after unification its leaders and people increasingly came to identify Germany as a rising, and aspiring first-rank, Weltmacht (‘world power’). Thenceforth, the attainment of international status as a member of the great power club became an overriding foreign policy objective. Accordingly, and despite persistent threats from the land powers with which it shared borders (e.g., France, Russia), German leaders soon turned their sights to the only other country within the international system that could give Germany the recognition for which they appeared to so desperately yearn: the contemporaneous leading state in the system, and quintessential maritime great power, Great Britain. In keeping with the imperialist ethic under Pax Britannica, and in an unprecedented policy shift, against his better judgment in the mid-1880s Otto von Bismarck, Germany’s Chancellor and leading foreign policy decision-maker from 1871-1890, adopted a policy of colonial expansion overseas. Although Bismarck would later fall on his sword in opposition to this very policy, which he had implemented in a moment of domestic political weakness, the shift in military trajectory was set during his three-year experiment with imperialism. Future leaders would continue along this path. Encapsulated in the slogan of Weltpolitik (‘world policy’), after 1897 the overriding foreign policy goal of German Emperor Wilhelm II (Reign: 1888-1918; below, ‘Wilhelm’) and the leading makers of foreign policy under him became the attainment for rising Germany of Ebenbürtigkeit (‘equality’) with and recognition by Great Britain as a fellow great power. Thenceforth, in a series of policy decisions

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1165 The pace and scope Germany’s industrialization and economic growth in the second half of the 19th century were phenomenal. In the half-century after 1860 its share of world manufacturing tripled to 14.8 percent. Between 1871 and 1895 German population increased 25 percent and GNP nearly doubled. And by 1910 Germany’s economy had leapfrogged that of Britain to become the second largest in the world after the United States.
German leaders increasingly mimicked the military force development and employment policy of maritime trading state Britain, arguably the one power with which Germany’s strategic environment had the least in common. Less than a decade after Bismarck was forced to resign, Wilhelm and his appointees would take colonial imperialism to another level and, most tragically, successfully champion the development of a massive, battleship-centric navy.\footnote{The link between domestic instability and threats to the leadership’s grip on power unleashed by industrialization and the push after 1897 by the leadership to pursue world policy as a means to contribute to national cohesion is a “far-reaching consensus” among U.S. British, and German historians. David E. Kaiser, “Germany and the Origins of the First World War,” \textit{The Journal of Modern History} 55, no. 3 (September 1, 1983): 443; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, \textit{The German Empire, 1871-1918} (Berg, 1985), 196; Kennedy, \textit{Anglo-German Antagonism}. Political scientists Mansfield and Snyder explicitly cite the nationalism of pre-1914 Germany as a case of “counterrevolutionary nationalism” as an effort to maintain power during a period of rapid change. Mansfield and Snyder, “Democratization and War,” 85–86; Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, “Pathways to War in Democratic Transitions,” \textit{International Organization} 63, no. 2 (April 1, 2009): 384.}

What is most puzzling about Germany’s pursuit of colonies and a battleship-centric naval fleet is that they were in significant aspects mimetic—shaped by a socialization process through which, in pursuit of recognition as a member of the club of great powers, German leaders effectively imitated the military policies of their aspirational referent—contemporaneous leading state Great Britain. They did so despite starkly different strategic geographies and interests.\footnote{Michael Epkenhans, \textit{Tirpitz: Architect of the German High Seas Fleet}, Military Profiles (Washington, D.C: Potomac Books, 2008), 52. That Britain was the model and source of status-envy to Germans, as well as the country from which its leaders most sought recognition as a member of the great power ranks, is well established by historians. For example, see Pflanze, \textit{Bismarck and the Development of Germany}, 141.} Furthermore, far from enhancing its wealth and/or security and despite the immense costs these policies entailed, the consequences of these status-seeking policy shifts were catastrophic for Germany’s strategic and material interests. Inter alia, these policies were primarily responsible for creating and exacerbating the “antagonism” that increasingly defined relations with Great Britain after 1897—the leading power that presented a negligible threat to Germany’s security and material interests.\footnote{For the authoritative English-language history of this ‘antagonism,’ see Kennedy, \textit{Anglo-German Antagonism}.} As Bismarck had warned for many years before falling victim to colonial ‘fever’ himself during a period of massive domestic unrest in the mid-1880s, overseas
colonies were colossally wasteful, unprofitable, and hugely expensive strategic liabilities. As for the battlefleet that continued to bankrupt the state long after the folly of its ostensible strategic rationale had become abundantly clear, it spent most of World War I—a war it played a key role in causing—watching from the sidelines.\textsuperscript{1169}

Although the argument is sometimes implicit, historians generally recognize the powerful role that status-seeking played as a major driver of Germany’s military policy decision-making during this period. In recent years, a growing literature in international relations theory makes this argument more explicit.\textsuperscript{1170} The case study analysis presented in this chapter draws from these literatures. It also builds on the existing literature in at least two ways. First, it places the case of pre-1914 Germany in a chronologically and geographically comparative framework that also explores the factors shaping the military trajectories of other rising powers experiencing rapid industrial development and economic growth. Second, existing studies tend to overlook the manner in which Germany pursued its coveted status was the result of a socialization process, do not identify the source of the content of the norms, or do not theorize clearly about why these norms shape policy choices. In other words, the status-seeking mechanism central to shadowing/avoiding theory is absent from other studies of pre-1914 Germany, which may correctly identify prestige or status-seeking as a driver but tend to leave it under-theorized. The reader may recall that a fundamental aspect of shadowing/avoiding theory is that the content of the norms constitutive of great power status and regulative of great power behavior are socially-contingent and can change over time. They are heavily influenced by the rhetoric and policies of

\textsuperscript{1170} For examples of recent arguments in this vein by IR scholars examining German imperialism and/or naval buildup, see Markey, “Prestige Motive,” chap. 5, 8; Wohlfforth, “Unipolarity”; Murray, “Identity, Insecurity, and Great Power Politics”; Renshon, “Fighting for Status,” chap. 4.
the contemporaneous leading state(s). This crucial point appears to be absent from the arguments of other existing studies of Germany’s pre-1914 rise.\textsuperscript{1171}

\textbf{Strategic Decision Points}

\textit{1884- Germany becomes a colonizing power}

Germany’s entry into the imperialist race for colonies in the mid-1880s was a stark reversal of past practice for this continental power with long-term consequences for Germany's overseas security commitments and its role in the world. It also contributed significantly to antagonizing the contemporary leading state: Great Britain. A puzzling aspect of Germany’s embrace of overseas territories is the fact that it began under Bismarck, who is widely considered to be a grand strategist and quintessential Realist. Consistent with this appellation, Bismarck had spent years passionately opposing colonial expansion as a strategically and economically costly distraction from far more pressing strategic priorities on the European continent—above all, clear threats from its continental neighbors Russia and France. Yet beginning in 1883, even Bismarck himself succumbed to the socialization pressures and became an abortive advocate of German colonialism. By the time Bismarck held the West Africa Conference at his residence just

\textsuperscript{1171} Recent studies on status-seeking and the rise of Germany before 1914 tend to focus on status competition or mimicry exclusively as a source of otherwise irrational conflict and aggression in international politics. Wohlfarth, “Unipolarity”; Renshon, “Fighting for Status,” chap. 4. These studies seem not to make the point—central to SAT—that the markers of international status and prestige are socially-contingent. Accordingly, policies adopted in pursuit of status-seeking are not necessarily always zero-sum or conflict-inducing. Although in her study of Germany’s naval buildup Murray appears to adopt a recognition-seeking argument similar to the one presented here, core aspects of her ostensibly sociological argument bear a striking resemblance to the power-maximization hypothesis. Murray’s argument not only employs a Realist ontology—the state as a unitary actor—it also seems to suggest the inevitability of an offensive Realist outcome—power-maximization under anarchy. The process by which socialization occurs, much less who is being socialized, is unclear. In further contrast to shadowing/avoiding theory, despite the apparently constructivist underpinnings of Murray’s argument the possibility that the norms constituting great power status may vary contingent on international social context and the policies and rhetoric of the leading states appears to be absent. In this sense, similar to those studies cited above, her analysis seems to also imply that under anarchy status-seeking is always a source of expansion and/or conflict. Accordingly, in the closing paragraphs of her article she seems to suggest that the same sociological mechanism may lead present-day China to follow the same path as Imperial Germany. Murray, “Identity, Insecurity, and Great Power Politics.”
a year later, Germany had established protectorates in Cameroon, Togo, and Southwest Africa. The day after the conference ended the German East Africa Company received imperial status and additional areas in Africa were taken as a fourth protectorate. Germany soon procured additional colonies in the distant Pacific islands, including German New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

What caused this abrupt, and unprecedented, policy shift? For years before Bismarck had been the primary opponent of colonial expansionism within the government. He even explicitly identified reasons why colonies were not a good idea for Germany, including the administration and maintenance costs, the dubious benefits for the national economy, and the opportunity costs of diverting naval and military power away from more pressing strategic priorities closer to home.\footnote{Pflanze, \textit{Bismarck and the Development of Germany}, 122–123.} As Bismarck once said, colonies are a political burden whose purported advantages are “very largely illusory.” In an 1873 memorandum to the first German emperor, Wilhelm I (Reign: 1871-1888), Bismarck wrote that his consistent policy was to eschew territorial acquisitions outside of Europe, which he predicted (accurately) “were bound to be for Germany a source of weakness rather than strength.”\footnote{Quoted in Wehler, “Bismarck’s Imperialism 1862-1890,” 128–129.} In short, prior to the mid-1880s it seemed clear that Bismarck only supported colonialism under strict conditions—namely that the country doing it not be Germany. Why did Bismarck, who dominated German foreign policymaking during this period and was staunchly opposed to colonial adventures as costly distractions, become an overnight imperialist in the mid-1880s? Bismarck’s policy shift—against his better judgment—appears to have been catalyzed primarily by beliefs about ‘appropriate’ behavior of great powers during the era of the ‘new imperialism’ and by popular agitation which called upon Germany to conform to
these norms. The pressure on Bismarck was exacerbated as a result of his increasingly tenuous grip on power during an economic depression.

As was true in the contemporaneous cases of fellow rising powers Meiji Japan and the United States, under the British imperium the great power discourse of the late 19th and early 20th-centuries was defined in large part by Social Darwinist thinking. Within Germany, leading intellectuals, including Ernst Haeckel, Otto Ammon, and even Max Weber, used these ideas to advocate and justify nationalism, imperialism, navalism, and colonialism.1174 German colonialists viewed colonial expansion as part of a ‘civilizing mission’ normatively expected of a white, civilized aspiring ‘great power.’1175 The symbolic significance of colonial possessions as a necessary condition for international status as a great power regardless of actual material capabilities appears to have been widely recognized in Germany. As one German historian at the time wrote, “it is very easy to imagine that, one day, a country which has no colonies will not be counted amongst the European Great Powers any more, however powerful it might otherwise be.”1176 Even uber-Realist Bismarck understood the normatively-defined status significance of overseas colonies, though a wealth of evidence suggests he personally did not agree with it. At a March 1885 dinner party where British Prime Minister William Gladstone, among others, was present, Bismarck reportedly remarked that “We [Germany] are the youngest of the great powers and we wish to undertake this function of colonisation, which belongs to a great power.”1177

Despite this apparent recognition of the normatively-defined significance of colonial holdings, true to his Realist instincts Bismarck’s years of resistance to acquiring them for

Germany suggests that this was not a sufficient cause of the abrupt policy shift he implemented in 1883. Rather, it was not until changing political winds on the home front directly threatened his grip on power that he cynically embraced colonialism. In the wake of the 1881 Reichstag elections, which gave him his worst parliamentary defeat in twenty years, Bismarck was particularly sensitive to his regime’s domestic legitimacy. Once an economic depression beginning in 1883 exacerbated domestic discontent and the Secessionists and Progressive Party merged into a united opposition Liberal Party the following summer, Bismarck was desperate for a project that could bolster his support and undercut that of the opposition. As much as he saw colonialism as antithetical to Germany’s strategic and material interests he was also a politician. He appears to have judged that given the great power mores of the time a critical mass of the public considered colonial expansion to be, in Eyck’s words, an “eminently national policy.” He also knew that it was a policy that his more sober-minded domestic political adversaries were likely to oppose vigorously. The great irony here is that the opposition opposed colonialism for many of the same reasons that Bismarck himself did—in particular, they believed that colonies were unlikely to bring any practical strategic or material benefits and would unnecessarily risk clashes and antagonisms with other nations. Yet Bismarck judged that the push for colonies would be popular and that by promoting such a policy he could exploit growing nationalism and domestic discontent and paint his adversaries’ opposition as unpatriotic, or, Eyck’s words again, “lack[ing] in national feeling.” Furthermore, those voices that championed colonialism were powerful within the Free Conservative and National Liberal parties—the same parties upon

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which Bismarck relied for support in the Reichstag.\textsuperscript{1180} In short, for domestic political reasons the argument in favor of colonialism became overwhelming.

It is important to stress that Bismarck’s basic views on the wastefulness of colonialism as far as the national interest was concerned do not appear to have changed significantly. Bismarck even told one of his colleagues that “All this colonial business is a sham, but we need it for the elections,” and another, “for internal reasons, the colonial question […] is of vital importance for us […] The smallest peak in New Guinea or West Africa, though it may be quite worthless objectively, is at present more important for our policy than the whole of Egypt and its future.”\textsuperscript{1181} In the words of Bismarck’s son, formal colonial expansion had been judged “essential” owing to “concern for domestic politics.”\textsuperscript{1182} It was not necessary for German security or economic interests.

In short, although Bismarck believed colonies to be useless, he nevertheless understood that he could exploit the widely recognized symbolic significance of colonial holdings effectively as an ideological force for social integration and means by which to enhance his regime’s legitimacy and grip on power. Bismarck’s cynical, self-serving judgment proved to be correct. In the words of Wehler, Bismarck’s colonialist propaganda had powerful “unifying effects” and helped to “cover up” severe social and political problems at home and to recover the “battered prestige” of his government.\textsuperscript{1183} In sum, as Wehler argues, a mid-1880s depression “had a catalytic effect” on imperialism and as the negative social externalities of industrialization created unrest, leaders in Berlin turned to expansion overseas as a countermeasure.\textsuperscript{1184} In this sense, Bismarck’s imperialist turn appears to have been the “external aspect” of a domestic

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[1180] Kennedy, \textit{Anglo-German Antagonism}, 169.
\item[1181] Quoted in Ibid., 172.
\item[1183] Ibid., 140.
\item[1184] Ibid., 132.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
policy. It was designed to be “a prophylactic measure” to prevent social unrest and was aimed at “averting a revolution.”

While the embrace of imperialism seems to have served Bismarck’s purposes domestically, as he himself had warned for years this major policy shift also had significant deleterious effects on Germany’s strategic circumstances. Bismarck soon regretted his decision to go after colonies against his better judgment, doubting that they could become important contributors to Germany’s economy and that German officials were capable of governing them. He considered them so burdensome, in fact, that he thought about selling German interests in Samoa, as well as in East and Southwest Africa. Furthermore, he was deeply troubled by the burdens and dangers they created for Germany’s foreign relations, the Foreign Office, and the imperial budget. For these reasons, all of which he had foreseen, Bismarck attempted a course correction just a few years later. Given the extent to which colonies had become associated with Germany’s international prestige and, consequently, regime legitimacy, however, the policy proved irreversible.

In 1888, Bismarck told Herman von Wissmann, a German military officer who harbored dreams of dominating central Africa, “Your map of Africa is certainly very beautiful, but my map of Africa lies in Europe. Here lies Russia and there lies France, and we are in the middle. That is my map of Africa.” Yet von Wissmann was nevertheless ordered to command a costly military expedition to restore order in East Africa. In a speech to the Reichstag that same year

1185 Ibid., 140. Leading historians of this period of German foreign policy generally support this basic argument. As Kennedy writes, colonial policy might increase exports and would “help […] to reduce the prospects for social unrest […T]hese successes would enhance Bismarck’s own position, identifying him yet again in the public’s eyes as the great national hero.” Kennedy, Anglo-German Antagonism, 177. See also Eyck, Bismarck and the German Empire, 273–275. Pflanze, Bismarck and the Development of Germany, 123.
1186 Pflanze, Bismarck and the Development of Germany, 140.
1187 Bismarck interview from 1888; quoted in Ibid., 142.
Bismarck warned of the dangers of the pursuit of prestige rather than national “self-interest.”

Remarkably, he called for Germany to abandon these economic and strategic liabilities, reportedly declaring that “The Foreign Office can either get rid of colonies, or get rid of me.”

In a meeting of the Cabinet in August 1889 he passionately criticized the “German colonial humbug” that threatened to undo his life’s work in the foreign domain.

Yet once the shift had been implemented the symbolic significance of Germany’s colonial holdings had become so powerfully and inextricably linked to national self-esteem tied up with Germany’s identity as an aspiring great power that it could not be reversed. Pflanze effectively captures the cause and consequences of Germany’s abortive embrace of imperialism under Bismarck,

“Once acquired, colonies were retained not for economic gain, but as symbols of national pride and power, proof that Germany was a Weltmacht [“world power”] with far-flung possessions and a rival, if not the equal, of Britain, whose achievements had so often and in so many ways incited Germans to envy and emulation. If untouched by such emotions, Bismarck was well aware of the colonies’ appeal to the German public and of the political effect of that appeal.”

The fact that Bismarck attempted to reverse course despite simultaneously recognizing the likely domestic political costs of doing so makes his effort all the more significant and provides further support for the argument that he saw these colonial holdings as severely detrimental to Germany’s security and economic interests. Yet this anti-colonialism campaign, although based on sober-minded strategic and material arguments, proved futile. Paradoxically,

1189 Quoted in Kennedy, Anglo-German Antagonism, 203.
1190 Quoted in Eyck, Bismarck and the German Empire, 272.
1191 Pflanze, Bismarck and the Development of Germany, 141.
and contrary to the expectations of existing theories, it was in no small part because of his pragmatic, strategic and material interest-based—many would say ‘Realist’—views on foreign policy that Bismarck was dismissed as chancellor in 1890.

After Bismarck was out of the picture, the colonial urge continued to remain influential among subsequent leaders. This is particularly puzzling for alternative explanations, however, since his immediate successors, such as Leo von Caprivi (Chancellor; 1890-1894), Friedrich von Holstein (leading foreign policy thinker in the Foreign Office through 1906), and Adolf Marschall (Secretary of State of the Foreign Office; 1890-1897), seemed to share his basic antagonism toward colonial expansion. In particular, these leaders also saw colonies as a major obstacle to good relations between London and Berlin and “millstones” that served as huge and costly distractions for Germany’s military, requiring the frequent deployment of warships more needed in Europe to far-flung places. Yet far from abandoning colonialism as both Bismarck and his immediate successors had recommended, post-Bismarckian Germany continued along the expansionist trajectory set out in the mid-1880s. Particularly in the wake of Weltpolitik, beginning in 1897 Wilhelm II effectively doubled down on colonial empire. The result was a second round of imperialist expansion despite, as the following examples illustrate, German leaders’ recognition that the strategic or material drivers of this second push were dubious. The international prestige and status—not to mention domestic political—benefits, however, appeared abundantly clear.

In 1897, Germany pursued a naval base in Kiaochow (China), apparently against the wishes of the Foreign Office and even—at least temporarily—Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, the newly appointed Naval Secretary. This effort, which created severe tensions with Russia,

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1192 Kennedy, *Anglo-German Antagonism*, 206.
1193 Ibid., 214.
nevertheless proved to be immensely popular with the German public. In a revealing message to Wilhelm after Germany acquired the Caroline Islands, newly appointed Foreign Secretary Bernhard von Bülow stated “This gain will stimulate people and navy to follow Your Majesty further along the path which leads to world power, greatness, and eternal glory.” Yet even the German Navy reportedly considered the islands worthless. And despite minimal trade prospects and Bülow’s explicit acknowledgment that “the entire Samoan question has absolutely no material, but an ideal and patriotic interest for us,” Germany acquired the Samoan island of Upolu in 1899. A colonial affairs expert in the Foreign Ministry dismissed the acquisition as “simply a prestige victory.” Leaders also saw the deployment of forces and a squadron of battleships to the Far East to join other powers in putting down the Boxer Rebellion as achieving the twin goals of increasing the prestige of Germany’s military and diverting the public’s attention away from problems at home.

In addition to Wilhelm’s personal advocacy of colonialism as part of his effort to see Germany attain its coveted “place in the sun,” in the course of the 1890s an upsurge in popular imperialistic agitation provided additional incentives for leaders to pursue this course. The empirical record suggests that despite awareness of the costs of annexing, administering, and defending territories half-way around the world, the shapers of German foreign policy in the post-Bismarck era were unwilling to risk their political futures by telling the public that Germany should relinquish its colonial trophies. In the context of worsening domestic political conditions, the temptation to exploit the public’s hunger for these prestigious symbols of great

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1194 Ibid., 233.
1195 Ibid., 236–37.
1196 Quoted in Ibid., 238. An upsurge in chauvinistic sentiment at home from such groups as the Pan-German league and the German Colonial Society played a significant role in its acquisition. Ibid., 214.
1197 Kennedy, Anglo-German Antagonism, 243.
1198 Ibid., 209.
1199 Pflanze, Bismarck and the Development of Germany, 141.
power status as a unifying force domestically was just too great. In 1897, Johann von Miquel, Minister of Finance, stated that continued imperialism would serve to “turn [ ] our thoughts abroad,” to divert the “revolutionary element,” and to “put [ ] the nation’s feelings […] on a common footing.”

That same year Holstein wrote of the government’s need for a “tangible success” abroad to have a “beneficial effect at home.” He identified the acquisition of territories outside of Europe as a primary means by which to achieve this goal. The risks of this growing nationalism was clear to Holstein, who stated that “English dislike of the Kaiser is a lot less serious than German [dislike of the Kaiser].” The unfortunate implication appears to have been clear—German leaders needed to placate their domestic critics, even if they had to sacrifice relations with England to do so.

What is most striking about German colonialism is the extent to which leaders’ insistence on following Britain’s imperialist example proceeded despite the lack of clear strategic and/or economic benefits. In addition to the tragic consequences for the peoples on the receiving end of German expansion, this policy also contributed directly to a significant worsening of bilateral relations between Berlin and London. One of the great ironies of history from this period is that, at least initially, key advocates of Weltpolitik appear to have wanted to see Germany pursue its coveted status in cooperation with its role model. And at least initially, Germany’s decision to play Britain’s colonial game and to join it as a ‘civilizing white power’ actually received praise in some important quarters in London. The same year Bismarck initiated a colonial policy (1884) Gladstone told the Commons “If Germany is to become a colonizing power, all I say is ‘God

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1201 Ibid., 152.
1202 Quoted in Kennedy, Anglo-German Antagonism, 215.
1203 Ibid., 220–221.
speed her!’ She becomes our ally and partner in the execution of the great purposes of Providence for the advantage of mankind.”

London’s perspective would ultimately change, however. Because of the inherently conflictual nature of the associated great power norm of territorial expansion and colonialism, in the course of the 1890s clashes with Britain over colonies far away from Europe became more frequent. A key area of tension was southern Africa, which British leaders had explicitly warned Germany was “perhaps the most vital interest of Great Britain” because of its role as a necessary communications link with India. Yet Germany continued along the trajectory set out a decade earlier. As a result, frictions over colonial expansion in southern Africa became so severe by the mid-1890s that German defense planners for the first time began planning for war with Britain.

German leaders’ continuation along the colonialist path further exacerbated the antagonism in the new century. The underlying rationale remained familiar, and continued to be remarkably disconnected from actual material interests. As a case in point, in 1911 Alfred von Kiderlin Waechter, the newly installed foreign secretary, again pushed another round of colonialism in order to cultivate nationalism and thereby bolster the leadership’s grip on power in order to forestall a Socialist victory in upcoming elections. A key consequence of this renewed push was the Agadir crisis, which Germany provoked despite a complete lack of material interests and not even a single German citizen present in the area. Germany’s involvement in the

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1204 Quoted in Ibid., 181.  
1205 Ibid., 220–221.
Agadir crisis had tragic consequences: it effectively convinced both Lloyd George and Winston Churchill that Germany wanted war.  

In an authoritative English-language analysis of German imperialism during this period, historian Paul Kennedy writes, “The creation of a German overseas empire was, by any reckoning, of considerable significance in the history of that country as a great power, in the development of its national consciousness and in the political affairs of its government and parties.” Germany’s initial pursuit of colonies in the mid-1880s constituted a major military policy shift that was implemented against the better instincts of uber-Realist and strategist Bismarck. As Flanze notes, it was “one of the few occasions when Bismarck clearly permitted domestic concerns to dictate foreign policy (Primat der Innenpolitik),” a decision whose consequences he would later regret. Far from being driven by structural imperatives, the shift was initially taken, and repeatedly upheld, in large part as a response to the negative domestic and social externalities of Germany’s rapid modernization. In this context, and in light of imperialism’s normative associations with the great power status enjoyed by imperial Britain, Germany’s aspirational referent, leaders in Berlin came to see colonial expansion as “an ideological force for integration” and key pathway to achieving Germany’s ‘place in the sun.’ Paradoxically, the push for colonies grew stronger in subsequent years despite the proven strategic and economic costs of the actual policies (see alternative explanations section). The colonies appeared to have acquired a significance that transcended material rationales. Indeed,

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1206 Peter Padfield, *The Great Naval Race: The Anglo-German Naval Rivalry, 1900-1914* (London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1974), 250–52. Renshon attributes Germany’s instigation of crises like that in Agadir as a means, rather than a consequence of the effort, to acquire prestige. Renshon, “Fighting for Status,” chap. 4. An additional example is the first Morocco crisis in 1905-1906. Morocco was an area where even Bülow noted that Germany’s economic interests were “trifling and insignificant.” But Germany was compelled to do something because the dispute had become a “question of honor.” Ibid., 141–42.

1207 Kennedy, *Anglo-German Antagonism*, 178.


1209 Wehler, “Bismarck’s Imperialism 1862-1890,” 143.
As Wehler notes, a popular refrain during this period was that Germany’s coveted status as a great power meant it was incumbent upon her “to procure colonies, as if they were the insignia of a true ‘world power.’” Even Max Weber was not immune to the appeal of such an objective.\footnote{Ibid., 146.}

Although aimed primarily at attaining great power status through conformity to contemporaneous force employment norms as defined by the behavior of Berlin’s status aspirant: imperial Britain, the inherently conflictual nature of these norms is clear. As Wehler argues, what was in large part “a defensive strategy in domestic politics” effectively, even if arguably unintentionally, “introduced an aggressive component into Germany’s foreign relations.”\footnote{Wehler, The German Empire, 1871-1918, 183.} A leading contemporary German historian captured the sentiments of many of his compatriots at the turn of the century when he wrote in 1899,

> “We want to be a world power and pursue colonial policy in the grand manner. That is certain. Here there can be no step backward. The entire future of our people among the great nations depends on it. We can pursue this policy with England or without England. With England means in peace; against England means - through war.”\footnote{Hans Delbruck in 1899, quoted in Jonathan Steinberg, “The Copenhagen Complex,” Journal of Contemporary History 1, no. 3 (July 1, 1966): 27.}

The implication, though disturbing, is clear—the desire to acquire colonies as symbols of Germany’s coveted status was so powerful that its leaders were determined to continue along this path even at the risk of a war with Great Britain. As the world learned in 1914, they were not bluffing.
1897 - Weltpolitik and the push for a battleship-centric navy

The second major, and arguably the most significant military policy shift implemented by Germany’s leaders during the course of its rapid rise was also the core component of Weltpolitik, which the leadership embraced beginning in 1897. Beginning with the 1898 First Navy Law, German leaders committed to a major, hugely costly battleship-centric naval fleet development program modeled explicitly on Great Britain’s Royal Fleet. Far from being insignificant in any practical sense, leading historians have called the 1898 First Navy Law a “landmark in the history of Germany’s naval development and foreign policy.”1213 Over the next fifteen years Germany passed five hugely expensive Naval Laws aimed at creating a fleet of battleships. The primary objective of this costly buildup was to help attain for Germany the recognition of “equality” from Great Britain that it sought as an aspiring ‘great power.’

As a continental power with no strong naval traditions that was surrounded by major power threats on all its borders—all of whom with which it had fought wars during the previous half-century, Wilhelmine Germany’s post-1897 pursuit of a hugely expensive fleet of battleships represented a major departure from past practice. It is also an extremely puzzling policy shift when viewed from a strategic or material perspective. During his two decades as Chancellor Bismarck had rejected an effort to build a large navy, which he dismissed as unnecessary for Germany to safeguard its economic interests and to defend its territory. He also considered it to be unnecessarily provocative vis-à-vis Britain, an island nation and maritime power that depended entirely on the seas for its economic lifelines. As Bismarck conceived of it, a small

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coastal defense force would be sufficient to protect Germany’s fisheries, harbors, and trade routes in the Baltic and North Seas.\textsuperscript{1214}

Germany’s abrupt shift to develop a battleship-centric navy appears to have been divorced from first-order consideration of pressing strategic threats and material interests. As noted earlier, many historians and a growing number of political scientists have brought attention to this puzzle.\textsuperscript{1215} As William Wohlforth concisely summarizes, German leaders chose to construct “at fantastic cost” a fleet “with no plausible strategic purpose other than to stake a claim on global power status.”\textsuperscript{1216} As even Admiral Tirpitz, the Naval Secretary whom Wilhelm appointed in 1897 to implement his goal of a battleship-centric fleet modeled on the Royal Navy, recognized, to the extent a practical purpose existed, it was primarily \textit{political} in nature; not military.\textsuperscript{1217}

As was the case with Germany’s colonial expansion, far from being an exercise in harmless vanity with little significance to international relations and regional and global peace and stability, the fleet that Winston Churchill would later derisively describe as a “luxury”\textsuperscript{1218} would contribute to nearly bankrupting Germany. Furthermore, this major shift, coupled with German leaders’ stubborn insistence on staying the course even after the dubious strategic rationale that ostensibly underpinned the buildup had collapsed, also was arguably the single greatest factor in creating the ‘Anglo-German antagonism’ that characterized the increasingly

\begin{flushright}
1215 See above. \\
1216 Wohlforth, “Unipolarity,” 32. \\
1218 Churchill: “The British navy is to us a necessity and, from some points of view the German Navy is to them more in the nature of a luxury. Our naval power involves British existence; it is existence to us, it is expansion to them.” Quoted in Padfield, \textit{The Great Naval Race}, 281.
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tense and volatile relationship between Berlin and London during the two decades prior to World War I. Perhaps more than any other military policy choice during this period, Germany’s naval buildup placed Germany on the military trajectory that would lead to a so-called ‘hegemonic war’ in 1914 with the very power from which it most sought recognition as an equal—Great Britain.

As it concerns decision-making at this turning point, given the extent to which Wilhelm II had consolidated his control over foreign policy by 1897 the details are not particularly exciting. Inspired by his fascination with the British Royal Navy from a young age, Wilhelm seemed determined to imitate it, utterly convinced as he was that a great navy was a necessary condition for status as a Weltmacht and recognition from Britain as a “first rank” nation. To assist him in achieving Weltpolitik and this naval buildup, Wilhelm appointed Bülow and Tirpitz as Foreign Secretary and Naval Secretary, respectively.

To be sure, the factors leaders cited for the naval buildup were manifold. But the empirical record suggests strongly that the strategic justifications advocated by German leaders were effectively post-hoc justifications for the buildup rather than its cause. In the words of historian Holger Herwig, the basic approach of Germany’s leaders was “Build first, design a strategy later.”

For example, Tirpitz and Bülow, the main architects of the Navy Laws, vaguely referred to “overseas and sea interests” (merchant shipping, colonies, and foreign investments) as a driving force behind this landmark military policy shift. Yet as Kennedy convincingly argues in his authoritative assessment of the landmark 1900 Navy Law, defending distant colonies in

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1219 Art, The Influence of Foreign Policy on Seapower, 36. Many scholars have identified the social meaning of battleships as sources of prestige and status as a major driver of Wilhelm’s pursuit of a battlefleet. Recent arguments by political scientists include those cited in the introduction of this case study.

1220 Although the argument about primary causal mechanisms delineated here differs from that posited in Jack Snyder’s seminal study, as it concerns this key observation they are compatible. Snyder, Myths of Empire, chap. 3.

1221 Herwig, “Imperial Germany,” 183.

Africa or safeguarding interests in distant Asia with a battlefleet that could not travel beyond the north coast of France was, at best, an extremely inefficient, or dubious, choice. The fact that the classes of naval ships that could actually defend these interests both more effectively and less expensively—primarily gunboats and cruisers—had been abandoned by Tirpitz in order to be able to fund the doubling of the battlefleet makes this stated rationale extremely suspicious.\textsuperscript{1223}

In other words, despite its clear strategic logic for an inferior naval power such as Germany, Tirpitz showed little interest in a commerce-raiding strategy based on far less expensive cruisers and torpedo boats, which was obviously the best way for Germany to protect its interests from a superior naval adversary. It would also have been far less expensive—for the cost of a single battleship Germany could have procured many cruisers and dozens of torpedo boats. As Robert Art notes, for this reason very expensive battleships were “not ‘cost-effective’—they surpassed the requirements for the task at hand and consequently entailed too many opportunity costs.” Battleships were also highly vulnerable, especially to swarming by smaller adversary ships.\textsuperscript{1224}

The 1900 naval bill, which called for the procurement of 19 additional battleships—effectively doubling the size of Germany’s navy—made it clear that the purpose behind the fleet was something other than merely defending German territory and safeguarding its colonies and maritime commerce. Indeed, the 1900 law effectively revealed that the true focus of Germany’s nascent naval buildup was Great Britain. The ostensibly strategic rationale informing it was that Germany needed to develop the ability to challenge Great Britain in the North Sea in order to protect its interests. Yet as Kennedy’s analysis suggests, this strategy appears to have been largely nonsensical, since without an ability to defeat Great Britain on the High Seas in the event of an actual conflict, Germany’s shipping would be sitting ducks and its colonies would be

\textsuperscript{1223} Ibíd., 37–38.
\textsuperscript{1224} Art, The Influence of Foreign Policy on Seapower, 17.
quickly overrun. Furthermore, in choosing to focus on Great Britain German leaders were selecting a basically friendly state that was not only Germany’s chief trading partner but also the major European power that posed the least threat to Germany’s security. Count Paul Metternich, just prior to being appointed German ambassador to England, said, “I have never believed that England harboured an aggressive purpose against Germany.” Even Bülow himself noted in 1897 that “the possibility of a clash with England did not seriously appear to be at hand.” Even more important, however, was the fact that by attempting to develop a battleship-centric fleet modeled on that of Great Britain, Germany effectively created an existential threat to Great Britain—an island nation whose dependence on maritime commerce was widely recognized.

Although in his writings Tirpitz does make strategic arguments, however dubious, for a battlefleet, it is important to recall that Tirpitz was, in effect, appointed by Wilhelm to fulfill a preexisting objective of procuring a fleet modeled on the British Navy. The British threat appears to have been invented to justify a desired naval buildup, rather than the other way around. Far more central to explaining the embrace of battleships than the dubious strategic rationale concocted by Tirpitz was Wilhelm—and much of the German public’s—apparent desire for a symbol of great power status that would contribute to attaining for Germany its coveted ‘equality’ with Great Britain. Even Tirpitz appreciated the symbolic value of the fleet. He once

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1227 Quoted in Padfield, *The Great Naval Race*, 92.
1228 As Grey stated in 1913, “The Navy is our one and only means of defence and our life depends on it and on it alone.” Kennedy, *Anglo-German Antagonism*, 416. As Churchill argued, “The British navy is to us a necessity and, from some points of view the German Navy is to them more in the nature of a luxury. Our naval power involves British existence; it is existence to us, it is expansion to them.” Padfield, *The Great Naval Race*, 281.
explained Germany’s desire for a navy “as a symbol of industrial progress […] that would be forward looking and progressive […] and would] show the flag around the globe.”

As in the case of Germany’s colonial expansion, the organically generated status-seeking driver was amplified by a more instrumental desire on the part of the leadership to exploit surging nationalism to mitigate worsening domestic instability and to strengthen its hand against the growing influence of the Social Democrats within the Reichstag. Wilhelm saw the navy as not only central to the (vague) objective of Weltpolitik but also a core element of the imperative of generating national cohesion at home via a de facto “alliance” with popular nationalism. In this regard, the navy was particularly useful as a symbol of national unity in the military domain. In contrast, Germany’s land armies were still organized on a state-by-state basis—even their uniforms and battle honors differed. In contrast, the navy was a purely national service and thus effective as a key tool by which to promote national cohesion. This helps to explain why the strategic foundations of the naval buildup were so dubious—the first-order objective appears to have been political rather than military. As Kennedy argues, even the landmark 1900 Second Navy Law, while a successful measure for domestic political purposes, was deeply flawed in terms of its strategic and foreign policy consequences. The propaganda about protecting trade routes, colonies, and overseas interests was “fabricated for the German public as a whole.” Even Tirpitz—the supposed ‘mastermind’ of the entire ‘strategy’—recognized that it had little basing in reality.

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1230 Quoted in Herwig, “Imperial Germany,” 178.
1232 Padfield, The Great Naval Race, 57.
foreign policy as a domain in which the leadership could exploit nationalism-infused status-seeking to effectively tighten their grip on power.\textsuperscript{1234}

In light of the prevailing ‘great power’ norms of the day, German leaders convinced themselves that they would forever be reconciled to status as a “second-rate power” if they remained a mere continental power, regardless of their actual strategic interests and material capabilities.\textsuperscript{1235} As Art writes in his seminal study, “intangible factors” played a “determinative role” in German naval policy, and were at least as, if not more, important than economic or domestic considerations. Especially salient in shaping decision-making was an ill-defined “lust for greatness.” In short, the core logic at the heart of Germany’s naval buildup appears to have been that “To be a great power, a nation had to have a powerful navy.”\textsuperscript{1236}

Tragically, Wilhelm’s singular objective was to attain for Germany status as a “world power of the first rank” and “equality” with Great Britain’s own empire, regardless of the costs, diplomatic, economic, financial, or otherwise.\textsuperscript{1237} Despite the fundamental strategic flaws and ‘fantastical costs’ of Germany’s procurement of battleships, it appears that throughout this period no one of any influence in decision-making bothered to seriously criticize the ostensible strategy upon which the buildup was based. Naval strategists who did were either sacked (e.g., Tirpitz’ predecessor, Admiral Friedrich von Hollmann, who favored a mixed fleet) or ignored.

Throughout this period opposition parties proposed sensible alternatives based on Germany’s strategic environment and geography that not only would have saved money, but which also

\textsuperscript{1234} For example, Bülow stated in December 1897 that he would “put[] the main emphasis on foreign policy. Only a successful foreign policy can help to reconcile, pacify, rally, unite.” In addition to Wilhelm and Tirpitz, Miquel, Holstein and other German leaders also held similar views. Kennedy, \textit{Anglo-German Antagonism}, 227.

\textsuperscript{1235} Tirpitz in secret speech to officers of the Imperial Navy Office, October 1913. Tensions by that point and made it clear that war was a risk. Tirpitz told the men he would rather fight and lose than remain with a lowly status as a continental, “second-rate power,” saying, “For a great nation, it seems more honourable to fight for the most important aim and to go under honourably instead of renouncing on a future without glory.” Epkenhans, \textit{Tirpitz}, 53.

\textsuperscript{1236} Art, \textit{The Influence of Foreign Policy on Seapower}, 6, 16.

\textsuperscript{1237} Padfield, \textit{The Great Naval Race}, 344. Art, \textit{The Influence of Foreign Policy on Seapower}, 36.
would have most effectively defended Germany’s ports and coastal areas. Even after ten years of deficit-inducing battleship construction, retired Admiral Karl Galster argued in a 1907 book that a German battlefleet would never achieve sufficient strength to engage in anything aside from a guerilla campaign against Britain and that a focus on less expensive cruisers and submarines would more effectively secure Germany’s interests.\textsuperscript{1238} Intent on mimicking Britain’s navy regardless of the costs or strategic inanity of doing so, however, Wilhelm and Tirpitz refused to reverse course. In 1909 battleships were being constructed despite the absence of any cogent war plans to guide their employment in an actual conflict—a fact that would become abundantly clear once war broke out five years later.\textsuperscript{1239} The ostensible strategic rationale that Tirpitz had come up with a decade earlier to justify Wilhelm’s dreams of a battlefleet was an empty vessel.

The extent to which the buildup of the battlefleet appears to have been largely divorced from strategic logic is reflected in the fact that despite significant changes in Germany’s strategic situation between 1900 and 1914—most importantly, the UK’s implementation of major countermeasures after 1904, including extremely expensive Dreadnoughts after 1906 and Germany’s effective ‘encirclement’ by all other major powers on the continent—the hugely expensive focus on battleship procurement did not change.\textsuperscript{1240} Once underway, a reversal proved impossible. The symbolic significance of the navy had become so powerful that surging navalism would at times put pressure on Tirpitz to accelerate the buildup beyond his own extremely ambitious plan.\textsuperscript{1241} Even after it became abundantly clear that the buildup was bankrupting the country and that Great Britain was investing heavily in countermeasures, ensuring a competition Germany could not come close to winning, the Naval Secretary

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1238] Padfield, \textit{The Great Naval Race}, 179.
\item[1239] Art, \textit{The Influence of Foreign Policy on Seapower}, 36.
\item[1241] Epkenhans, \textit{Tirpitz}, 39.
\end{footnotes}
nevertheless regularly warned Wilhelm that a decision to reverse course risked, in Kennedy’s words, “a severe blow to the prestige of the monarchy, with alarming internal repercussions.”

In short, naval power had become inextricably linked to the regime’s domestic legitimacy.

In sum, there is a wealth of evidence to support the claim that the first-order cause of Germany’s unprecedented shift to pursue a battleship-centric navy modeled on that of Great Britain was status-seeking and a desire to be recognized as an “equal” of London rather than security threats or other material interests. It seems that Wilhelm appointed Tirpitz to formulate a strategic justification for a decision that he had already made; accordingly, the desire for the fleet shaped the extremely dubious strategy and threat perceptions rather than the other way around. Inconvenient truths about Germany’s strategic environment, priorities, and threat perceptions, were effectively ignored. With Wilhelm’s support, Tirpitz avoided the procurement of far less expensive platforms that actually would have been more effective in safeguarding Germany’s territory and economic interests. By focusing on symbolically significant but strategically and tactically useless battleships, which antagonized Great Britain unnecessarily, Wilhelm and Tirpitz effectively created a major threat to Germany’s security where none had existed previously. Even after it became clear less than four years after the 1900 Naval Law that Great Britain was going to do everything in its power to ensure that Germany’s navy remained forever in the so-called “danger zone,” German leaders effectively doubled down on their seemingly nonsensical policy. As Padfield sums up circumstances circa 1906, when it became clear that Germany was not reacting to the obvious turn of circumstances against it, “It was not intelligence,

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1242 Kennedy, *Anglo-German Antagonism*, 419.
but emotion, ambition and high pride that directed and supported German naval policy; intelligence was called in for justification."\textsuperscript{1243}

Wrapped up as it had become with the symbolism of Germany’s emergence as a ‘great power’ once Germany’s leaders had committed to this ill-advised naval buildup they judged that they could not reverse course. Even after Britain responded with its own rapid buildup and the launching of HMS \textit{Dreadnought}, an event which, inter alia, effectively caused the cost of battleships to double overnight, German leaders doubled down, literally: its naval estimates doubled from 219 million GM to 434 GM between 1904 and 1910.\textsuperscript{1244} Despite the fact that Germany still had no hope of catching up with Britain construction continued apace, bankrupting itself in the process. In 1909, after Bülow finally realized the buildup’s huge strategic opportunity costs and the devastating toll it was having on Berlin’s relations with London, he recommended that Germany sign a naval agreement and shift to mines, submarines and coastal defense as a strategy for protecting German interests—which would have been an efficient, asymmetric strategy. In a revealing exchange, Bülow asked Tirpitz bluntly whether “Germany and the German people could calmly and with confidence envisage an English attack?” Tirpitz reportedly could not answer in the affirmative. Tirpitz also continued to deny that the naval issue was the core source of tensions with Britain.\textsuperscript{1245}

The consequences of this prestige-oriented naval buildup were tragic. It left Germany diplomatically isolated. Not only had its naval buildup antagonized Britain to a disastrous effect, but it also facilitated rapprochement between Britain and Germany’s other potential major power

\textsuperscript{1243} Padfield, \textit{The Great Naval Race}, 138.
\textsuperscript{1244} Herwig, “Imperial Germany,” 185.
\textsuperscript{1245} Quoted in Epkenhans, \textit{Tirpitz}, 41.
adversaries, including France, the United States, Russia, and Japan. Not coincidentally, all of these countries would ultimately join forces in defeating Germany in World War I. Yale historian Donald Kagan concisely sums up the tragic inanity of Germany’s extremely costly pursuit of great power status through the development of a battleship-centric navy: “Though [the navy] played a major role in causing the war, it took no significant part in the fighting and never did Germany any practical good.”

Alternative Explanations

Power-maximizing Hypothesis

As noted earlier, the rise of Germany during the pre-1914 period is often cited by Realists, including those of the power-maximizing persuasion, as providing strong evidence for their claims. For example, John Mearsheimer claims that Germany is a case that provides “strong support” for offensive realism as Germany was “almost always looking for opportunities to expand through conquest, and when they saw an opening, they usually jumped at it.” Christopher Layne captures the core causal argument of this alternative explanation when he writes that international anarchy gave pre-1914 Germany “little choice but to emulate Britain by building a powerful navy.”. In Layne’s view, Germany’s rise to world power status and the Anglo-German antagonism that resulted “were structurally determined.”

Yet at least as it concerns the two major military policy shifts examined in this section, the empirical record appears to provide relatively limited support for the specific causal arguments central to the power-maximizing hypothesis. It certainly does not warrant structurally

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1246 Herwig, “Imperial Germany,” 184.
1248 Mearsheimer, TToGPP, 169.
deterministic claims. As several existing studies (discussed earlier) have pointed out, Germany’s naval buildup is a case-in-point.\textsuperscript{1250} The major weakness of the power-maximizing hypothesis in these instances is the fact that it overlooks the role of socially-contingent ideas in shaping decision-making. The empirical analysis of this case study demonstrates clearly that in pursuit of recognition as a first-rank ‘great power,’ German leaders’ military policy choices were motivated in large part by the socially-contingent, symbolic meaning of colonies and battleships. During this period both colonies and a battleship-centric navy were frequently identified as symbolic ‘badges’ of great power status and pursued despite leaders’ simultaneous recognition that associated policies would entail costly distractions from more pressing strategic threats—especially on the European continent—and economic and other interests, both abroad and at home. Indeed, far from proving that pursuit of hegemony is a first-order goal of rising and great powers, the available evidence suggests the opposite. Had Germany’s leaders not implemented these two prestige-driven major policy shifts Germany would probably have ended up far more secure, wealthy, and perhaps even hegemon on the Continent. In other words, it appears, paradoxically, that Germany’s pursuit of prestige and status as a first-rank ‘great power’ by mimicking Great Britain may have effectively prevented it from achieving the hegemony that the power-maximizing hypothesis assumes to be the fundamental goal of all states.

The role of contemporaneous ideas, rather than structure, in shaping leaders’ decision-making about both colonies and naval power is manifest. It is even evident in the very cynical, ostensibly strategic thinking of the man who Wilhelm II tapped to implement his dream of a

\textsuperscript{1250} Murray also offers an effective counter to Realist claims through a concise overview of the “suboptimal” nature of Germany’s battleship construction. She insightfully criticizes the “tendency of offensive realists to attribute any act of power maximization to a strategic logic.” See Murray, “Identity, Insecurity, and Great Power Politics,” 667–671. The analysis in this section overlaps at points with that of several recent studies by political scientists, cited earlier, including that of Murray concerning the naval buildup. As discussed earlier, however, shadowing/avoiding theory has important differences—especially in its focus on the source of the norms and emphasis on the changeability of their content.
naval fleet befitting a great power: Tirpitz. Despite Germany’s obviously inappropriate strategic geography as a continental state, Tirpitz was so heavily influenced by the ideas of Social Darwinism and Mahanian thought that from the moment of his appointment in 1897 he appears to have blindly sought to develop the ability to challenge Britain’s naval supremacy by holding its navy “at risk.”\footnote{Epkenhans, *Tirpitz*, 27.} More sober-minded naval strategists who focused on Germany’s actual strategic conditions and material interests recognized the folly of a battleship-centric naval development plan and proposed alternatives that would have been more effective and less expensive. Even if one contends that Tirpitz’s strategy was logical and sincere—a debatable proposition—it still appears to be the case that Tirpitz’ thinking was not the first-order cause of Germany’s pursuit of a battleship-centric navy modeled on that of Great Britain. After all, Tirpitz was selected by Wilhelm to implement (and to justify) a naval development plan to which Wilhelm had already committed himself. In Kennedy’s words: “he most clearly felt that possession of a large navy by Germany would gain him the respect and “equality” which the proud yet practical British only paid to powerful states. In this aim, of course, Tirpitz’s new strategy appeared ideal.” Contrary to the power-maximizing hypothesis, at least initially, Wilhelm’s primary objective was not to be able to dominate Great Britain, but to be afforded the respect and status from Britain that he believed Germany deserved. Wilhelm’s initial goal was for Germany and Britain to “rule the seas together.”\footnote{Kennedy, *Anglo-German Antagonism*, 224.}

In the language of shadowing/avoiding theory, the primary cause of Germany’s unprecedented pursuit of a battleship-centric navy was status-seeking driven socialization to contemporaneous great power norms, with Great Britain as the aspirational referent model.

Wilhelm brought Tirpitz in to achieve the material trappings necessary to attain that status. It is
because of this vague, first-order non-material objective that its strategic foundations were never really challenged. As Helwig notes, the basic approach of Germany’s leaders was to “Build first, design a strategy later.” Accordingly, the idea of a battlefleet was never subjected to rigorous military analysis before the decision was made to develop it. This became abundantly clear when Germany entered World War I sixteen years later with no clear war plan for fighting the Royal Navy—the adversary which the entire naval buildup had ostensibly been designed to confront. It is very difficult to reconcile the assumptions underpinning the power-maximizing hypothesis with these puzzling empirical facts.

Given claims in the literature that pre-1914 Germany’s rise is a ‘most likely’ case for the power-maximizing hypothesis, the fact that it performs so poorly relative to SAT in providing first-order explanations of these two hugely significant military policy decisions evinces major weaknesses in theories of rising powers based exclusively on structural or material factors. To be sure, the record of expansionary policy outcomes during this period manifests significant overlap with the expectations of the power-maximizing hypothesis. Nevertheless, a closer look at the empirical record of actual decision-making evinces severe weaknesses in its ability to explain the actual decision-making behind these major military policy shifts.

*Security-Maximizing Hypothesis*

When tested against the empirical record of decision-making the security-maximizing hypothesis does not seem to prevent a convincing first-order cause of Germany’s colonial expansion and naval buildup. As discussed above, as a number of scholars have noted, what is

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1253 Herwig, “Imperial Germany,” 183.
1254 Ross, “Naval Nationalism,” 51.
most remarkable about German decision-making is the extent to which it appears to have been divorced from what leaders considered to be Germany’s primary strategic threats and material interests—most of which lay on the European continent. Indeed, Bismarck and other leaders who were focused on territorial security and material interests opposed these policies, at least in private. These truly ‘Realist’ leaders understandably wanted Germany to avoid wasteful and distracting wars of “acquisition,” fleet building, and global empire/colonialism.\textsuperscript{1256} A security-maximizing leadership would have focused on preparing for conflicts with those major powers with which Germany shared land borders, rather than effectively antagonizing the island nation and maritime power that posed the least threat to Germany’s security. Yet Germany’s military trajectory clearly did not follow this path.

The focus on Great Britain and developing battleship-centric naval power to deter the supposed threat it posed to German interests is puzzling. First, as Kennedy argues, Germany’s ostensible effort to challenge British hegemony through a battleship-centered naval buildup “seemed ridiculous [...] particularly for a nation keeping the most powerful army in Europe to preserve her borders against France and Russia.”\textsuperscript{1257} In other words, the entire buildup of the fleet had conveniently ignored Germany’s strategic geography.\textsuperscript{1258} That Germany, a continental power surrounded by major land powers, would mimic the naval policy of Great Britain, an island nation and maritime hegemon, was very odd. As a maritime island nation basically incapable of invading Germany, the dominant land power on the Continent, Britain was the power that posed the least actual threat to it.\textsuperscript{1259} Even as late as 1897 key German leaders, even those who advocated a naval buildup, noted the low probability of a military conflict with

\textsuperscript{1256} Herwig, “Imperial Germany,” 173.  
\textsuperscript{1257} Kennedy, \textit{Anglo-German Antagonism}, 37.  
\textsuperscript{1258} Epkenhans, \textit{Tirpitz}, 54.  
\textsuperscript{1259} Wohlforth, “Unipolarity,” 32.
England.\textsuperscript{1260} Beyond the focus on Great Britain, Germany’s battleship-centric naval buildup appears even more nonsensical and inefficient, focused as it was on platforms largely useless for achieving leaders’ stated material interests and strategic priorities (e.g., protecting colonies, trade routes, and overseas interests).\textsuperscript{1261} Particularly problematic for this alternative explanation is the fact that despite the immense sums spent developing the fleet, in the aftermath of Great Britain’s commissioning of the HMS \textit{Dreadnought} Germany’s Chief of the General Staff granted the navy no role in his war planning.\textsuperscript{1262} This was still true on the eve of World War I, when Germany still lacked a war plan for fighting Britain.\textsuperscript{1263}

To be sure, uncertainty about the future, coupled with Britain’s vast wealth and industrial power, appear to have been important factors in the thinking of German leaders during this period—especially that of Tirpitz. In this sense, the security dilemma was at play. But again, the fact remains that when Wilhelm decided to go after a fleet in the 1890s, leaders—Tirpitz a possible exception—do not seem to have identified Great Britain as a threat to German interests. Furthermore, as noted above, Tirpitz was essentially chosen by Wilhelm as a tool tasked with coming up with a strategy in order to justify the decision to develop a fleet of battleships that had already been made. This distinction is important. Furthermore, as Kennedy argues, the ostensible strategy that Tirpitz devised—a ‘Risk Fleet’ designed for a decisive naval encounter in the North Sea—did not make much sense. At its core, the entire foundation of “risk theory” was that by investing heavily in battleships Germany would gain respect and such political influence that it did not matter that its fleet would be permanently inferior. The assumptions that Germany could make it through Tirpitz’ “danger zone” without Britain noticing, much less ever challenging

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Padfield, \textit{The Great Naval Race}, 92.
\item Herwig, “Imperial Germany,” 185–188.
\item Epkenhans, \textit{Tirpitz}, 55.
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British naval superiority were extremely dubious. After all, as Kennedy points out, if Tirpitz truly believed in his “risk theory”—that the German navy could effectively deter an attack—his belief that the British navy would ever enter German battleship-infested waters was completely illogical. 1264 Germany’s status-seeking drive to mimic Britain’s battleships and naval force structure, despite the dubious strategic rationale and financial, strategic, and diplomatic costs, became all consuming. German leaders refused to adjust their focus on battleships, even after it became abundantly clear within just four years of the Second Navy Law that the British were going to do whatever it took to “keep Tirpitz’s creation permanently in the ‘danger zone’” unless Germany changed its naval policy. 1265

By 1908 Great Britain had built up so much in response to the nascent threat from Germany that the strategic rationale of the risk fleet was no longer apt and Germany had no hope of posing any “risk” to Britain’s fleet; yet Germany continued building. 1266 Battleships were being constructed despite the absence of any cogent war plans to guide their employment in an actual conflict. 1267 As Kennedy sums up his analysis of the landmark decision to pursue a battlefleet,

“the crowning irony of it all was that this creation of a larger battlefleet, with all the disastrous political consequences which followed for Germany, in no way improved the military and strategic capacity of the German fleet against Britain. The Second Navy Law and the definite swing into an anti-British posture proved as militarily useless for Germany as it was politically disastrous. [...] There was, of course, another major motive—the internal political one—and here [Tirpitz’s] calculations made much more sense.” 1268

1264 He writes “Whether a state of peace or war existed, the two ideas cannot be reconciled.” Kennedy, “Tirpitz, England and the Second Navy Law of 1900: A Strategical Critique,” 47.
1265 Kennedy, Anglo-German Antagonism, 272.
1266 Art, The Influence of Foreign Policy on Seapower, 34.
1267 Ibid., 36.
The fact that the first time one of the three major foreign policy leaders appeared to seriously question the logic of Tirpitz’ deeply flawed strategy, which Bülow did in 1912, suggests that it was not actually insecurity that was the primary force behind the buildup in the first place. As discussed above, had external threats actually been a primary driver of these two policy shifts, rather than focusing on hugely expensive battleships it is highly likely that leaders would have adopted entirely different strategies.

Far from maximizing security, Germany’s pursuit of distant colonies and its naval buildup not only played a central role in causing its encirclement and diplomatic isolation, but also contributed directly to the tensions that would boil over in 1914. As in the case of the United States, Germany’s pursuit of far-flung territories in the Africa and the Far East created security vulnerabilities and antagonized other powers (e.g., Great Britain and Russia). Furthermore, colonial acquisitions in the Western Pacific (e.g., Caroline Islands, Kiaochow) were explicitly identified by political and military leaders as “worthless.” As for the naval buildup, a truly security-maximizing leadership would probably have recognized that the British Navy was much more powerful than even a combination of its two closest rivals, and arguably surpassed even that of any three other powers combined. Rather than challenging Great Britain, whose leaders were clearly intent on maintaining British maritime hegemony as a core interest, German leaders would have adopted a far more effective, less expensive strategy focused on coastal defense, coupled with cruisers to protect trade from commerce-raiding adversaries, and submarines—a clearly logical, asymmetric and inexpensive strategy for a weaker power threatened by a maritime hegemon.

1269 Herwig, “Imperial Germany,” 184.
1270 Art, The Influence of Foreign Policy on Seapower, 16–17.
The willingness of Germany’s leaders to waste huge sums of money on policies largely divorced from strategic threats and material interests also seems to contradict the ‘guns vs. butter’ tradeoff central to the theoretical arguments of many advocates of security-maximizing explanations of state behavior. Despite the lack of a clear strategic rationale, Germany’s pursuit of colonies and investment in a hugely expensive naval buildup became direct contributors to a crisis in Germany’s finances.\textsuperscript{1271} By the eve of World War I, these two policies had contributed an immense 1734 million GM to Germany’s national debt, one-third of the total amount. After the First Navy Law, annual naval expenditures surged. By 1911 more than a third of Germany’s military budget—90 percent of all federal expenditures—went to the navy.\textsuperscript{1272} These figures provide support for the idea, introduced in Chapter 2, that rather than always a structural imperative or even driven by external threats, in important cases military spending can often be driven by concern for status. In other words, leaders sometimes trade off both guns and butter against prestige.

\textit{Domestic Institutions/Interest Groups Hypothesis}

Although each clearly had a role to play, alternative explanations based on domestic interest groups or institutions also do not provide convincing first-order explanations for the two major military policy shifts examined in this chapter. The two most likely candidates for hijacking military policy decision-making during this period are vested interests within the military and the business and industrial lobbies.

As a continental power located in the middle of Europe and a newly unified state that had recently fought a series of land wars, Germany had no colonial traditions. The Navy barely

\textsuperscript{1271} Padfield, \textit{The Great Naval Race}, 175.  
\textsuperscript{1272} Herwig, “Imperial Germany,” 185–188.
existed in the 1880s and the Army was focused on preparing for wars against the major powers that surrounded Germany. In other words, the former seems to have had little clout and the latter had little interest in overseas adventures. For these reasons, there is little evidence to support the idea that a constituency within the military possessed sufficient interests and clout within the decision-making process to hijack it and force through these policies. Civilian leaders—and in the case of Tirpitz, a military leader directly appointed by Wilhelm to fulfill a specific objective—appear to have been firmly in control.

On the other hand, there is evidence to suggest that German business interests played some role in the initial push for colonies. Bismarck had held out against colonial advocates for years and it was not until his grip on power came under threat during the mid-1880s economic depression that he became slightly more receptive to the idea that overseas colonies could help to improve economic circumstances at home. Bismarck’s mid-1880s abortive embrace of colonialism was also prompted in part by the actions of German traders roaming Africa. But the role of these traders does not appear to have been decisive. In fact, major business constituencies back home appeared to be deeply cynical of the “colonial idea” and largely belittled the colonial mission. Coupled with his longstanding skepticism about the idea that formal overseas colonial holdings would serve national economic interests, this suggests that Bismarck’s first-order concern was domestic stability rather than economic interests. Bismarck’s belief that colonies were not worth the cost in blood and treasure proved correct. Not only did they do little for the German economy, they also imposed huge burdens on the imperial budget, the military and the foreign office. Pflanze cites a series of statistics from German-language sources that prove (shockingly) instructive.

1274 Ibid., 141.
“Colonies did not provide the safety valve for excess production either in goods or people that colonial zealots expected. Between 1887 and 1906, 1,085,124 persons left Germany as emigrants, of whom 1,007,574 chose the United States rather than German colonies. In 1903 only 5,125 Germans lived in the colonies, including 1,567 soldiers and officials; by 1913 the number was only 19,696, of whom 3,000 were soldiers and gendarmes. Nor did overseas possessions prove valuable as a habitat for German capital. By 1914 German capitalists had invested a mere 500,000 marks in colonies (chiefly railways, harbors, plantations, and mining)—only about 2 percent of all German capital invested abroad. In 1891 Germany imported from its colonies goods valued at 59,000,000 marks, constituting only 0.13 percent of all imports (46,560,000,000 marks). In the same year the colonies absorbed German products worth 60,000,000 marks or only 0.17 percent of all exports (35,039,000,000 marks). By 1910 the proportions were only slightly higher—0.54 percent of all imports and 0.73 percent of all exports.”

Despite these data evincing the economic costs of colonialism, not to mention the burden of deploying expensive military assets to safeguard them, Bismarck's successors effectively doubled down on colonial expansion rather than abandoning colonies as he had called for in the late 1880s. The symbolic significance of colonies as ‘trappings’ of great power status during the British-led age of the ‘new imperialism,’ coupled with these leaders’ manifest desire to exploit nationalist fervor for domestic political ends caused Bismarck and his successors to go down this path, in important cases against their better judgment.

As for Germany’s pursuit of a battleship-centric navy after 1897, the degree to which its development was not underpinned by a coherent strategy would certainly be consistent with an alternative explanation that pointed to a navy and/or industrial cartel hijacking policy for purely parochial ends, unconcerned about the costs—economic, strategic, diplomatic or otherwise—of doing so. The historical record demonstrates clearly that the civilian political leadership was the primary champion of Weltpolitik and the driving force behind the associated policy decisions.

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1275 Cited in Ibid., 139–140.
First, far from losing his grip on foreign policy decision-making to a renegade bureaucracy or cartel, Wilhelm effectively consolidated his control in 1897. It was Wilhelm himself who was responsible for appointing key architects of Weltpolitik—e.g., Bülow and Tirpitz as Foreign Secretary and Naval Secretary, respectively. Wilhelm selected these individuals because they would implement his vision for a naval buildup and a colonial empire as a means to achieving his status-seeking goals. As Art convincingly argues, “bureaucratic politics made little dent” on foreign policy or naval planning prior to World War I. The buildup went forward despite staunch opposition from both the powerful Army and sober-minded strategists within the navy itself. Yet this opposition was effectively “crushed.”

As for the influence of extra-governmental and extra-military actors, there is certainly evidence of strong industry support for a naval buildup, due in no small part to apparent expectations of technological spin-offs, increased employment, and profits. Along these lines, an influential study by Snyder argues that as a late industrializing rising power, Germany’s political system was vulnerable to cartelization among interest groups, which in turn created logrolling and powerful domestic political pressures for ‘overexpansionist’ policies. Yet Snyder’s argument appears to rest on a questionable core assumption that domestic actors would only support a policy that serves their parochial economic interests. In other words, in his study non-material sources of domestic actors’ ‘utility’ are effectively dismissed a priori.

At least concerning the two major military policy shifts examined in this section, however, it does not appear that domestic interest groups or ‘cartels’ were more powerful in

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1277 Art, The Influence of Foreign Policy on Seapower, 6–7, 18, 20–21.
1278 Herwig, “Imperial Germany,” 178.
1279 Snyder, Myths of Empire, chap. 3. It should be noted that Snyder’s study, like most of the existing literature offering theoretical alternatives to SAT, does not engage an alternative sociological explanation similar to that posited by shadowing/avoiding theory, so it is difficult to know how he might argue against it.
shaping leaders’ decision-making than those forces posited by shadowing/avoiding theory. First, it should be noted that Snyder’s brief empirical analysis of Wilhelmine-era decision-making focuses largely on the years immediately prior to World War I, many years after the two shifts examined in this chapter were initially implemented (i.e., the mid-1880s and 1897/8). The idea that years after a major policy shift was undertaken the domestic interest groups that benefit from it would continue to champion it does not pose a clear challenge to SAT. The important question is what caused the shifts in the first place. Second, as Murray astutely points out, the puzzling form that Germany’s naval buildup took—i.e., a strategically ‘suboptimal’ focus on immensely expensive battleships of dubious military utility, as opposed to cruisers and other more militarily useful ships—does not appear to be directly attributable to industrial interests hijacking policymaking. After all, as long as government money is flowing in to their coffers domestic industrial interests (e.g., Krupps) should be agnostic about what type of ships they build.\footnote{Murray, “Identity, Insecurity, and Great Power Politics,” 673.} As discussed above, from a strategic or material interest-focused perspective, there were extremely dubious benefits to a focus on battleships. Third, just because domestic interest groups benefited from certain policy outcomes does not necessarily mean that these cartelized bottom-up forces determined them.\footnote{As Epkenhans argues, support from leading businessmen and industrialists for the historic 1898 navy bill “did not mean that industrialists and other vested interests could in any way influence [the naval buildup] program.” Epkenhans, Tirpitz, 30.} Furthermore, the 1897 “Law concerning the German Fleet” effectively made the Navy independent from the Reichstag, insulating it considerably from the potential influence of domestic interest groups. These military policy shifts also appear to have been widely popular on the home front, despite their ultimately disastrous impact later on. To be sure, naval propaganda was channeled through both the political leadership and industry-backed nationalist groups. Yet these two groups appear to have been working together toward the same
goal; the latter did not force the hand of the former. Support for the naval buildup was widespread among the middle class and intellectuals, two groups with their own patriotic associations independent of government and industrial interests (e.g., the Pan-German League). These popular associations supported empire and naval buildups primarily as means to enhance Germany’s international prestige—economic interests were not their primary concerns.\textsuperscript{1282} In sum, although industrial interests clearly supported the naval buildup, cartelization and/or log-rolling does not appear to have been the first-order cause of these two major military policy shifts during their initial implementation. These shifts appear to have been driven primarily by the top leadership and were widely popular.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The content of the outcomes of military policy choices examined in this case study reveal the rise of pre-1914 Germany to be a ‘most likely’ case for structural explanations of rising power behavior. Nevertheless, the empirical record of the actual decision-making behind the two major military policy shifts that largely defined pre-1914 Germany’s military trajectory during this period suggests that neither a ‘self-help imperative’ under anarchy, nor even leaders’ evaluations of pressing strategic threats and/or economic interests, constitute first-order explanations of these outcomes. In contrast, this section provides compelling evidence of the relatively strong explanatory power of the sociological causal mechanism posited by shadowing/avoiding theory. Largely consistent with the expectations of shadowing/avoiding theory.

\textsuperscript{1282} Art, \textit{The Influence of Foreign Policy on Seapower}, 21. Patriotic/nationalistic associations, including the Colonial Society and the Navy League, served simultaneously as both tools for the government to exploit its policy objectives and as pressures on the government to accelerate and expand those ambitions. For an excellent overview of these groups and their effects on policy outcomes, see Markey, “Prestige Motive,” chap. 8. Similarly, Kennedy argues that newspapers and pressure groups played a contributory role, but lacked a “motive force of their own.” Kennedy, \textit{Anglo-German Antagonism}, 466.
theory, status-seeking during a period of rapid economic and industrial development drove Germany’s socialization to what its leaders perceived to be constitutive and behavioral norms associated with their coveted status as a military great power. Surging nationalism and domestic unrest—both consequences of rapid industrialization and economic growth—served as enablers and accelerators of these two major shifts in military policy.

What is perhaps most remarkable about the policy shifts explored in this case study is the extent to which the specific policy choices, not to mention the larger Weltpolitik umbrella under which they were pursued after 1897, were shaped by non-material, even emotional and symbolic, objectives, rather than the kind of sober-minded evaluations about threats and material costs and benefits that alternative explanations assume tend to shape military policy decision-making. As former US National Security Advisor and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, himself widely recognized as a ‘Realist’ practitioner of foreign policy, assesses German foreign policy during this period, “Beyond the slogans lay an intellectual vacuum: truculent language masked an inner hollowness; vast slogans obscured timidity and the lack of any sense of direction.”1283 This view was shared by many contemporaries, even within the German military. As one military commander writing in the 1890s lamented, “We are supposed to pursue Weltpolitik. If only we knew what it is supposed to be.”1284

Throughout the pre-1914 period German leaders chose to implement these two major military policy shifts despite often recognizing that associated policies were extremely costly in strategic, economic, and diplomatic terms. They did so because they themselves longed for Germany to attain status as a first-tier great power, regardless of the costs, and/or because they recognized the domestic political benefits of appealing to and exploiting a widely-held desire for

1284 Quoted in Renshon, “Fighting for Status,” 129.
enhanced international prestige. Even in cases where leaders privately wanted to reverse course, the extent to which these policies were associated with national self-esteem effectively rendered any effort to do so political suicide. In short, domestic political considerations in practice blinded leaders to the extent to which these policies actually ran directly counter to Germany’s security and material interests. After all, to undo these policy shifts would be tantamount to a symbolic betrayal of national self-esteem and inimical to the effort to achieve for Germany its coveted “equality” and status as a first-rank “world power.”\textsuperscript{1285}

As the above analysis demonstrates, far from being historically irrelevant decisions, Germany’s embrace of colonial expansion and the development of a battleship-centric fleet are arguably the two most significant military policy shifts in the history of pre-1914 Germany. They marked a ‘founding period’ in rising Germany’s foreign policy, contributing significantly to setting Germany on a military trajectory that would ultimately lead to a clash with the hegemon, all for prestige-based reasons largely distinct from first-order concerns about security or material interests.\textsuperscript{1286}

Along with the cases of Meiji Japan and the United States examined earlier, this ‘least likely’ case for shadowing/avoiding theory also provides a powerful example of the manner in which the normative content of the international system into which a rising power emerges can have immense consequences for its military trajectory. The content of contemporaneous norms defining ‘great power’ status in turn can have an important impact on the likelihood of conflict.

\textsuperscript{1285} In secret remarks to officers of the Imperial Navy Office in 1913, Tirpitz stated, “Generally speaking the question whether Germany should fight for its place in the world against England […] or whether it should be content with the status of a second-rate power on the continent is a question of one’s political faith. For a great nation, it seem more honourable to fight for the most important aim and to go under honourably instead of renouncing on a future without glory.” Epkenhans, \textit{Tirpitz}, 53.

\textsuperscript{1286} Consistent with this point, Wehler explicitly identifies Bismarck’s overseas policy and pursuit of colonies as occurring during a “founding period”—a moment or decision point at which “lines are set which determine the whole course of future developments.” Wehler, “Bismarck’s Imperialism 1862-1890,” 150.
between a rising and an established power. A tragic aspect of Germany’s pre-1914 rise is that because of the inherently conflictual nature of overseas territorial acquisition and a battleship-centric navy on Britain’s doorstep, what began as a relatively ‘benign’ (vis-à-vis London, at least) effort to mimic Great Britain effectively antagonized it—a potential friend and ally. It also significantly exacerbated tensions with almost every other major power—including those near (France and Russia) and far (Japan and the U.S).

In sum, rather than being compelled to expand by structural forces or because of a ‘self-help’ imperative under international anarchy, Germany’s pursuit of colonies and a battleship-centered navy were explicit choices of leaders. Far from making Germany more secure or wealthy, these policies made it less secure and poorer. They also contributed to its defeat in World War I. Leaders often supported the associated policies primarily as a means to stake Germany’s claim to equal status with Great Britain, and to enhance their domestic legitimacy and maintain their grip on power during a highly volatile period on the home front. External threats and/or material interests appear to have been, at best, second-order causes.

3. Late-20th Century Germany—Type B, Status-Avoiding Rising Power?

In a historic reversal of its expansionist, and deeply destructive military trajectory prior to 1945, throughout the second half of the 20th century German leaders chose to adopt a low-profile approach to foreign affairs. Germany’s foreign policy was especially self-restrained as it concerned the development and employment of military power. Despite rapid economic and industrial growth that saw Germany emerge from the Cold War as the world’s third largest

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1287 In this chapter, “Germany” refers to the Federal Republic of Germany (i.e., West Germany) prior to reunification, and reunified Germany after reunification in 1990.
economic power and despite facing a highly volatile, even existential threat from the Soviet Union for four decades, Germany’s post-war military posture remained remarkably consistent throughout the period of its rise as it avoided those policies normatively associated with ‘great power’ status.

Far from being determined by an alleged ‘self-help imperative’ under international anarchy or an embrace of the traditional ‘great power’ ethos that ‘might makes right,’ the defining elements of late 20th-century Germany’s military policies were the eschewal of military power for anything beyond territorial defense—in the strictest sense of the term—and a firm embrace of multilateralism. Particularly salient was widespread opposition within Germany to the use, or the threat of use, of military power as a tool of coercive diplomacy in order to safeguard or expand material interests, much less to recover territory lost as a result of the war. Indeed, as reflected in Chancellor Willy Brandt’s Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech cited at the outset of this chapter, many Germans came to see war and the use of military force as \textit{ultima irratio} of international politics.\textsuperscript{1288} Together with postwar Japan, during the course of its rise Germany effectively set out to chart an alternative pathway to great power status that eschewed the development and employment of military power for self-interested ends, much less international prestige.

To be sure, the exigencies of the Cold War and immense pressure from the U.S. and other NATO allies to adopt certain policies clearly limited German leaders’ freedom of action far more than those of its Japanese counterpart. They also did spend significantly on defense, maintained large ground forces given the possibility of Soviet invasion, and even allowed the stationing of foreign nuclear weapons on German territory. In this sense, it is important to note that both the

\textsuperscript{1288} Brandt, “Brandt Nobel Lecture.”
institutional and security-maximizing hypotheses perform relatively well in this case. Its policy choices, however, also appear to show how a shift in national identity can lead to a categorically different stance in international affairs, even in the military domain. Whereas a desire for international recognition as a ‘military great power’ had been fundamental to Germany’s self-identity and a driving force behind its military policies as far back as the late 19th century, the self-inflicted suffering it brought on itself during World War II catalyzed a fundamental shift.\textsuperscript{1289} The experience appears to have effectively discredited the heavily military-oriented, nationalistic, self-centered ‘great power dreams’ held by German leaders and much of the public during that earlier period.\textsuperscript{1290} The national identity that ultimately resulted from these historical experiences shaped Germany’s late 20th century military trajectory in important ways. Throughout the period examined in this case study, references to Germany’s past mistakes with military power permeated domestic debates about military policy.\textsuperscript{1291}

In the initial period after 1945, even basic rearmament faced powerful domestic opposition within Germany.\textsuperscript{1292} After a period of intense contestation, however, a more moderate post-war identity consolidated that was focused on cooperation rather than competition, pursuit of wealth instead of power, and enmeshment in supranational institutions rather than efforts to map out a path aimed at achieving even autarkic military capabilities, much less dominance or status based


\textsuperscript{1290} Berger, Cultures, 24.

\textsuperscript{1291} Berger, “Power of Memory,” 79.

on power. The mainstream eventually converged on a shared embrace of multilateralism, avoidance of German nuclear arms, a focus on non-military dispute resolution, coupled with a strictly defensive, but robust military posture of deterrence—with Germany’s military limited to territorial defense of Germany and its NATO allies. Remarkably, despite external pressure from the United States on German policymakers to do otherwise, efforts to implement a more confrontational military posture vis-à-vis the Soviet Union fomented powerful domestic political backlash. Yet leaders in Bonn were key advocates of détente and Ostpolitik and often opponents of confrontational ‘power politics.’ Germany’s national identity in the military domain has proven to be remarkable ‘sticky.’ It has persisted despite significant changes to Germany’s latent material power and strategic environment. Despite widespread predictions from structural Realists and other observers to the contrary, even after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s the core principles defining Germany’s military policy posture evinced remarkable continuity.

In a series of seminal analyses published during the first decade after the Soviet Union’s collapse, Hans Maull identified three defining principles of Germany’s security policy: 1) ‘never again’ (foreign policy centered on principles of pacifism, moralism and democracy); 2) ‘never alone’ (integration in Europe and NATO, foreign policy centered on multilateralism and democratization); and ‘politics not force’ (reliance on diplomacy rather than military power or

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1294 As a result of the experience of the war, self-centered nationalism, militarism, and use of force in pursuit of material interest beyond strict territorial defense had been largely discredited among many Germans—particularly on the Left. Even those on the center-right concluded that excessive nationalism and militarism had been disastrous for Germany. While those on the left drew the lesson of “never again war,” those on the right drew the lesson of “never again alone” and called for Germany to be enmeshed with the greater Western community. Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, “The Test of Strategic Culture: Germany, Pacifism and Pre-Emptive Strikes,” Security Dialogue 36, no. 3 (September 1, 2005): 344.
In keeping with these basic principles, while at the same time working with NATO allies to develop a robust deterrent against an existential Soviet threat of invasion, German leaders eschewed use of the Bundeswehr in self-interest beyond territorial defense, resisted military confrontation against the Soviet Union (e.g., nuclear warfighting), kept defense spending relatively low even when the Soviet threat was peaking, did not develop offensive strike or major naval power projection capabilities, and imposed severe restrictions on the use of military forces out-of-area. Rather than developing robust independent warfighting capabilities or engaging in ‘self-help,’ a core principle of Germany's post-occupation military policy was to never engage in a military operation unilaterally. Accordingly, its leaders effectively tied its hands through enmeshment within NATO both during and after the Cold War.

To argue that a widely-held national identity within Germany had a powerful and independent effect on its military trajectory during the late 20th century is not to claim that it was determinative of German leaders’ policy choices. Indeed, the empirical record of military policy decision-making and outcomes during and after the Cold War, much of which was aimed at working with its NATO allies to deter an existential threat of invasion posed by the Soviet Union, does not support such an extreme view. Rather, the argument here is that important aspects of Germany’s military trajectory both during and after the Cold War ran counter to fundamental assumptions of leading alternative explanations about the drivers of rising power behavior, effectively bending the curve in a direction categorically opposite that of a Type A, status-seeker. While of course not the entire story of late 20th-century Germany’s military policies, these ‘distortions’ of conventional expectation are of both theoretical and practical significance.

1296 Maull, “Germany and the Use of Force.”
1297 It should be noted, however, that German defense spending was generally three-times the size of Japan on a GNP-percentage basis.
During this period they had significant consequences not only for Germany but also for international relations writ large, especially as it concerns peace and stability in Europe.

The following paragraphs explore two military policy issue areas that were both heavily debated in post-war Germany and consequential for its impact on peace and stability in Europe and the world, for better or for worse: nuclear weapons policy and employment of military power beyond its borders.

**Strategic Decision Points**

**Nuclear Weapons Policy**

A controversial and heavily debated issue concerning military force development during the first half of Germany’s late 20th-century rise concerned the sensitive issue of nuclear weapons. As part of the 1954 London and Paris accords that gave West Germany its sovereignty and made it a member of both NATO and the Western European Union (WEU), Chancellor Konrad Adenauer (Christian Democratic Union; 1949-1963) pledged “not to manufacture in [West German] territory any atomic weapons.”

Significantly, the pledge did not forbid Bonn from acquiring nuclear weapons from other states, co-owning them, controlling them, or developing them outside German territory. Indeed, despite this pledge West German leaders flirted seriously with acquiring nuclear weapons for more than a decade. In fact, just one year after the Paris Accords, Adenauer was already putting together legislation to remove domestic legal obstacles to a nuclear weapons

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1299 These major loopholes are in stark contrast to Japan’s *self-imposed* three non-nuclear principles, which effectively prohibited Tokyo from developing *anywhere*, possessing *anywhere*, or allowing *any* other country to introduce into its territory nuclear weapons (see Chapter 4).
program. In January 1958 related legislation passed the Bundestag. Meanwhile, Defense
Minister Franz Josef Strauss pursued diplomacy aimed at producing nuclear weapons on French
territory and an arrangement that would grant access to West Germany in a crisis.

Yet in a series of significant policy decisions beginning in the 1960s, German leaders
effectively forswore an indigenous nuclear deterrent. After significant domestic debate and
controversy, Bonn acceded to the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty and in 1975, after a long delay,
ratified the 1968 Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). In doing so, Bonn effectively vowed
not to possess its own nuclear weapons, though it did maintain the option of sharing delivery of
other states’ weapons. In the mid-1980s, after all the restrictions imposed on Germany in 1954
were overturned by the WEU Council, West German leaders announced a “unilateral and
perpetual rejection of the production of NBC [nuclear, biological, or chemical] weapons.” Both
West and East German leaders reaffirmed this commitment in the ‘Two Plus Four’ Treaty of
1990, which paved the way for the emergence of a fully sovereign, reunified Germany in

Germany’s decision to eschew nuclear weapons both during and after the Cold War poses
some challenges for existing theory. Given the widely-held belief that German soil was the likely
ground zero of World War III, were it to occur, Germany arguably had greater need for a reliable,
indigenous nuclear deterrent than any other U.S ally. After a rapid post-war recovery in the
1950s and 1960s, Germany also had remarkable economic, industrial, and technological
capabilities—not to mention robust atomic power programs—that made ‘going nuclear’ a viable
option throughout the period of its rise. During the two decades between the time that Germany

1300 Alexander Lanoszka, “Protection States Trust?: Major Power Patronage, Nuclear Behavior, and Alliance
regained its sovereignty and when it ratified the NPT in 1975, its leaders appeared extremely reluctant to accept its status as a second-tier, non-nuclear weapons state. Among many German conservatives, signing the NPT was seen as tantamount to permanently reconciling Germany to “inferior international status.”\textsuperscript{1303} Coupled with the clear loopholes in the 1954 agreement with the United States and its other allies and the fact that nuclear weapons policy was extremely controversial during the first two decades of the Federal Republic, it is evident that leaders’ avoidance of possession and/or control of a nuclear deterrent was not preordained.

As mentioned above, there were clear security and diplomatic rationales for Germany to develop and/or control nuclear weapons. German leaders reasonably feared that lack of control of nuclear weapons meant they would have to outsource key decisions concerning Germany’s very existence to others.\textsuperscript{1304} Furthermore, the vagaries of U.S. nuclear policy made German leaders deeply insecure about U.S. extended deterrence. In the 1950s even members of the staunchly anti-nuclear Social Democratic Party (SPD) generally felt that neither U.S. extended deterrence nor NATO conventional forces was reliable.\textsuperscript{1305} The Eisenhower Administration’s “New Look” doctrine and its focus on “massive retaliation” raised doubts about whether the United States would risk its own existence in order to come to the aid of Germany.\textsuperscript{1306} A few years later, West German leaders feared that the Kennedy administration’s doctrinal switch to

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1303} Wolfgang Krieger, \textit{The Germans and the Nuclear Question}, Occasional Paper (Washington, D.C.: German Historical Institute, 1995), 8.
  \item \textsuperscript{1304} Jenifer Mackby and Walter Slocombe, “Germany: The Model Case, A Historical Imperative,” in \textit{The Nuclear Tipping Point}, ed. Kurt M Campbell, Robert J Einhorn, and Mitchell Reiss (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 182. The U.S. began deploying nuclear weapons on German soil in the mid-1950s, yet Bonn had no control over them. This was a major concern to German leaders. As Krieger points out, “West Germany as a non-nuclear NATO member would not have had much say and, in fact, had practically no advance knowledge about when, where, and on what scale a NATO nuclear strike would occur. With the fast-growing number of short-range and battlefield nuclear weapons arriving on West German territory since 1954, it was even more obvious that such nuclear strikes would occur on German soil and on a massive scale.” Krieger, \textit{Nuclear Question}, 14.
  \item \textsuperscript{1305} Mackby and Slocombe, “Germany, Model Case,” 181.
  \item \textsuperscript{1306} Ibid., 183. Soviet acquisition of ICBMs made German leaders doubt U.S. extended deterrence even more.
\end{itemize}
“Flexible Response” increased the likelihood of an extremely catastrophic conventional conflict on German territory. German leaders reportedly resented Flexible Response. Coupled with acceptance of the Berlin Wall and the pursuit of détente, which could lock in the status quo of a divided Germany, U.S. embrace of this new doctrine fomented a crisis in relations between Bonn and Washington. Defense Minister Franz Josef Strauss believed it increased the likelihood of war and believed that it was designed by policymakers in Washington to turn Germany into a nuclear battlefield.

Given these apparently severe entrapment, abandonment, and other concerns resulting from Germany’s reliance on extended deterrence, it is perhaps not surprising that during this period, key German leaders, most notably Adenauer and Strauss, were unhappy with the status quo. A number of German leaders viewed the 1954 renunciation of nuclear weapons as a temporary expedient and openly called for the recently established Bundeswehr to acquire nuclear weapons. Beginning in 1956 Bonn pursued nuclear weapons development jointly with France and Italy. In 1957 Adenauer referred to tactical nuclear weapons as “basically nothing but the further development of artillery,” adding that “we cannot dispense with having them for our troops. We must follow suit and have these new types—they are after all practically normal weapons.” The following year intense and highly polarizing debates occurred in the Parliament. Strauss pursued diplomacy aimed at producing nuclear weapons on French territory and an arrangement that would grant West Germany access in a crisis. Despite massive public demonstrations in opposition the Bundestag approved the Bundeswehr’s

1307 Mackby and Slocombe, “Germany, Model Case,” 189.
1308 “Nato Review.”
1309 Berger, Cultures, 89.
1311 Paul, Power versus Prudence, 39.
acquisition of capabilities to deliver nuclear arms.\textsuperscript{1312} When the NPT was being debated in the 1960s, Adenauer identified accession as tantamount to a “death sentence” for West Germany.\textsuperscript{1313}

For his part, Strauss used an extremely powerful historical analogy to express his feelings about the NPT, referring to it as a nightmare tantamount to a “military Versailles.”\textsuperscript{1314} For good reason, a 1966 report by the U.S. Department of State identified West Germany as a proliferation risk.\textsuperscript{1315}

Despite the existence on its doorstep of a nuclear-armed superpower that posed a clear threat to its very existence, as well as a leadership in Bonn that appeared to covet nuclear weapons, West Germany did not procure them. Why? Fellow European powers France and Great Britain had been offered the U.S. nuclear umbrella but decided nevertheless to go after indigenous nuclear deterrents for various reasons, not the least of which was fear of U.S. abandonment in the event of a crisis.

To be sure, international pressures undoubtedly played an important role; as at least early on both Germany’s key allies (the United States, France, and Great Britain) and the Soviet Union opposed Bonn acquiring nuclear weapons. The existence of these diplomatic pressures is abundantly clear. But as Lanoszka argues, it is also clear that due in no small part to persistent and severe concerns about U.S. abandonment, German leaders appear to have effectively resisted these pressures for years. It is therefore an oversimplification to argue that any particular nuclear weapons policy was imposed on them—a fact reflected in the concerns of U.S. leaders about Germany’s position on nuclear weapons and the failure of attempted U.S. economic coercion to achieve its goals. Even the most significant policy decision during this period—the decision to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1312] Mackby and Slocombe, “Germany, Model Case,” 185.
\item[1313] Ibid., 180.
\item[1314] Ibid., 196.
\item[1315] Report cited in Lanoszka, “Protection States Trust?,” chap. 4.
\end{footnotes}
sign the NPT—was not primarily the result of U.S. coercion or Washington’s provision of a security guarantee; rather, it was due to incoming Chancellor Willy Brandt’s desire to embrace a less confrontational posture vis-à-vis the East via Ostpolitik.\textsuperscript{1316}

While the complexity of nuclear policy decision-making during the 1950s and 1960s is such that it cannot be argued that a single factor was clearly primary, the role of public opinion in curtailing the leadership’s ambitions does appear to have played an important role. Experts point to a wide and persistent gap between elite and popular views on nuclear weapons throughout the Cold War. While key decision-makers within the elite (e.g., Adenauer) were largely supportive given the expected security benefits for Germany and appeared to see nuclear weapons as another (“practically normal”) type of weapon useful for deterrence, the public appears to have generally opposed these hugely destructive weapons in light of the confrontational, ‘great power politics’ that they symbolized.\textsuperscript{1317}

Early on its rise there was strong public opposition to nuclear weapons within Germany. In particular, and not coincidentally, those political groups with the strongest sense of ‘war guilt’ supported détente and effectively rejected the great power logic of nuclear deterrence. They tended to oppose not only Bonn’s acquisition of indigenous nuclear arms but also the stationing of foreign nuclear weapons on German soil.\textsuperscript{1318} Deployment of NATO nuclear weapons in West Germany in the mid-1950s as part of ‘New Look’ fomented massive controversy within Germany and led to the mobilization of a huge peace movement and backlash against the government. In response to this public backlash Adenauer was forced to limit the military to

\textsuperscript{1316} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1317} Krieger, Nuclear Question, 24.
\textsuperscript{1318} Berger, Cultures, 61–62.
control of the delivery systems—it was not allowed to control the warheads themselves.\(^{1319}\) In run-up to the 1957 election a powerful antinuclear weapons movement compelled the government to drop its effort to give the military tactical nuclear weapons.\(^{1320}\) The leading opposition party called on Bonn to renounce nuclear weapons of its own, and to demand that all foreign nuclear weapons be withdrawn from its territory. Leading nuclear scientists also called for Germany to reject nuclear weapons. In short, throughout this period there was immense domestic pressure on the leadership to eschew both possession of indigenous and introduction of foreign nuclear weapons. Debates over nuclear policy were incendiary and accompanied by massive public protests.\(^{1321}\)

Opposition to nuclear weapons actually grew stronger as Germany’s latent material capabilities expanded. An especially salient case-in-point of public opposition to nuclear weapons is the immense public backlash to NATO’s 1979 decision to deploy intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) on German soil. A direct response to Moscow’s provocative deployment of Backfire bombers and SS-20 intermediate-range ballistic missiles, NATO’s decision was made in a period characterized by the end of détente and rapidly worsening East-West relations. Two weeks after NATO’s decision, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, which was its first instance of military aggression since 1945 outside its \textit{de facto} sphere of influence. The administration of U.S. President Jimmy Carter responded with a major military buildup, a key component of which was the deployment of advanced Pershing II intermediate-range, nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles to Western Europe. Confronted with a surging existential threat on its border, German leaders supported the deployment as a means to strengthen extended deterrence.

\(^{1319}\) Ibid., 100.
\(^{1320}\) Ibid., 49.
\(^{1321}\) Mackby and Slocombe, “Germany, Model Case,” 184.
They also faced immense pressure from Washington to accept the deployment of Pershing II missiles on their territory. Large portions of the public, however, had other ideas and opposed the deployment and the confrontational posture it entailed. The planned INF deployment fomented large-scale public protests across Germany—the largest demonstrations in its history. Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (Social Democratic Party; 1974-1982) was heavily criticized, even from within his own party, for supporting the deployment. The decision ultimately played a central role in causing the collapse of his government.¹³²²

As Berger argues, resistance to the deployment of Pershing II’s was in large part a result of widespread opposition within Germany to the use, or threat of use, of force, as well as the reliance on nuclear weapons as a means to defend the country against the Soviet Union. Despite Soviet provocations, and in stark contrast to the more confrontational posture advocated by America, support within Germany for détente remained extremely high (seventy-four percent) during this period.¹³²³ The Pershing II missiles were not deployed until 1983, after Schmidt’s government had collapsed and his conservative successor gave in to pressure from Germany’s allies. Yet even so the government of Chancellor Helmut Kohl (Christian Democratic Union; 1982-1998) maintained a focus on Ostpolitik and redoubled efforts to reduce tensions through non-military means. The decision to allow the deployment was primarily based on a desire to placate Germany’s NATO allies, rather than out of a conviction that military power and nuclear weapons were an appropriate means by which to address tensions with the Soviet Union.¹³²⁴ The difference in perspectives between Germany and its NATO allies, above all the United States,

¹³²² Berger, Cultures, 128, 198; “Nato Review.”
¹³²³ Berger, Cultures, 127.
¹³²⁴ Ibid., 134.
left Western leaders and observers within and outside Germany concerned that Germany “was in danger of succumbing to pacifist neutralism.”

To a far greater extent than in the case of late 20th-century Japan, Germany’s nuclear weapons policy was shaped by heavy external pressure from allies. Faced with the possibility of a massive ground invasion of Western Europe at any moment, these allies also compelled Germany to accept foreign nuclear weapons on its soil throughout the Cold War. These two empirical facts significantly frustrate efforts to measure the independent effect on specific policy decisions of identity-based popular resistance. Nevertheless, it also appears that these external factors were not determinative, and at the very least, German nuclear policy could have been far more robust, and doctrine significantly more confrontational had leaders faced different domestic political incentives. The populist nationalist push for nuclear weapons that appears prominent in cases of other proliferators during the Cold War was largely absent in the German case. The major loopholes in the 1954 commitment, coupled with the extent to which German leaders not only made efforts to acquire and/or control nuclear weapons but were also able to resist ratifying the NPT, show that even during the Cold War policymakers in Bonn had significant wiggle room. By the mid-1960s even the U.S. government had identified Germany as a proliferation risk.

In contrast to other U.S. allies Great Britain and France, however, public opposition within Germany to both nuclear weapons themselves and an assertive nuclear posture significantly frustrated policymakers’ efforts to do what they appeared to feel was necessary to most efficiently ensure Germany’s territorial security. This influence was especially clear in the failure of ambitious efforts by Adenauer and Strauss in the mid-1950s and, two decades later, the

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1325 Ibid., 149.
debate over INF and resistance to a more confrontational nuclear posture, despite a surging, and existential, threat from the nuclear superpower next door. When the issue of nuclear war-fighting was raised the result was a massive outpouring of public antipathy.\textsuperscript{1326} Although the decision was ultimately forced through, at least in the case of the INF deployment, the domestic backlash was sufficiently powerful to contribute significantly to the government’s collapse.

In the end, despite the fact that Germany had powerful security and diplomatic reasons to adopt a far more assertive posture vis-à-vis nuclear weapons—either its own or those of its allies—during the Cold War, its leaders chose not to do so. The most they were able to achieve was a foreign nuclear deterrent on German territory. To be sure, despite strong evidence of popular opposition to nuclear weapons and offensive nuclear strategy, the fact remains that there is far less hard evidence than in the Japan case that Germany’s actual nuclear weapons policy outcomes were initially shaped primarily by national identity. Nevertheless, developments after the 1960s suggest that non-possession of nuclear weapons evolved into a fundamental component of late 20\textsuperscript{th}-century Germany’s foreign policy. In direct contradiction of Realist assumptions, popular opposition to nuclear weapons grew despite increases in both Germany’s latent material power and the threat from the Soviet Union. Germany did not seriously consider nuclear weapons in the 1980s, 1990s, or the new century, despite having emerged from the Cold War as the country with the world’s third largest economy, as a major exporter and as an industrial and technological powerhouse, and despite having achieved reunification with East Germany, full sovereignty, and unprecedented freedom in foreign (and nuclear) policy formulation. When the 1954 restrictions were overturned by the WEU Council in the mid-1980s, Bonn promptly announced a “unilateral and perpetual rejection of the production of NBC

\textsuperscript{1326} Katzenstein, \textit{CN&NS}, 178.
[nuclear, biological, or chemical] weapons.” Even after reunification and full sovereignty, public opposition to nuclear weapons remained so powerful that some analysts argued that it would “be suicidal for any serious politician to make a political platform out of [a nuclear program].”\textsuperscript{1327} In the early 1990s German leaders effectively embraced Germany’s “inferior” status as a non-nuclear state when the Bundestag voted unanimously to make the NPT permanent.\textsuperscript{1328}

\textit{Use of Military Force}

The extent to which Germany’s late 20\textsuperscript{th}-century trajectory represented a fundamental transformation of Germany’s national identity and approach to foreign affairs, as well as of its mission and role in the world, is powerfully captured in the principles that have governed its approach to the use of military power. Whereas prior to 1945 the employment of military power overseas was seen as a core, necessary element of its self-interested, self-serving pursuit of perceived national interests and coveted status as a military great power, German policies after the war were categorically different. The war had essentially discredited the use of military force, even in concert with its NATO allies, as an appropriate instrument of German foreign policy.\textsuperscript{1329} The explicit avoidance of this otherwise effective tool of coercive diplomacy appears to have been a core element of Germany’s pursuit of an alternative, strictly non-military pathway to greater international prestige and a more stable, secure world. Even during the 1960s and 1970s, despite rapid economic growth and Germany’s emergence as an industrial and technological powerhouse, public support for the basic contours of the low-key military policy posture adopted

\textsuperscript{1327} Mackby and Slocombe, “Germany, Model Case,” 207.
\textsuperscript{1328} Ibid., 208.
early in the postwar period became more popular.\textsuperscript{1330} Throughout the Cold War Bonn refused to employ military power overseas, even when explicitly asked to do so by Washington, such as during the Vietnam War.\textsuperscript{1331} Even the evolution of reunified Germany’s force employment policies in the 1990s contradicts the fundamental assumptions of leading alternative explanations of rising power behavior.

Although this section will focus primarily on policy debates over actual employment of military power overseas, Germany’s reluctance to rely on military power-based threats to deter would-be adversaries was also significant. As discussed in the previous section, particularly after the 1960s Bonn frequently resisted more confrontational postures vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, even when pressured by its NATO allies to support them. Instead, it favored non-military solutions to Cold-War tensions, such as those encapsulated in widespread support for détente and Ostpolitik. Even when the threat posed by the Soviet Union grew more severe beginning in the late 1970s, support among the public for increased defense spending remained extremely low.\textsuperscript{1332}

An especially compelling test of Germany’s commitment to foreswear use, or even the threat of use, of military force as a means of statecraft is its behavior in the 1990s. Germany had already emerged from the Cold War as a reunified nation and the wealthiest country in Europe. Despite a radically transformed strategic environment and unprecedented freedom to shape its own destiny, reunified Germany’s military policies evinced remarkable consistency with Germany’s longstanding national identity as a state that eschews military-based ‘great power

\textsuperscript{1330} A case in point is support for integration with Western Europe—the same integration that limited Bonn’s flexibility in the military domain. Whereas in 1965 more than two in three West Germans preferred reunification to integration with Europe, by 1973 those numbers had flipped. Berger, \textit{Cultures}, 111.
\textsuperscript{1331} Maull, “Germany and the Use of Force,” 67.
\textsuperscript{1332} During the period 1967 to 1979 support for increased defense spending never exceeded sixteen-percent of the population, and averaged a mere eleven-percent during the 1970s. Poll data cited in Berger, \textit{Cultures}, 113–115.
politics’ and the use of military force, even in order to safeguard its expansive global economic and other interests.

Post Cold-War

The specific content of Germany’s force employment policies after the collapse of the Soviet Union is especially puzzling given the predictions of classical and Neo-realists that reunified Germany would inevitably pursue a traditional path and emerge as a military great power. In this view, Germany’s behavior during the Cold War could be dismissed as a “structural anomaly,” i.e., attributable to the unique nature of the bipolar international system during the Cold War. Accordingly, Germany was expected to ‘self-correct’ in the 1990s. Yet Germany’s behavior during the following decade did not comport with these expectations. Far from increasing defense spending and developing independent military capabilities befitting a ‘military great power,’ such as nuclear weapons, under the leadership of Chancellor Helmut Kohl reunified Germany immediately implemented significant reductions to defense spending, effectively cut its force structure in half through personnel and tank reductions, inter alia, and moved to further enmesh itself within NATO and other multinational institutions.

In short, despite rapid changes to its external strategic environment, unprecedented freedom to maneuver, and emergence from the Cold War with significantly more latent material power than any other country in Europe, reunified Germany’s post-Cold War military policies effectively doubled down on multilateralism and non-military solutions to international disputes. In Maull’s formulation, this outcome was a direct result of an extremely ‘sticky’ national identity

1333 The analysis in this section draws on seminal work by other scholars. In addition to the scholarship of Thomas Berger, cited earlier: Maull, “Germany and the Use of Force”; Baumann and Hellmann, “Germany”; Dalgaard-Nielsen, “Strategic Culture.”

1334 For example of such arguments, see Mearsheimer, “Back to the Future”; Layne, “Unipolar”; Waltz, “Emerging Structure.”
as a ‘civilian power’ determined to uphold the principles of ‘never again,’ ‘never alone,’ and ‘politics, not force.’ Far from leading to a chauvinistic nationalism and/or supporting a more traditional, independent path to great power status, during this period support within reunified Germany for an independent foreign policy posture was lower than ever.

The single most contentious debate within reunified Germany about its post-Cold War military role was the issue of whether, and if so, how, to employ the Bundeswehr beyond the NATO area and its longstanding role as being strictly limited to territorial defense role—often referred to as the issue of ‘out-of-area’ deployment. The content of the debate was remarkable for the extent to which the lessons, or mistakes, of Germany’s own past employment of military power overseas shaped policy decisions. Importantly, and in stark violation of the expectations of the alternative explanations, the push for an expanded role was largely divorced from the factors that existing theories of rising powers expect to be the primary forces shaping military policy. Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen concisely captures the puzzling nature of the debate about Germany’s post-Cold War military role thus,

“The out-of-area battle did not, as an external observer might have expected, evolve around the question of reunified Germany’s national security interests in the post-Cold War era. Instead, it represented a battle over the lessons of the past and the expectations of Germany’s partners. The debate looked backward much more than forward, and was dominated by expressions such as ‘Germany’s historical responsibility,’ ‘moral responsibility,’ ‘international solidarity’ and ‘requirements of partnership.’ In contrast, terms like ‘national security’ and ‘national interest’ were hardly ever used.”

1335 Maull, “Germany and the Use of Force.”
1336 Berger, “Power of Memory,” 97.
In other words, the 1990s debate over employment of military powers overseas appears to have been shaped largely by a widely-shared sense that because of its past actions Germany had a responsibility not only to never again use military force in pursuit of narrow material self-interest, but also to help to chart out a new pathway to a more stable, secure, and multilateral world. The debate within Germany over how to respond to Iraq’s 1990 invasion of Kuwait provides a powerful case-in-point.

**Gulf War**

No sooner had the Cold War ended then a major military crisis occurred in the Persian Gulf. This crisis posed a direct threat to Germany’s material interests, especially in light of its high dependence on oil imports from the region. In addition to these clear, straightforward self-interests, German leaders also faced severe diplomatic pressure from its U.S. ally to ‘step up’ and support the U.S.-led multinational military coalition. Furthermore, Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait took place in the context of very uncertain futures for both NATO and stability in Europe. Failure to support its Western allies risked huge diplomatic costs and a further weakening of NATO’s severely diminished raison d’être. Significantly, the U.S.-led military coalition had also received the ultimate multinational stamp of approval—from the UN Security Council. Berger effectively captures the propitious circumstances for a German military contribution when he writes that the Gulf War crisis was “almost tailor-made” for Germany “to assume a larger international role.”

Yet Germany’s response provides a powerful case-in-point of the ‘stickiness’ of Germany’s national identity in the military domain, especially as it relates to the public’s evaluations of the appropriateness of the employment of military power overseas. As early as

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1338 Berger, *Cultures*, 198.
August 1990 Washington asked the Kohl government to send troops to support the U.S-led coalition. Although German leaders recognized the importance of contributing to the mission for the sake of Germany’s relationship with the United States and out of a desire to respond to growing calls for Germany to carry more “global responsibility,” the German public overwhelmingly opposed overseas deployment of the *Bundeswehr*.\textsuperscript{1339} Paradoxically, it did so despite simultaneously being overwhelmingly supportive of the U.S.-led coalition itself.\textsuperscript{1340} Despite the obvious anger of many decision-makers in Washington,\textsuperscript{1341} the majority of German elites and a critical mass of the public maintained that military force was not an appropriate means of resolving international disputes. As former Chancellor Willy Brandt argued in November 1990, it was incumbent upon Germany to rely on diplomatic and economic measures “in order to reach, in every conceivable way, a political solution.” Repeating his famous statement from his Nobel lecture two decades earlier, Brandt again called war “the *ultima irratio* of politics.”\textsuperscript{1342} Given widespread public opposition to a military role for the *Bundeswehr*, the Kohl government ultimately opted to pay the diplomatic and prestige costs by refusing Washington’s request to participate militarily. Instead, Germany’s contribution was limited to a strictly financial one. In other words, despite privately seeking to respond favorably to Washington’s request for a military contribution, widespread antimilitary sentiments among a wide swath of the German public effectively prevented Kohl from doing so.\textsuperscript{1343}

\textsuperscript{1339} Baumann and Hellmann, “Germany,” 69; Berger, “Norms,” 322; Berger, *Cultures*, 172.
\textsuperscript{1340} Berger, *Cultures*, 172.
\textsuperscript{1341} Likely diplomatic costs were manifest: Evidence of U.S. anger captured in the remarks of the leader of the Congressional movement to cut the cost of U.S. overseas military commitments, who said she was shocked at “the way the Germans have told us, forget us, we’re not doing anything [in the Gulf crisis].” “House Votes Troop Pullout From Japan.”
\textsuperscript{1342} Baumann and Hellmann, “Germany,” 70.
\textsuperscript{1343} Berger, *Cultures*, 2.
Post-Gulf War Evolution

Throughout the 1990s, the German public’s general resistance to overseas deployment of the Bundeswehr was challenged by events beyond national borders. To be sure, in the course of the decade German public opinion (and force employment policy) underwent a significant shift. Yet core principles remained broadly consistent with those of the past, and the content and drivers of policy changes do not appear consistent with the expectations of Realist or materialist theories. Calculations of self-interest were not a major part of the story. The resulting policy shifts appear to have been directly attributable to the principle of ‘never again,’ rooted in the historical lessons that Germans drew from their own past experiences with military power.

During the 1990s humanitarian crises and atrocities beyond Germany’s borders caused a fault line to emerge within the German Left about how to apply the lessons of Germany’s own history with military force to its foreign policy. The prevailing view theretofore had been that Germany’s historical experiences compelled it to not only abstain from, but also to oppose, the use of military force under all circumstances. It was this view that ultimately prevailed in the debate over Germany’s response to the Persian Gulf War. Nevertheless, this logic experienced an especially potent challenge when diplomatic measures and sanctions failed to prevent the mass slaughter of Bosnian Muslims at Srebrenica in the summer of 1995. The Srebrenica tragedy catalyzed a fundamental shift among the German Left from a passive to active stance. Thenceforth, the Left’s interpretation of Germany’s ‘historical responsibility’ evolved into a view that effectively called for Germany to not merely oppose war, but also to act to prevent
aggression against unarmed civilians.\textsuperscript{1344} The Left’s rallying cry of “Never again war!” was modified to include “Never again Auschwitz!”\textsuperscript{1345}

This shift paved the way not only for Germany’s participation in two multinational peacekeeping missions in the area—Implementation Force (IFOR) and Stabilization Force (SFOR). It also led to Germany’s first-ever deployment of combat troops tasked with security operations and of fourteen fighter jets to support Operation Allied Force in Kosovo. Remarkably, this unprecedented use of force in support of a multinational military operation occurred during the administration of the left-leaning Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (SPD; 1998-2005). Schröder explicitly emphasized that Germany’s own “historical responsibility” made it “imperative” for Germany to “prevent mass-murder with all the necessary means.”\textsuperscript{1346}

In sum, far from the end of the Cold War and reunification paving the way for the kind of assertive, self-interested military deployments that existing theories would expect, even the gradual evolution of Germany’s military force employment policies during the 1990s appear to be primarily attributable to a historically-shaped national identity concerning the use of military power overseas. Core principles persisted despite sea changes in international and domestic structural conditions, not to mention reunified Germany’s emergence from the Cold War as the (potentially) dominant power on the European continent. Despite Germany’s unprecedented willingness beginning in the mid-1990s to participate militarily in overseas missions aimed at stopping or preventing atrocities, the widely-held view of military force as an illegitimate means of pursuing self-interests and/or solving disputes persisted. In this sense, Germany’s force employment policies evinced remarkable consistency even in the post-Cold War era. A critical

\textsuperscript{1344} Dalgaard-Nielsen, “Strategic Culture,” 347.
\textsuperscript{1345} Baumann and Hellmann, “Germany,” 74–75; Dalgaard-Nielsen, “Strategic Culture,” 347.
\textsuperscript{1346} Baumann and Hellmann, “Germany,” 76.
mass of the general public appeared to remain staunchly opposed to the kinds of policies that Realist theories of state behavior would expect post-Cold War Germany to pursue—unilateral deployments, military intervention to secure oil and/or sea lanes, and preemptive strikes or punitive action against ‘rogue’ regimes. The consistently powerful influence of this principle became very clear when Germany refused to participate in the 2003 Iraq invasion, despite immense pressure from the U.S. and the predictable, and severe, damage to relations between Berlin and Washington that resulted.

**Alternative Explanations**

*Power-maximizing Hypothesis*

The power-maximizing hypothesis can be easily dismissed as an alternative explanation of late 20th-century Germany’s military trajectory. Leaders did not even significantly debate, much less adopt, policies aimed at military or territorial expansion—even to those territories that prior to its 1945 surrender had belonged to it—during its period of rapidly increasing latent material capabilities. Nor do they appear to have been compelled by anarchy to translate surging economic and industrial wherewithal into a major military buildup, much less to pursue hegemony or even independent military power. On the contrary, throughout the Cold War as Germany’s latent power surged the public’s general support for multilateralism, enmeshment in Western Europe (which effectively limited its freedom of action internationally—and especially in the military sphere), and a diplomacy-first policy increased. Far from collapsing, these fundamental aspects of Germany’s military policy were reinforced after Germany gained unprecedented sovereignty and freedom of maneuver after the end of the Cold War.

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1348 The 2003 invasion was seen in Germany as unacceptable because it was a preventive strike against a potential future threat. Dalgaard-Nielsen, “Strategic Culture.”

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Germany’s military policies both during and after the Cold War evince an almost categorical refusal to develop military power for its own sake. Far from being ‘expansionary,’ even after it emerged post-reunification as far and away the most wealthy country in Europe it effectively doubled down on its longstanding post-1945 foreign policy principles, immediately reducing defense spending and force structure. As far as force development is concerned, Germany did not develop meaningful independent conventional power projection capabilities necessary to safeguard its expansive global political and economic interests as a major exporter. Even when it came to nuclear weapons there were significant loopholes that could have paved the way for a German nuclear deterrent. The German public saw these weapons as so distasteful, however, that even at the height of the Cold War and despite immense pressure from the United States nuclear deterrence based on a warfighting doctrine appears to have been widely seen by the public as anathema.

As for force employment policies, Germany’s leaders’ refused to employ military power overseas, even when not only given sanction, but explicitly requested by allies to do so (e.g., during the Vietnam War and Gulf War). The first significant overseas deployment of the Bundeswehr occurred for reasons incompatible with the power-maximizing hypothesis—a direct response to human atrocities of the sort that their own forebears had been guilty of committing. In a direct contradiction of the claims of influential power maximization theorists that military force is “the ultimo ratio of international politics,” former chancellor Willy Brandt argued on multiple occasions that war is “the ultimo irratio” (emphasis added).\footnote{A core assumption of offensive realism is that “force is the \textit{ultima ratio} of international politics.” Mearsheimer, \textit{ToGPP}, 56.}

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Security-Maximizing Hypothesis

Relative to the power-maximizing hypothesis, the security-maximizing hypothesis performs relatively well in explaining important aspects of Germany’s late 20th-century military trajectory. As the likely ground zero in the event of war between the two superpowers during the Cold War, threat perceptions vis-à-vis the Soviet Union had powerful effects on military policy choices. The threat of the Cold War compelled Germany’s leaders to invest significantly in developing strictly defensive measures, including a military deterrent and a close alliance with NATO countries, especially the United States. In short, there is no question that perceived external threats played a significant role in shaping Germany’s post-1945 military policy choices.

As was the case with Japan (see Chapter 4), however, important—though by no means all—aspects of late 20th-century Germany’s military trajectory challenge assumptions (and policy expectations) of this alternative explanation. Germany’s military policy choices during this period is the extent to which core principles remained relatively stable despite Germany’s rapidly increasing latent material capabilities, as well as major changes to international structure and Germany's specific strategic environment.

The content of Germany’s three core foreign policy principles—‘never again,’ ‘never alone,’ and ‘politics, not force’—is generally incompatible with the security-maximizing hypothesis, two core assumption of which are the ‘self-help’ imperative and military power as the principle means through which to safeguard one’s territory and material interests in an anarchical world. Despite being a leading exporter heavily dependent on sea lanes for trade, it has categorically refused to unilaterally employ military power outside its national borders. At no point during this period did a significant percentage of the public support the trappings (e.g., nuclear weapons, aircraft carriers) or behavior (e.g., coercive diplomacy in material self-interest)
normatively associated with status as a great power in the military domain, even when it appeared that some of the associated policies could have given Germany significant deterrent ‘bang for the buck.’ Paradoxically, as Germany became more powerful, public support for these core foreign policy principles increased.

In important cases public opposition to certain military policies handicapped leaders’ decision-making, effectively preventing leaders from adopting measures that they felt were necessary to ensure Germany’s security and to safeguard its alliance relationships and interests after the Cold War. Examples discussed above include Adenauer’s and Strauss’s push for nuclear weapons (public opposition to which grew over time), and the Kohl Administration’s desire to give in to pressure from the U.S. and its other NATO allies to deploy the Bundeswehr during the Gulf War. Although in the course of the 1990s the public became more supportive of employment of military power abroad, it was not for the reasons the security-maximizing hypothesis would expect. Despite unprecedented sovereignty and freedom, reunified Germany quickly eschewed nuclear weapons. Employment of the Bundeswehr on overseas missions was almost exclusively limited to humanitarian missions for ideological reasons rooted in Germany’s own history with atrocities—not territorial security or a desire to safeguard overseas material interests. In fact, even two decades after reunification the self-interested employment of military power overseas remained taboo. As a case-in-point, in 2010 a domestic uproar caused by President Horst Kohler’s suggestion during a radio interview that the Bundeswehr deploy abroad in support of Germany’s economic interests compelled him to resign his post, the first resignation of a German president in four decades. As a testament to the still-powerful taboo within German society concerning military force, Kohler’s straightforward, material-interest
based argument was widely derided as tantamount to a call for Germany to engage in gunboat diplomacy.\textsuperscript{1350}

\textit{Institutions}

An alternative explanation focused on the role of institutions in shaping Germany’s late 20\textsuperscript{th}-century military trajectory is compelling and also performs relatively well and to a degree significantly beyond that of the case of late 20\textsuperscript{th}-century Japan examined in Chapter 4. There is no doubt that constraints imposed on Bonn by its (post-1955) NATO allies had an important impact on Germany’s subsequent policy choices. Yet it is also important to note that the effects of these institutional constraints do not appear to have been determinative. German leaders had considerable policy flexibility. More importantly, even when allies explicitly presented leaders with opportunities or even pressured them to develop or employ military power in a more ‘traditional manner,’ especially beginning in the 1980s, they chose not to do so. Especially in the case of overseas deployment of the \textit{Bundeswehr} it was primarily domestic opposition that explains leaders’ policy choices.

With regard to force development, as part of the London and Paris accords that brought Germany into NATO and the Western European Union, Chancellor Adenauer pledged to never manufacture on German soil nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons and agreed both to limit the size of the \textit{Bundeswehr} (to 12 divisions and 499,000 men for army and air force, and 11,400 for the navy) and not to develop certain conventional arms, such as long-range strategic bombers.

\textsuperscript{1350} In the May 22, 2010 interview, Köhler stated that “A country of our size, with its focus on exports and thus reliance on foreign trade, must be aware that military deployments are necessary in an emergency to protect our interests, for example, when it comes to trade routes, for example, when it comes to preventing regional instabilities that could negatively influence our trade, jobs and incomes.” “German President Quits Over Remarks on Military,” \textit{New York Times}, May 31, 2010.
and heavy battleships. Yet the first agreement did not prevent Bonn from acquiring nuclear weapons from other states, co-owning them, or developing them outside its own territory—all major loopholes. The limitations of the ostensible institutional constraint were abundantly clear after more than a decade of West German leaders actively flirting with a nuclear deterrent—to such an extent that the State Department identified Germany as a proliferation risk. Yet despite severe abandonment and entrapment concerns and due in no small part to popular domestic opposition to an indigenous nuclear deterrent, German leaders ultimately chose not to exploit these loopholes. There is evidence to suggest that the decision to sign the NPT was made not because of pressure or coercion from its allies, but as a desire to pursue détente with its adversaries. After significant domestic debate and controversy, Bonn acceded to the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty and the 1968 Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. In the mid-1980s when all restrictions imposed in 1955 were overturned by the WEU Council, West German leaders announced a “unilateral and perpetual rejection of the production of NBC [nuclear, biological, or chemical] weapons” (emphasis added). This commitment was again reaffirmed in the ‘Two Plus Four’ Treaty of 1990, in which all four occupying powers renounced all rights in West and East Germany and by which reunified Germany became fully sovereign in 1991.

As for conventional weapons, even after all 1954 limitations were removed on January 1, 1986, Germany did not move to procure aircraft carriers, modern-day battleships, or other conventional force projection platforms typically associated with great power status and arguably useful for safeguarding its maritime commerce, either independently or in concert with allies. In

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1352 Lanoszka, “Protection States Trust?,” chap. 4.  
addition to maintaining these commitments de facto, immediately after reunification Germany significantly reduced the size of its military.

In sum, although it is clear that institutional constraints played an important role shaping Germany’s trajectory the empirical record also shows that German leaders nevertheless enjoyed important flexibility as it concerned nuclear and conventional weapons policy. With a different national identity it is entirely possible that a very different path would have been feasible. Although it undoubtedly gave German leaders less flexibility than, say, Great Britain or France, institutional constraints were not determinative of Germany’s nuclear and conventional force development policies.

As it concerns force employment, institutional constraints on the use of force are significant. The Basic Law, which created the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949, stipulates that any “Activities tending to disturb, and undertaken with the intention of disturbing, the peaceful relations between nations, especially of preparing the conduct of an aggressive war,” are unconstitutional. In 1955, article 87(a) was introduced to establish “Armed Forces for purposes of defense,” with the additional stipulation that “Apart from defense, the Armed Forces may be employed only to the extent expressly permitted” by the Basic Law, Article 24 of which states, “For the maintenance of peace, the Federation may join a system of mutual collective security; in doing so it will consent to those limitations of its sovereign powers which will bring about and secure a peaceful and lasting order, in Europe and among the nations of the world.”

Importantly, however, neither the NATO Treaty nor the Basic Law set specific geographical restrictions on deployment of the Bundeswehr. As is the case with Japan, the substantive

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interpretations of these restrictions seem to be in large part domestic political questions. As a case-in-point, in response to U.S. demands to contribute troops to the Persian Gulf War the Kohl government called on Basic Law to be changed to allow troops to be deployed in support of UN activities. Yet majorities in both East and West Germany opposed such a change. Consequently, the government did not deploy troops. A few years later, however, the Constitutional Court reinterpreted the Basic Law to allow Bundeswehr participation in an out-of-area operation if the Bundestag gives authorization and if the operation is part of a collective security mission (i.e., NATO).

A second institutional constraint on Germany’s force employment options was the fact that during the Cold War all Bundeswehr combat units were to be assigned to NATO in the event of a war. Yet as Paul Stares points out, the Bundeswehr was under national control in peacetime, and its status within NATO was no different than that of other alliance members. A 1955 U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Report stipulated that the “supreme allied commander in Europe (SACEUR) would have no authority to engage the forces of any nation in hostilities until the nation concerned had determined that it wished to take such action under article V of the North Atlantic Treaty.” Germany’s 1985 defense white paper confirms this point, noting explicitly that the transfer of operational command of all NATO-assigned German forces to NATO commanders would be based on the “decision of the Federal Republic.” In other words, the actual restrictions on Germany’s freedom to use military force overseas outside the context of a full-scale war with the Soviet Union were not as significant as a superficial analysis would

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1356 Baumann and Hellmann, “Germany,” 70.
1357 Ibid., 74.
suggest. Even in the context of a military conflict it maintained the right to refuse involvement.\textsuperscript{1359}

While initially Germany’s NATO allies may have sought ‘to keep it down,’ the fact that Bonn consistently refused to employ military power even when requested to do so by Washington suggests an important limitation on this alternative explanation as an explanation of late 20\textsuperscript{th}-century Germany’s force development and force employment policies. In sum, although institutions clearly played significant roles in shaping Germany’s late 20\textsuperscript{th}-century military trajectory, they were not determinative. Leaders’ policy choices appear to have been shaped heavily by its own values and principles, which led it to adopt policies that often went against the wishes of its allies.

**Conclusion**

During its late 20\textsuperscript{th}-century rise, despite the rapid expansion of its latent material power and major changes to its strategic environment, important aspects of Germany’s force development and employment military departed from the expectations of existing theories of rising powers. To be sure, a powerful aversion to the development and employment of military power was by no means determinative. Indeed, the ever-present existential threat of nuclear or conventional war in its territory and institutional restrictions on military policy externally imposed during the 1950s also played significant roles in shaping Germany’s military policy choices. Nevertheless, key aspects of Germany’s military policies were still constrained in a manner of both practical and theoretical significance. Its military trajectory was remarkable for what German leaders chose not to do in the military domain despite Germany’s growing material

power and at times very significant pressure from the United States. Even in the post-Cold War period, Germany’s identity as a “civilian power” and the foreign policy principles that flow from it have evinced remarkable consistency.\textsuperscript{1360}

Throughout the period examined in this case study, references to Germany’s past mistakes with military power permeated domestic debates about military policy.\textsuperscript{1361} In stark contrast to the behavior of a Type A, status-seeking rising power, at no point during its rise did the development or employment of military power appear to become a popular means by which German leaders could pursue enhanced international prestige. On the contrary, leaders’ pursuit of policies associated with a more traditional pathway to great power status often fomented domestic political backlash, even in cases where leaders identified the proposed policies as otherwise necessary for national security. In short, military power-oriented nationalism—so powerful a factor in Germany’s foreign policy prior to 1945—was almost entirely absent from the debate. Instead, Germans appeared to generally take pride in their alternative path, defined in large part by the avoidance of military force as a means to solving disputes or pursuing material interests and the eschewal of trappings normatively associated with great power status (e.g., aircraft carriers and a blue-water navy, nuclear weapons, and power projection capabilities).

The evolution of Germany’s military policy in the 1980s and 1990s, after the restraints of the Paris Accords had been overturned, the Cold War had ended, and it had reunified and emerged as the world’s third largest economy, evinces the ‘stickiness’ of national identity and

\textsuperscript{1360} The norms associated with this role include ‘civilizing’ international relations by supporting a shift from international politics based on power to international politics based on legitimacy; willingness to transfer sovereignty or autonomy to multinational institutions—buttressing collective security and eschewing (and opposing) unilateral uses of military force; prioritizing a ‘civilized’ international order rather than focusing on material power and self-interest. For more details, see S. Harnisch and H. Mauull, \textit{Germany as a Civilian Power?: The Foreign Policy of the Berlin Republic} (Manchester Univ Pr, 2001), 4.

\textsuperscript{1361} Berger, “Power of Memory,” 79.
the extent to which it can effectively ‘bend the curve’ of a rising power’s military trajectory away from the expectations of existing theories.
Chapter 7: Conclusions and Policy Implications

“It is not appropriate to invade a country and at the end of a barrel of a gun dictate what you are trying to achieve. That is not 21st century, G-8, major-nation behavior.”

“We hope that this can be resolved according to the standards of the 21st century. And frankly to the standards of the G-8. If Russia wants to be a G-8 country, it needs to behave like a G-8 country.”

– U.S. Secretary of State John F. Kerry, March 2014

Regardless of one’s views on the above statements by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry in the days leading up to Russia’s 2014 annexation of Crimea, it is clear that the constitutive and regulative norms that U.S. leaders are trying to promote as associated with great power status at the beginning of the 21st-century differ sharply from those of the Cold War, and certainly those championed by the imperialist great powers prior to World War I. To be sure, the world is not free of geopolitics, nor of leaders holding very different values in clear tension with these norms, and America and other leading states do not always act in full accordance with their rhetoric. Nevertheless, the content of the norms promoted by the leading states today—the United States in particular—is in important aspects fundamentally different from that promoted by those in the past. As the empirical analysis in Chapters 3-6 has shown, the content of these norms can matter significantly in shaping the military policy choices of rising powers. While international anarchy may generally create baseline needs for territorial defense capabilities and can exacerbate

interstate tensions that exist for other ideologically-, material interest-based, or other reasons, it is clearly not determinative of state behavior, even in the military domain.\textsuperscript{1363}

This study’s case selection made special effort to consider Realist and materialist theories seriously by focusing exclusively on the military domain and on states that are weak relative to established powers yet which are experiencing rapid industrialization and economic growth—i.e., surging latent material capabilities. Furthermore, in all cases its research design included extensive tests against the empirical record of the relative explanatory power of the causal mechanisms posited by these and other paradigms. Nevertheless, this study found that in important cases the socialization process and non-material variables posited by shadowing/avoiding theory (SAT) can still evince superior explanations for policy outcomes at strategic decision points. Far from being limited to ‘deviant,’ or ‘irrelevant’ cases, this claim appears to hold even in some of what are arguably the most historically consequential military policy decisions of rising powers over the past 150 years.

This study shows that whether and how a rising power pursues status as a ‘military great power’ is contingent on the choices of leaders, for better or for worse. International structure, perceived external threats, and material interests certainly may influence policy decisions, but no outcome is a structurally-determined inevitability. Contrary to the expectations of influential theories, the empirical record demonstrates that the rise of new potential great powers does not always trigger disaster and, even when it does, it is often for reasons other than those privileged by the existing literature. This finding also has important implications beyond the academy: theoretical assumptions to the contrary risk \textit{a priori} relinquishing an otherwise potentially

\textsuperscript{1363}Nor, it should be stressed again, should this study’s argument be interpreted as claiming that the causal mechanisms posited by shadowing/avoiding theory are determinative of state behavior. It does not, and is designed to offer a mid-range theory to explain theoretically and historically significantly variation and empirical puzzles that cannot be adequately accounted for by existing theory. This study has demonstrated that the variables posited by SAT can have powerful and independent effects on rising power behavior in the military domain.
powerful lever by which established powers can help to shape China's and other emerging powers’ military trajectories in a constructive, peaceful, and order-sustaining direction.

While future research should subject the generalizability of this study’s findings to additional empirical tests using cases beyond the six rising powers examined within these pages, and more needs to be done to explain the variation within these cases in the degree of socialization taking place, the comparative analysis in chapters 3-6 allows us to draw several preliminary conclusions of interest to both international relations theorists and policymakers.

1. Implications for Students of International Relations

Implications for Theory

Contrary to widespread assumptions in the existing international relations literature, there is important variation in the military trajectories of rising powers that departs from the expectations of influential theories on rising and great powers specifically, and military affairs and foreign policy more generally. In particular, this study demonstrates that two major distortions to a rising power’s military trajectory are possible. These distortions cannot be captured effectively by Realism or explained primarily by material interests. First, some rising powers choose to effectively ‘opt out’ of ‘the great power game,’ despite the associated costs and risks, and despite possessing the material capabilities necessary to invest heavily in developing and employing military power. Second, even those states whose leaders choose to pursue membership in what both statesmen and foundational works in international relations theory often refer to as ‘the great power club’ often do so in costly ways and for reasons disconnected from, or even contrary to, pressing strategic threats and material interests, not to mention opportunity costs (e.g., lost ‘butter’ at home).
This variation has significant implications for issues of war and peace in the past, present, and future, all issues of central interest to international relations scholars. Yet it has been overlooked by the existing literature specifically focused on rising powers; these distortions also remain unexplainable by more general theoretical paradigms. No existing theory appears able to satisfactorily account for the variation explored in this study, even in the abstract. Furthermore, when tested rigorously against the empirical record existing theories also perform relatively poorly even on a case-by-case basis in explaining many of the most important specific policy choices that create this variation in the first place. As a case-in-point, while a debate can be had about the applicability of the assumptions underpinning the power-maximizing hypothesis to the three cases prior to 1914, they cannot begin to account for either Germany or Japan’s puzzling trajectories in the second half of the late 20th century. This hypothesis also faces challenges when applied to contemporary China—with the important caveat that China’s rise is ongoing.

Existing theory correctly identifies leaders’ pursuit of ‘great power status’ for their state as a phenomenon of importance. Due in no small part to research design issues, however, what existing studies generally miss are two important empirical observations: First, not all states with the requisite material capabilities choose to pursue that status in the military domain. In other words, ‘to be, or not to be’ a military great power is in large part a choice. Yet it is a choice that has heretofore remained un-theorized. SAT attributes this choice largely to variation in widely-held, albeit contested, national identity within the rising power. As Japan’s special envoy to the administrations of both Presidents Johnson and Nixon wrote in 1969, after his country had experienced a decade of double-digit annual GDP growth, “foreign policy is a question of national self-definition.”1364 (Most U.S. presidents would probably agree.) Second, the

conditions for attaining, or avoiding, great power status are in large part socially-contingent. The term itself is a label whose meaning is socially-defined.

This study reveals that shadowing/avoiding theory performs well relative to leading alternatives not only in explaining the major distortions from theoretical expectations (i.e. the variation across country cases), but also by providing a superior explanation of policy choices at a number of, but by no means all, historically significant strategic decision points (i.e., specific policy decisions, or observations, within individual cases).

**Shadowing/avoiding Theory, Revisited**

To review briefly, SAT posits that the interactive effect of two non-material factors can account for theoretically and historically significant variation in rising powers’ military trajectories. Major shifts in rising powers’ military policies are often a response in the first instance to socialization. Leaders’ perceptions of the contemporaneous constitutive and regulative norms—e.g., the weapons platforms and missions—associated with status as a ‘great power’ in the military domain have powerful effects on subsequent decision-making. These norms are constitutive of membership in the ‘great power club’ and regulative of force development and force employment policies.

Leaders’ responses to these norms will be contingent on a second variable: widely-shared national identity within the rising power concerning the desirability of this status in the military domain. This identity influences whether the rising power will mimic, or avoid, the normatively-associated military policies. This interaction will effectively ‘bend the curve’ of rising powers’ military trajectories away from the expectations of leading existing theories. The consequences, while not determinative of state behavior, are of immense theoretical and practical significance. Type A, “status-seeking” rising powers will mimic (‘shadow’) military policies normatively
associated with coveted status as a “great power.” Status-seeking will effectively function as a driver of the rising power’s socialization to and conformity with contemporaneous great power norms. Conversely, Type B, “status-avoiding” rising powers will *eschew* military policies normatively associated with avoided status as a “great power.”

**General implications for IR theory**

The international *normative and social* context into which a rising power emerges is of immense consequence for its military trajectory, and the socializing effects of these norms are powerful. In other words, the policies that are normatively associated with membership in certain international social status groups are consequential for state behavior, even in the military domain. In this sense, status and standing in the social hierarchy can affect policy outcomes independently. They are not merely stand-ins for the distribution of material capabilities. By showing that status-seeking is a powerful driver of military policy decision-making in rising powers, this study provides further support for a burgeoning literature on status in, and applying social identity theory to, international relations. By showing that status-avoidance can be a powerful driver of military policy decision-making in rising powers, this study introduces a novel concept into the international relations literature that may provide a fruitful avenue for further research.

When non-material factors such as national identity, perceived great power norms, and (socially-contingent) status are taken seriously as alternative explanations of state behavior it becomes clear that their effects can be far from epiphenomenal, even in the military domain. The size of this effect is an empirical question, and although it appears to vary across the six cases in this study, the data available suggest that it is independent and significant across cases, albeit of course not the primary cause of all policy decisions. The fact that SAT theory and the interaction
of the two non-material variables that underpin it perform relatively well even in ‘most likely’ cases for the leading alternative explanations demonstrates the power of these non-material factors on state behavior. This observation suggests that related non-material factors should more frequently be explicitly included in studies as candidate alternative explanations for observed outcomes. These factors will of course not evince superior explanatory power in all cases, but they should at least be taken seriously as alternative explanations of state behavior. This study shows that these non-material factors can trump not only international anarchy, but even specific, identified pressing threats to national security and overseas political and material interests, as well as domestic consumption. Beyond the popular ‘guns vs. butter’ tradeoff, the powerful effects of rising powers’ socialization to contemporaneous great power norms often causes leaders to effectively trade security, hegemony, and/or domestic consumption against status and prestige.

Even the Type A, status-seeking rising powers adopt policies that are not always aimed at directly challenging more powerful states, but at gaining social recognition (and influence) through mimicry; i.e., by essentially ‘playing their game.’ The effects of socialization are often strongly contested but nevertheless can be remarkably ‘sticky,’ as leaders effectively become socialized to certain ‘rules’ of great power politics early on in their development. Although the degree of stickiness is not fully tested in this study, a brief survey of these four countries’ paths after their respective rises suggests that short of a major shock, leaders and their successors tend to continue along those basic trajectories. This trajectory can persist even when the norms advocated by the leading state(s) in the system change. (See Germany and Japan; 1919-1945). In this sense, this study provides significant empirical support for the concept of ‘founding periods’
early on in a state’s development.\textsuperscript{1365} Rising powers appear to become socialized to certain values that set them on a particular path that is difficult to change. It is for this reason that even marginal shifts in military policies during a state’s rise can prove to be extremely important in the long run.

The translation of a state’s rapidly growing latent material power into the development of military power and the employment of it overseas to expand and/or safeguard territory and material interests is not a structurally-determined inevitability. In other words, whether a rising power pursues status as a ‘military great power’ is, in fact, a choice. This study provides a theory to help to explain that choice, as well as the subsequent effects of this choice on the rising power’s trajectory. The consequences of these choices for international peace and stability can be immense. On the one hand, Type B rising powers exercise restraint and effectively eschew military competition, thereby generally acting as stabilizing forces in international politics. It may be that because they are stabilizing, rather than disruptive, their choices—and the associated consequences—are often ignored or dismissed as due to some other (normally structural) force, especially in the rising power literature.

On the other hand, the silver lining of Type A rising powers that emerges from this analysis is that even their competitive strategies seem to a large extent to ‘play the game’ of their aspirational referents, for better or for worse. In other words, the military trajectory of rising powers is to a large degree contingent on the norms promoted and followed by the leading state(s) in the system at the time. Rising powers generally act within the bounds of, and can become socialized to, these norms. Because rising powers’ military policies are often mimetic,

\textsuperscript{1365} See a brief discussion of this concept, see Wehler, “Bismarck’s Imperialism 1862-1890,” 150–151. Although not explicitly tested in this study, as mentioned in Chapter 2 this preliminary claim is also generally consistent with the argument of Legro, \textit{Rethinking the World}. 511
the content of these norms has significant consequences for the scale and nature of tensions between the rising and established power(s), with direct effects on the likelihood of a hegemonic war. Because the trajectory a rising power takes is not predetermined, a hegemonic war is a possible, but by no means inevitable, outcome of power transition.\textsuperscript{1366}

**Implications for Research Design**

This study’s research design aims to modify or improve on those of existing studies in several important ways, which in turn contribute to its novel findings. First, this study offers a complement to the existing literature on great power behavior when confronted with rising powers/emerging challengers—e.g., the literature on great power ‘decline’—by explicitly treating rising powers’ military policy decisions as the outcomes to be explained. Second, this study’s findings suggest that some influential claims in the existing literature on rising/great powers—especially those structural arguments that appear to be deterministic—may be in large part artifacts of problematic research design. Yet the content and generalizability of the theoretical arguments of these studies is often not caveated accordingly. Third, some influential studies are explicitly, or implicitly, not subjected to extensive, systematic tests against the empirical record of actual decision-making.

Case selection bias may also help to explain why the existing literature does not explicitly recognize, much less offer an explanation for, the existence of important variation in rising powers’ military trajectories. A key consequence is that some influential studies make theoretical

\textsuperscript{1366} For example, in the case of the pre-1914 rising powers examined in Chapters 3 and 6, status-seeking driven conformity to contemporaneous great power norms effectively created and/or exacerbated political tensions and diplomatic conflict, and in some cases and even contributed directly to military clashes. Yet in important instances, key policy drivers of the underlying frictions were (from the rising power’s perspective) disconnected from leaders’ evaluations of pressing strategic threats or material interests. In the case of China, how things play out remains to be seen, but as discussed below there are some grounds for guarded optimism.
arguments that explicitly or implicitly claim that all rising powers will pursue the same path. The variation explored in this study demonstrates that such deterministic claims are not supported by the empirical record. Some key related issues of interest include general conclusions about all rising powers drawn from single case studies and general conclusions drawn exclusively from examination of cases within unique chronological, geographical, or cultural contexts (e.g., cases from the period before World War I or between the two World Wars; cases exclusively from Europe and North America).

A third, arguably far more significant research design issue is the tendency to select on the dependent variable. Existing studies often effectively define rising powers retroactively based on certain policy choices that leaders make which the analyst his or herself associates with ‘great power’ status (e.g., developing nuclear weapons), rather than on the enabling conditions—rapid industrialization and economic growth—that give leaders the option of going down such a path. This study’s selection of cases based on enabling conditions in which different values of the outcome variable manifest allows for a more robust test of causal mechanisms by not predetermining the outcome or restricting the extent of possible variation. In contrast, selecting on the dependent variable can restrict variation in outcomes a priori, which in turn risks exaggerated conclusions about the inevitability of certain policy choices, which must be attributed to some constant—i.e., international anarchy. This study’s research design explicitly attempts to minimize such bias, which allows for a reexamination and test of existing general claims about the primary causes of rising powers’ military trajectories—especially whether international anarchy compels all states experiencing rapid economic and industrial growth to become military great powers, to maximize security, and/or to maximize military power in the pursuit of hegemony.
Another research design issue in some influential existing studies is a tendency not to test a favored theory’s explanatory power relative to leading alternative explanations both within and outside the favored paradigm.\textsuperscript{1367} In other cases, alternative explanations are pulled exclusively from within the same paradigm. For an example of the former issue, some Realists seem to dismiss de facto real-world challenges to fundamental assumptions of the Realist paradigm as mere ‘structural anomalies,’ rather than treating them as empirical puzzles of both theoretical and practical significance that may be in need of explanation. For example, a major article by Kenneth Waltz appears to do this in a discussion of late 20\textsuperscript{th}-century Japan and Germany, while appearing not to address the empirical puzzle that other ‘clients’ of the U.S. superpower (e.g., Great Britain and France) during the Cold War pursued independent military capabilities (e.g., nuclear deterents and aircraft carriers) much more in accordance with Realist expectations. As Waltz states, categorically, “for a country to choose not become a great power is a structural anomaly.”\textsuperscript{1368} (Note, incidentally, the phrase ‘to choose.’) As the analysis in Chapters 4 and 6 demonstrate, however, U.S. extended deterrence certainly played an important role in shaping Japan’s and Germany’s trajectories post-1945, but it was not determinative of their leaders’ choices.

An example of the latter issue is Zakaria’s study of America’s rise to great power status, which includes other Realist theories—‘defensive Realism’ and classical Realism—as a foil against which to test his favored theory of ‘state-centered Realism.’\textsuperscript{1369} As demonstrated in Chapter 6, however, a back-to-back reading of Zakaria’s study against that of other histories of America’s rise, such as a seminal study by historian Ernest May, reveals the extent to which the

\textsuperscript{1367} For example, those who favor Realist or materialist assumptions of state behavior often do not explicitly test assumptions against those of theories positing nonmaterial forces as of primary causal consequence, and vice versa.

\textsuperscript{1368} Waltz, “Emerging Structure,” 66.

\textsuperscript{1369} Zakaria, \textit{FWTP}. 
former appears to overlook key factors at play in shaping several of U.S. leaders’ most historically consequential military policy decisions, which appear to have actually been unrelated to structural ‘imperatives’ or growing executive power.\footnote{Ibid.; Ernest R. May, \textit{Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America As a Great Power} (Chicago: Imprint Publications, 1991).}

In addition to affecting the internal and external validity of the theoretical conclusions one draws, research design can also affect a study’s policy relevance. In the case of rising powers, for example, one can argue that empirically analyzing decision-making from the perspective of leaders in the rising power itself is \textit{sine qua non} for the formulation of effective policies designed to shape the choices these leaders make. While there is a strong methodological argument to be made for developing theory based on ‘objectively-identifiable’ conditions and with the aim of universal generalizability, a potential drawback of such an approach is that it may be of limited use for policymakers. As several leading international relations scholars actively engaged in contemporary foreign policy debates and with policy-making experience point out, policymakers often appear not to ‘objectively’ perceive the conditions in which they find themselves.\footnote{For example, see Jervis, \textit{Perception and Misperception in International Politics}; Friedberg, \textit{The Weary Titan}; Christensen, “Perceptions and Alliances in Europe, 1865-1940”; Zakaria, \textit{FWTP}.}

Accordingly, effective policy-making designed to shape a target policymakers’ choices necessitates an understanding of how decision-makers conceive of their state’s identity, the threats it faces, and its interests (material and otherwise), inter alia.

With that said, we end with a brief discussion of some possible policy implications of this study.
2. Implications for Policymakers

While recognizing that there are always difficult tradeoffs involved in foreign policy decision-making and that policymakers are often limited to choosing the ‘least bad’ of two options, this study’s findings suggest several implications for policies aimed at shaping the military policy choices of rising powers. The first section focuses on general principles. The second section focuses specifically on efforts to shape China’s rise.

General Principles

Leading states must lead; great powers must proactively define, uphold, and abide by norms (i.e., be a model). Despite this study’s finding that international anarchy does not appear to determine outcomes and that contemporaneous great power norms shape rising powers’ military policy choices, it does not necessarily follow that the world has been, is, or will in the future be stable, peaceful, and prosperous. Nevertheless it becomes clear that military policy outcomes are the result of the choices of leaders, and that contemporaneous great power norms also have independent and significant effects on these choices. In the context of this study, this finding evinces the importance of the established power(s) actively defining, upholding, and abiding by norms that promote cooperation rather than conflict and that proscribe self-serving uses of military power. Although not an issue directly explored in this study, the potential costs of failure to do so appear manifest in disastrous outcomes during the inter-war period, when the United States, the de facto ‘would-be’-hegemon, failed to ‘step up’ and uphold and abide by the
norms it promoted (e.g., de facto refusal to accept the ‘racial equality clause’ put forward by the Japanese delegation to the Paris Peace Conference).¹³⁷²

As far as ‘being a model’ is concerned, it appears that leaders of rising powers pay very close attention to what leaders of established powers do and say. To a significant degree, they appear to adopt policies aimed at conforming to the ‘trends of the times,’ i.e., they operate within the bounds of what is considered ‘appropriate’ behavior for a great power based on their assessments of contemporaneous norms. Accordingly, from the perspective of leaders in a rising power, the military policies of the leading state(s) effectively legitimize, or proscribe, certain behaviors, with consequences for better or for worse for international peace and stability. Leaders in leading states should bear this in mind when formulating their own foreign policies. As a general principle, established powers should behave in a manner consistent with how they want the rising power to behave both now and in the future. To rephrase this point in more colloquial terms – they should be an exemplar of the type of great power it wants the rising power to become. Perceived hypocrisy, however exaggerated or misinterpreted, can have significant consequences.

Leading states should exploit the status-seeking driver to define for the rising power what it means to be a ‘great power.’ Status-seeking, or the pursuit of recognition from the established powers as a member of ‘the great power club,’ appears to be an important driver of

¹³⁷² Whether a different outcome in the decades after was possible is of course unknowable, but the empirical record suggests strongly that perceived racist discrimination against Japan was an important factor in driving Japanese leaders’ threat perceptions vis-à-vis the United States, especially after 1905. It fed into a narrative about a ‘race war’ pushed by hyper-nationalist groups (many of which formed in the wake of the 1895 Tripartite Intervention) and undercut moderates. Examples include legislation against Japanese and other Asian immigrants, the failure of the ‘racial equality clause’ at the Paris Peace Conference, and more generally, the clearly racist views of many leaders. For example, while his distant cousin and presidential predecessor Theodore’s views on race are well known, even U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt once pondered whether a ‘less delinquent’ Asian could be produced by interbreeding. Franklin Roosevelt quoted in R.J. Vincent, “Racial Equality,” in The Expansion of International Society, ed. Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 240.
rising power’s decision-making. Although this mechanism is of course not determinative of outcomes, it provides one important lever that can be exploited to socialize leaders in the rising power. It can be used to shape their policy choices in a particular direction—ideally, although unfortunately not always, toward efforts salubrious for peace, stability, and prosperity of all states in the international system. In this sense, this study provides clear theoretical underpinnings for concerted efforts to proactively ‘engage’ rising powers.

Normative suasion, pressures, and demonstration effects can be effective means by which leading states can define for the rising power what states with ‘great power’ status are ‘supposed to’ have and to do—i.e., what policies are ‘role-appropriate.’ The content of the socially-defined markers of great power status can have consequences for the likelihood of conflict between states, as is especially manifest in the pre-World War I cases examined in Chapters 3 and 6. For example, as noted in the primary case study from this period, at no point in Japan’s development between 1868 and 1911 did the Western leaders from which Japan’s leaders most sought recognition as an ‘equal’ clearly express significant moral opposition against Japan’s policies, including its employment of military force against and eventual annexation of Taiwan and Korea or its wars with China and Russia. On the contrary, Western leaders and media often actively sanctioned the associated destructive policies—directly (through active encouragement) and indirectly (by behaving in similar ways themselves). This in turn appears to have effectively given Japanese leaders status incentives to go down this path. As noted in Chapter 6, despite clear antagonism by the 1890s, even early on in Germany’s rise at least some British leaders appeared supportive of its decision to effectively follow Britain’s example, such
as when Gladstone originally praised Germany for its colonial turn as Britain’s “ally and partner in the execution of the great purposes of Providence for the advantage of mankind.”

Leading states should be mindful of and act to minimize discriminatory policies when potential benefits outweigh expected costs. Perceived hypocrisy of the leading state(s) and/or perceived discrimination against rising powers, however exaggerated or misinterpreted, risks antagonizing their leaders (and publics) for reasons distinct from perceived lost material benefits. For example, as discussed above, the case of Meiji (and later, Taisho and Showa) Japan shows clearly that discrimination, real or imagined, can effectively antagonize leaders and exacerbate extant tensions that exist for other reasons. For example, while the practical material costs of lost territory due to the 1895 Tripartite Intervention (which, inter alia, forced Japan to give up some of its territorial against from the Treaty of Shimonoseki) were not insignificant, it seems clear from the discourse both at the time and for the next several decades that the perceived humiliation of what many in Japan viewed as explicit discrimination against it was arguably even more significant for shaping Japanese leaders’ beliefs about international politics. The Intervention fomented an extremely emotional response. Great Britain and the United States of course were not directly involved in the Intervention, but it did not only affect Japanese leaders’ understanding of the manner in which ‘great power politics’ was supposed to be played at the time. It also made many believe that as a racially ‘Asian’ nation, in order to accede to the exclusive ‘great power club’ Japan would have to ‘prove itself’ by defeating an established ‘Western’ power in war.

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1373 Quoted in Kennedy, Anglo-German Antagonism, 181.
1374 As Kowner writes, Russia’s policies toward Japan at the turn of the century were due in large part to the fact that Nicholas II, the tsar, saw Japan as “feminine, weak, and racially inferior.” Kowner, “Becoming a Honorary Civilized Nation,” 20.
Implications for Rising China

Although not intended to offer a ‘theory of China’s rise,’ one motivation of this study was to derive an empirically-grounded, rigorously tested theory of rising powers upon which to inform predictions about and efforts to shape China’s current and future trajectory. To be sure, China is a ‘case-in-progress’ and its future intentions and policy choices are unknowable—even to today’s leaders in Beijing. Nevertheless, placing China’s rise in a comparative historical context can help to inform policies aimed at shaping its leaders’ future decisions.

First, however, a caveat: it is abundantly clear that significant conflicts of interest exist between China on the one hand and many of its neighbors and, both directly and indirectly, the United States on the other. Especially salient are China’s vast, and ambiguous, sovereignty claims to and policies toward contested territories on its immediate periphery. While these claims are longstanding and predate its rise by several decades, together with the coercive policy measures short of kinetic force that it employs to assert them their effects are also provocative and destabilizing, and at best introduce unnecessary levels of uncertainty into already tense circumstances. As noted in Chapter 5, for these and other reasons China’s growing military power poses an increasingly serious potential threat to the interests of both the United States and its allies and partners in East Asia. This study’s findings, which are not intended to be deterministic of state behavior, should not be interpreted as claiming otherwise.

While recognizing this reality, however, the discussion in this section is informed by three empirically- and theoretically-grounded beliefs: First, whether one evaluates China’s foreign policy as trending toward increased order-sustaining or increased order-challenging behaviors depends to a significant extent on the standard for comparison: China’s own past policies (especially between 1949 and 1979), or whether current policies are destabilizing from
the perspective of many other states at present. Second, China’s policies vis-à-vis outstanding sovereignty disputes are extremely important but they are not the entire story of China’s rise, and other trends in its foreign policies both within and beyond the contested ‘Near Seas’ are also significant and due in large part to factors not attributable primarily to realpolitik. Third, even if China’s rise continues—a future that is not, it should be stressed, foreordained—a military conflict is not inevitable.

In aggregate, this study’s findings provide grounds for guarded optimism. How things play out in the coming years will be contingent on the choices of leaders, in Beijing, Washington, and elsewhere in the region. While there is certainly cause for concern and the policies of the United States and other countries cannot unilaterally determine the ultimate outcome, measures can be taken to increase the likelihood that China will emerge in a generally peaceful and order-sustaining manner. Given the focus of this study on the role of non-material factors in international politics, coupled with the existence of numerous publications designed specifically to inform the more coercive side of U.S. strategy vis-à-vis China, the following discussion focuses exclusively on implications for policies that are non-coercive (in a traditional sense). The question ‘Can China be socialized or do its leaders just pursue interests?’ presents a false dichotomy and is the wrong question to ask. All rational leaders pursue national interests in some fashion; the question is how they conceive of those interests and determine how to pursue them.


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The factors shaping leaders’ decisions are extremely complicated. To maximize efficacy while minimizing risks, an effective policy aimed at shaping China’s rise must incorporate both coercive and non-coercive measures.

Although the two countries of course face different strategic situations and the outcome has been shaped by a number of factors, both material and non-material, thanks in large part to the contemporaneous international order China’s leaders did have the option to follow a path similar in spirit if not specifics to that of late 20th-century Japan—i.e., to focus on economic wealth and to eschew status as a military great power.\footnote{On the current international order, see in particular the influential scholarship of John Ikenberry, cited elsewhere in this chapter. For an earlier related study, see Richard Rosecrance, \textit{The Rise of the Trading State: Commerce and Conquest in the Modern World} (New York: Basic Books, 1986).} For a number of reasons, it is not particularly surprising that they did not choose to do so, but that does not change the fact that the option was there. Furthermore, at this moment in time, it appears clear that leaders in China are not only uninterested in emulating post-war Japan but also are intent on developing military power ‘commensurate with’ what they perceive to be China’s rapidly increasing international standing as an economic power. This is of course China’s right, but to say it is a right does not mean that it is necessarily a good idea or that it may not have significant, even unintended, negative consequences. How things play out will depend in large part on how China’s leaders choose to develop and, perhaps most importantly, employ its military power. The result can be a net-plus, or a net-minus, for global peace and stability and the persistence of the existing global order. The trend line so far provides reason for both concern and (guarded) optimism about China’s future trajectory.

Although the underlying types of drivers, or causal variables, that have shaped China’s military trajectory have much in common with those that contributed to driving erstwhile rising
powers such as Meiji Japan, Germany, and even the United States toward expansion a century ago, the *values* of key material and non-material independent variables in the contemporary era differ in important ways that militate against China embarking on a similar path *in terms of policy content*. Although there is no guarantee that conflict will be avoided, fortunately both material incentives and normative pressures appear likely to shape China’s trajectory in a more salubrious direction. Not only is China ‘rising’ in a period in which an open trading system characterized by open markets and globalized production chains militate against military expansion based on China’s and other states’ economic incentives,\(^{1377}\) contemporaneous norms promoted by America and other leading states governing expectations of ‘appropriate’ great power military policies are also categorically different than in the past. These norms essentially disparage rather than glorify expansionism and promote multilateral cooperation in nontraditional security operations, such as peacekeeping and anti-piracy operations, as well as counter-proliferation and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

For example, and as discussed in Chapter 3 and 6, the contemporaneous norms that shaped military policy decision-making in the period immediately before World War I explicitly defined ‘responsible’ great power behavior as developing modern military power and projecting it overseas, engaging in colonization and ‘civilization’ of ‘backwards and unenlightened peoples,’ and even fighting wars with established major powers. Leaders in rising powers effectively interpreted these norms as defining necessary attributes for achieving their coveted status as a

\(^{1377}\) As noted in Chapter 1, characteristics of the contemporary global economic, trading, and financial systems, as well as the existing institutional order, further reduce the potential material benefits of the destabilizing behaviors embarked upon by past powers (e.g. conquest or attempts to overthrow the existing order). This in turn reduces the likelihood that a rising (or great) power will engage in territorial expansion and/or see benefits to starting a great power conflict. For recent scholarship making the former type of argument, see Brooks, *Producing Security*; Gartzke, “The Capitalist Peace”; Lieberman, “Timing of Power.” On the powerful stabilizing effects of the contemporary international order, see Ikenberry, *After Victory*; Ikenberry, “The Rise of China and the Future of the West”; Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*. 

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‘first-rank power’ and gaining ‘entry into the great power ranks.’ These policies were not only considered normatively acceptable; in important cases leaders judged—correctly—that they had international status incentives to adopt them. Leaders in Beijing today do not face a similarly permissive, much less an encouraging, normative environment.

As explored in Chapter 5, in important cases the genesis of Beijing’s perceptions of some key contemporary ‘great power’ norms can be traced back to changing thinking in the U.S. military about the development and employment of military power, manifest in the U.S. military response to the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia and the U.S. maritime forces’ landmark 2007 “Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower,” for example. China’s civilian and military leadership appears to have drawn lessons from both of these de facto normative demonstration effects. In short, and in contrast to pre-1914 rising powers, in important cases widespread desires for greater international prestige push China’s leaders away from, rather than toward, many of the major disruptive policies adopted by rising powers during the late 19th/early 20th centuries.

For three cases-in-point of how the content of great power norms is subject to change and can shape rising powers’ military policies accordingly, see Table 1. This table compares major shifts to overseas force employment policies aimed at staking claims to status as ‘responsible’ great powers in this study’s two primary cases of Type A, status-seeking rising powers: Meiji Japan and contemporary China. Both the norms today and their policy consequences differ significantly from those of the pre-1914 period.
Table 7 Comparative Force Employment Norms – Major ‘Firsts’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Slogans</th>
<th>Meiji Japan (^{1378})</th>
<th>Contemporary China (^{1379})</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First overseas operational deployment of ground forces</strong></td>
<td>“Follow the trends of the times” <em>(jisei ni shitagau 時勢に従う)</em></td>
<td>“Progress with the trends of the times” <em>(yushijujin 与时就进)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“enter the great power club/ranks” <em>(rekkyo no nakamari 列強の仲間入り)</em></td>
<td>“enter the great power ranks” <em>(jiaru daguo de hanglie 加入大国的行列)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Civilizing’ mission vis-à-vis ‘savages’ in Taiwan (1874) --initiated with U.S. encouragement and direct participation in planning and execution</td>
<td>UN peacekeeping operation in Mali (2013) --initiated with U.S. and UN encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First overseas operational naval deployment</strong></td>
<td>Gunboat diplomacy vis-à-vis ‘barbarous’ Korea (1876) --modeled explicitly on an almost identical operation carried out against Japan by U.S. military a few years earlier; 1876 mission initiated with encouragement of Western powers, including America</td>
<td>U.S. and European-led multinational anti-piracy operation to safeguard international maritime commerce (2008-present) --initiated with direct U.S. and European encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First operational participation in multinational military force</strong></td>
<td>British-led mission to suppress an anti-Western uprising in China (1900-1901) --initiated after explicit invitation from Great Britain; led to quartering of Japanese troops in China</td>
<td>U.S. and European-led multinational anti-piracy operation to safeguard international maritime commerce (2008-present) --initiated with direct U.S. and European encouragement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The empirical record of the past two decades suggests that, in several important cases the pursuit of recognition as a member of the great power club has caused China’s civilian leaders to adopt policies they associate with status as a ‘responsible’ great power *as they exist today*. This is admittedly from a low base, but occurs despite apparent deep-seated ideological and institutional resistance to the associated military policy shifts, including from China’s military itself. Although this status-seeking causal mechanism is clearly not determinative of China’s military policies, one need only look to history to see that even ‘the margins’ can matter

\(^{1378}\) See Chapter 3.
\(^{1379}\) See Chapter 5.
significantly in shaping a rising power’s later trajectory. Furthermore, to the extent that even some force development programs are in part aimed at staking China’s claim to great power status and are not shaped by a clearly defined strategy, there is potentially significant room to shape how China’s leaders employ its growing military capabilities now and in the future. Indeed, many of the normatively associated policies (e.g., nontraditional security operations and international military cooperation) are defined by the rhetoric and behavior of the leading state(s) in the system, above all, that of the United States. In contrast to those norms in the past that gave leaders in rising powers status incentives to adopt military policies—e.g., imperialism—that had dubious material or strategic underpinnings yet which nevertheless ultimately put the state on a path to a military clash with other great powers, the norms shaping China’s behavior today proscribe most of those behaviors. To a significant degree, today’s great power force employment norms are not inherently conflictual. In fact, in several important cases, China’s more extensive adoption of the policies normatively associated with ‘great power’ status in the contemporary international system would actually be beneficial for both the United States and the rest of the world.1380

Although the focus of analysts and the media understandably tends to be on major areas of friction, especially as it concerns China’s destabilizing policies vis-à-vis sovereignty claims on its immediate periphery, there are other salubrious trends that also should be acknowledged. Despite the fact that its military is significantly more powerful than it was even a decade ago, the PLA has not used force kinetically against another country since 1988 and has not fought a war since 1979. Even in the cases of its expansive and increasingly volatile island and maritime

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1380 The former dean of naval warfare studies at the U.S. Naval War College has written eloquently on this point. For example, see Robert C. Rubel, “Defense of the System,” in Twenty-First Century Seapower: Cooperation and Conflict at Sea, ed. Peter Dutton, Robert S. Ross, and Øystein Tunsjø (New York: Routledge, 2012).
sovereignty claims, since the early 2000s Beijing has held the PLAN back from front-line operations and has instead typically relied on non-military vessels to further or otherwise support its claims. Further afield, and especially since former president Hu Jintao’s 2004 speech on the PLA’s “New Historic Missions,” China has increasingly developed and employed its growing military power in order-sustaining ways—starting with its first-ever operational dispatch of the PLAN outside East Asia to participate in a U.S.-, European-, and UN-sanctioned anti-piracy mission. In recent years direct cooperation with the U.S. Navy and those of other countries has gradually increased. In fact, some of China’s new policies have been implemented with the active encouragement of the United States as part of its effort to shape China into a “responsible stakeholder” in international society (see below). 1381 Outside of China’s immediate periphery, many current and former U.S. policymakers appear to be more frustrated by what China’s leaders refuse to do—i.e., the areas where they have been resistant to change longstanding, and usually passive, policies—rather than the policy shifts they have adopted as China has grown significantly more powerful. 1382

The next section provides some preliminary policy suggestions based on this study’s findings.

1381 Zoellick, “Whither China.” Admiral Mullen, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in a speech in Beijing that “We look forward to China assuming more responsibilities for global problem solving, commensurate with its growing capabilities.” “Mullen Urges China to Become Global Security Partner,” *American Forces Press Service*, July 10, 2011, http://www.defense.gov/utility/printitem.aspx?print=http://www.defense.gov/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=64607. The Dean of Naval Warfare Studies at the U.S. Naval War College has argued that the U.S. objective “should be to try to convince China to build her navy, which she has every right to do, for the right reasons – to do her part to defend the global system.” Rubel, “China.”

Specific suggestions for U.S. policy toward China

Leading states must lead; great powers must proactively define, uphold, and abide by norms (i.e., be a model). Whether intentional or not, U.S. foreign policies effectively legitimize or proscribe certain policies as normatively acceptable. Because China may ‘play the U.S. great power game,’ for better or for worse, if Washington wants Beijing to agree to and support a rules-based order it must not only abide by, but also actively champion, those rules itself. With this in mind, the U.S. government should: immediately ratify the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS); continue to support international arbitration of maritime and territorial disputes; and continue to actively delegitimize the use, or threat of use, of military force to unilaterally change the de facto status quo in territorial disputes.

Leading states should exploit the status-seeking driver to define for the rising power what it means to be a ‘great power.’ Normative suasion, pressures, and demonstration effects can be effective means by which leading states can define for the rising power what states with ‘great power’ status are ‘supposed to’ have and to do—i.e., what policies are ‘role-appropriate.’ Because Chinese leaders’ interpretations of great power norms can be shaped, the United States should proactively attempt to do so through robust engagement. Through rhetoric and behavioral demonstration effects, Washington should continue to make clear that going down a ‘more traditional path’ will prevent Beijing from achieving the international prestige and status its leaders and public appear to covet. Conversely, further efforts along the lines of its unprecedented, albeit still limited, contributions to cooperative security (aka “far seas cooperation”; yuanhai hezuo 远海合作) and in defense of the global order, such as the Gulf of Aden anti-piracy operation, HA/DR, and UNPKO will move it further along the path to attaining the great power status it seeks. In particular, and along the lines of the 2005 ‘Responsible
Stakeholder’ speech by then U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick, Washington should actively, explicitly, and repeatedly delineate for Chinese leaders what ‘role-appropriate’ policies for a 21st-century great power are. In other words, it should define the conditions for China to achieve status as a great power, including, but not limited to, the non-use of force to resolve territorial disputes and, further afield, the provision of public goods and the defense of the global order. It should also continue to actively persuade China to leverage its growing power in this direction. The PLA’s unprecedented, albeit still limited, contributions to cooperative security provide some grounds for optimism.

At the same time that it encourages China to conform to these norms, Washington should avoid granting Beijing explicit or de facto status as a ‘great power’ prematurely. Doing so would be tantamount to abandoning this otherwise potentially potent lever of influence over China’s policy decision-making. If this study’s thesis is correct, then great power rhetoric can be very important in shaping rising powers’ behavior. Unfortunately, in this regard Washington appears to have committed what may prove to be several unforced errors in recent years of long-term significance. First, it appears to have moved away from the ‘responsible stakeholder’ rhetoric and overall approach. Second, it appears to have offered support, tacit if not explicit, for adopting the “new-type great power relations” (xinxing daguo guanxi 新型大国关系) model proposed by the Chinese side. This may be a mistake, for at least two reasons.

First, doing so appears to have effectively given some in China the impression that America already considers China on the cusp of great power status, well before China has demonstrated sufficient socialization to order-sustaining contemporary norms. Embracing this slogan prematurely may be tantamount to the United States unilaterally relinquishing an

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1383 Zoellick, “Whither China.”
otherwise effective tool for further shaping China’s rise. Second, the meaning of this phrase remains extremely vague, and prematurely signing on to a still undefined, and potentially vacuous, slogan effectively gives China’s leaders the ability to define for themselves what it means for China to become a great power and to sell the rhetoric (i.e., the de facto status recognition) on the home front, while shaping the interpretation to its own liking—a direct violation of an earlier principle. In other words, embracing this slogan risks committing the U.S. government rhetorically to supporting certain policies it has no intention of supporting. Later, when Washington expresses opposition hard-liners within China can then stir up domestic nationalism by crying foul and lampooning alleged U.S. mendacity. The 2009 U.S.-China Joint Statement, in which Washington included an agreement to “respect[] each other’s core interests,” provides a possible cautionary tale.\textsuperscript{1384}

\textit{Leading states should be mindful of and act to minimize discriminatory policies when potential benefits outweigh expected costs.} For various reasons, not the least of which is China’s own unfortunate history on the receiving end of the brutal expansionism of past ‘Western (including Japan) great powers,’ China’s leaders (and public) generally appear extremely sensitive to any policy perceived to be aimed at (what they often erroneously identify as) efforts to ‘contain China’ (ezhi zhongguo 遏制中国). Whether intended or not, any policies that can be easily interpreted as discriminatory or hypocritical appear to feed into a cynical narrative promoted by hard-liners within the policy-making process. While there is little doubt that some actors within China exploit this narrative in self-interest, there is also significant evidence, at

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least anecdotally, that others within China sincerely feel unfairly discriminated against. Nor are these two results necessarily mutually exclusive.

To be sure, in some cases there appear to be at times strong arguments in favor of de facto exclusionary policies (e.g., strict limitations on transfer of advanced defense technology). To warn against the negative consequences of exclusionary policies here is not to imply that the flood gates should be opened indiscriminately. Yet there are also other areas where the potential costs appear to be limited and the potential benefits significant. When performing a cost-benefit analysis of such policies, it appears important for policymakers to always remain mindful of the potentially significant negative consequences of exclusion. Far too often, these costs appear to be overlooked or dismissed as nonexistent, or inconsequential.

In keeping with this principle, the U.S. government should adopt the following policies: First, continue to proactively enhance military-to-military cooperation and joint exercises with the PLA, especially those exercises that have limited direct benefits for improving China’s warfighting capabilities yet which can contribute to enhancing its ability and willingness to contribute to international security, such as HA/DR exercises (e.g., RIMPAC). There is at least significant anecdotal evidence that in recent years Chinese concerns about the PLA’s inability to perform effectively has been an important source of China’s hesitation to become more actively involved in nontraditional security operations. Second, cease referring to the de facto group of leading states as ‘the West,’ or to norms, rules, or orders as ‘Western.’ This rhetoric effectively, albeit in most cases unintentionally, marks the associated policies as constitutive of a group of states to which many Chinese observers believe, for various historical and other reasons, China cannot, and/or should not, belong.
This study has shown clearly that the international system can be a very volatile and violent place. The emergence of new rising and great powers can be extremely destabilizing and result in disastrous conflicts. This study’s findings also, however, provide empirical and theoretical support for the claim that such catastrophic outcomes are not the inevitable result of some immutable law of international politics. Multiple factors are at play, and the historical record suggests strongly that the normative context into which a rising power emerges is immensely consequential for its subsequent trajectory and, consequently, peace and stability in the international system. To say so is in no way intended to excuse the destructive behavior of past (or future) rising powers. As in the past, how international relations play out in the coming years will be contingent on the choices of leaders. For the order to be truly sustainable, no power, whether rising or established, should be given a ‘free pass’ for the consequences of those choices. To do so reflexively truly could produce a “tragedy of great power politics.”
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