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China's Rise as a Threat To the U.S Hegemony

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By

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Abstract

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The hegemonic status of the United States shows indications of decline in the coming 20 years based on analysis done using the long cycle theory and the hegemonic stability theory. Due to the Belt and Road Initiative and Made in China 2025 Initiative, China's growing economy will be responsible for China's challenge to the United States. Combined with the increased economic power, China is likely to spend more on security and develop its military more substantially than the United States to counter its military power. Given its growing international status, China shows the potential to challenge the hegemonic status of the United States in the world.

Keywords: hegemony, long cycle theory, hegemonic stability theory, the U.S, China, decline, rise, superpower, economy, military, political stability.

China's Rise as a Threat to the U.S Hegemony

Chapter 1: Introduction

The international order is fraught with conflict; that is not new. What is new, however, is the identity of the dominant players in the struggle. Countries enter into competition when trying to establish themselves on the international stage. The country or countries that dominate the economic, military, and political (both domestic and international) arenas are the ones best able to protect their way of life and thrive in the global order.

A hegemon is a country that influences the global order, and they do so by using both coercive and non-coercive methods (Schenoni, 2019). The word "hegemony" comes from the Greek phrase "hēgemonia," which means "dominance over," and Greeks used the phrase to characterize interactions between city-states in ancient Greece. Before being extensively discussed by the Italian politician and Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), political analysts rarely used the word "hegemon." In Gramsci's theory, hegemony is an invisible mechanism the state and ruling bourgeoisie use in cultural institutions to maintain their power and spread their influence through capitalist societies. Rules and authority become normalized by constant exposure, especially for the working class (Bates, 1975).

Statement of the Problem

From the perspective of international relations studies, hegemony is a term that describes an actor's capacity to influence the global order. Typically, this actor is a state, such as the United States in the 20th and 21st centuries or Britain in the 19th century. Currently, researchers in international relations discuss the possibility that China could take over the hegemony in the next 20 years (Yuan & Han, 2015). This change could upend the international order, moving the balance of power from countries in the West to countries in the East. The world's challenge,

however, is not just a major change in cultural norms or economic strength but a shift from predominantly democratic principles to more authoritarian rule.

Background and Need

Since the end of the Cold War, the Asia-Pacific region has grown economically and become the world's largest commercial center, impacting the economic hegemony of the United States. The security and stability of the region also affect the U.S. security strategy. China's engagement with globalization, especially in emerging economies, and its use of grand strategic plans in the Asia-Pacific region, contribute to a popular discourse that American hegemonic power is fading. Today, Chinese power is starting to dominate the international economic and political arenas, becoming the main competitor of the United States. In addition, China is investing in its military, and many scholars and social scientists believe China will soon be the economic hegemon (Nkouna, 2013).

Moreover, China criticizes the U.S. for its domestic political failures, which include racism, deep partisanship, and laws protecting gun ownership. China's authoritarian regime is using the January 6, 2022 attack on the U.S. capitol to call into question the efficacy of U.S. democracy. China publicly contrasts its success using autocratic laws to control its people—and domestic politics in general—with what they label a failure of democracy.

In this scenario, American political leaders, as well as leaders in industry, the military, and the foreign service, need a solid analysis of the impact of China's rise on the role of the United States in the world.

Purpose of the Study

This paper will analyze China's rise as a threat to U.S. hegemony using the long cycle and hegemonic stability theories. Both theories use three common characteristics to measure and

determine hegemony over time: economic supremacy, war/military power, domestic politics, and foreign policy of the hegemon and its challengers. Based on these theories, scholars predict China will threaten U.S. hegemony in the coming 20 years (Shwe & Htay, 2021).

This study will present three possible areas of threat to U.S. hegemony from a rising China: the economic supremacy of China over the U.S., China's increased war/military capacity, and management of the U.S.'s political stability by China both in the domestic and international arenas. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the shifts in hegemonic power based on these theories and to analyze and discuss the possible threats to the U.S.'s hegemony from China.

Research Questions

This paper will compare the U.S. with China and ask: under what conditions will U.S. hegemony decline? And, will China take over the hegemony?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

For almost two decades, the U.S. and its hegemonic fall have been a salient topic analyzed by political science researchers and other social scientists. They cite several indicators that show that U.S. hegemony might soon decline: China's rapid economic growth, geopolitical sway (the Belt and Road Initiative), the U.S. and global dependency on China's manufacturing sector, China's excellent performance relative to the rest of the world during the COVID-19 crisis, and the survival of authoritarianism amid attempted liberalization. Most importantly, China's strategies, intended to solidify the permanence of its position in international trade and international organizations, have been successful. The following scholarly works indicate the possibility that the U.S.'s position as a hegemon will decrease in the next decade and that China might take over the hegemony.

In their essay, "No one is satisfied: Two theories of the U.S.-China global rivalry and the international order" (2021), Younn Shwe and Sin Htay conclude that China's relentless economic power coming from its growing economy might change the perception of global politics in the twenty-first century; in other words, with its economic supremacy, China is capable of taking over the hegemony from the United States. Additionally, they state that the current Sino-U.S. relationship is a power struggle between a dominant power (or hegemon) and a rising power (or challenger).

On the other hand, according to Carmel Davis in "U.S. hegemony, China, and the U.S. current account deficit" (2006), the relationship between the U.S. and China is advantageous for both nations. Exports to the United States are essential for the Chinese economy's rapid expansion because domestic demand alone would not have been sufficient to expand its economy in earlier years. Similarly, having a trade partner with cheap labor and resources is

advantageous for U.S. hegemony because it helps stabilize the American economy. The problem is that China has expanded its market in every country worldwide. Also, boycotting the U.S. as a trading partner may not hurt China's economy, but it may cost the U.S. because China heavily supports the U.S. treasury. Davis (2006) further states that a China with high economic growth is too vital for the U.S. hegemony's existence.

According to Alexander Cooley and Daniel Nexon's book *Exit from hegemony; The unraveling of the American global order* (2020), "we now live in a world where the liberal order established by the U.S. is facing increasing challenges." The rise of China since the year 2000 has given the world an alternative to western democracy/liberalization. Cooley and Nexon state further that the United States is no longer in the same posture as the great hegemonic power that the U.S. was after the Cold War victory in the late 1990s. They also state that President Trump is a symptom but not a cause of the hegemonic decline of the United States. According to the authors, the U.S. hegemonic decline started in the late 1990s-2000s.

There exist in the literature certain studies that communicate mixed messages. Some scholars claim that the U.S. and China are working cooperatively, that there is no competition between them, and that their partnership benefits the world. Others conclude that China is gaining strength at the expense of the U.S. and that China's strength will lead to the U.S.'s demise as a hegemon. They state that in the 2000s, following the economic boom, China became a contender for hegemony. Before that, the contender was Russia, which ended with the triumph of the Cold War by the U.S. in the 1990s.

In the essay "U.S. economic hegemony and the rise of China: What lessons to be learned?" (2013), Francois Joseph Nkouna argues that China is working to advance the free international order. Referring to the 2008 financial crisis, the author claims that China's and

America's cooperation during that crisis was significant for the prosperity of the entire world. As the financial crisis of 2008 has shown, China is playing a crucial role as the United States' primary creditor in repairing the harm caused by the credit and housing bubbles. According to the author, China and the U.S. are now working together to maintain an international balance in the context of globalization. Thus, the author is presenting a bipolar form of hegemonic power.

Moreover, in his article "The waning U.S. hegemony - Myth or reality" (2009), Christopher Layer states that globalization is truly Americanized, which can be a big mistake for the United States. For China, globalization has been a blessing because of its open and liberal platform, and this may turn into a danger for the U.S. economy. At the end of his article, Layer (2009) comments that to secure its position, the U.S. must rethink its global role and grand strategic moves, such as its trade agreements/partnerships specifically with China so that both parties can benefit.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Analysis

Numerous scholars employ various theoretical constructs to interpret hegemonic decline because various theories of international relations have different views on what causes a hegemon's fall and a new hegemon's emergence. Realists believe hegemonic decline occurs when states become unrestrained by hierarchically superior powers (Mearsheimer, 2001). However, liberal theories of international relations assume that states and non-state actors work together, and in this system, power is distributed, and everything works cooperatively (Kauppi & Viotti, 2019). Hence, from the perspective of liberal international relations theories, the decline or change of hegemony is not a big deal.

This part of the theoretical analysis will use the long cycle theory and hegemonic stability theory to answer the research questions: under what conditions will U.S. hegemony decline? Furthermore, will China take over the hegemony? The decline of one hegemon opens the opportunity for the rise of a new power. These two theories will make sense of hegemony's rise and fall in the case of the U.S. and China.

The Long Cycle Theory

The idea of a long cycle theory was first presented in 1987 by George Modelski in the book *Long cycles in world politics*. In addition to Modelski, William Thompson is credited with developing this theory. According to Modelski and Thompson (1988), the "long cycle theory" describes the connection between war cycles, economic supremacy, and the political aspects of world leadership. The theorists also explain the long cycle theory this way: "the long cycle of global politics refers to the process of fluctuations in the concentration of global reach capabilities which provide one foundation for world leadership" with shifts in power or hegemony happening every 100-120 years. In the recent opinion of Dan Cox, a far-right

American politician and scholar, the long cycle lasts approximately 70-100, not 100-120 years. He further suggests that, during this period, "the title of the world's most powerful nation changes hands" (Herrington, 2011).

The long cycle theory identifies repeated significant events or clustered events, which in global politics usually occur in intervals of 100 to 120 years of cycles (Modelski, 1987). With these repeated events, empires tend to decline because they have expanded beyond their capacity, and new powers rise. The five long cycles of leadership in international politics include: Portugal as the first hegemon in the 16th century, and then in the 17th century, the Netherlands followed. After that, Great Britain served twice, once in the 18th century and again in the 19th century, and since the end of World War II, the United States has served as the hegemon. Each of these hegemonic shifts has either occurred during a global war, been based predominantly on economic revolutions or because of changes in the needs of people. This need for innovation and technological development is caused by the long cycles of the economy as well (Amos, 1989).

Many traditional theories of international relations, including other approaches to hegemony, argue that the baseline state of the international system is anarchy. In contrast, Modelski's (1987) long cycle theory suggests that war and other destabilizing events are a natural result of the long cycle and the global system cycle as a whole; they are essential to the functioning of the global polity and social order. Anarchy does not play a role in world politics because it is not a random process of success or failure based on luck or the brute force of the contestants.

The long cycle theory, however, like any other theory of social science research, has both positive sides and weaknesses. First, the strong side of the theory: The long cycle theory can

describe the power of transition in the international system from a critical and rational point of view based on historical patterns of leadership cycle changes. The long cycle theory proposes testable variables, such as the economy, the military, the political conditions, and the cycles of wars. It also uses economic indicators such as productivity, growth, deficit, and international trade. It is concerned with countries switching power through war, economic dominance, and the political aspect of world leadership.

The long cycle theory also convincingly shows that with its military power, the dominant state can support its economic goals, benefitting from world trade, which it monopolizes (Kohout, 2003).

Now, the weaker side of the theory: agents of transition are not easily identified, and transitions are not uniform according to the long cycle theory. Each transition brings new elements to play in global politics, and this does not work like mechanical clockwork but rather as a social system transformation. Finally, long cycles are not a universal principle of world politics but rather a process of global politics defined by time (Modelski, 1987).

The Hegemonic Stability Theory

Several political scientists, including Robert Gilpin, Robert Keohane, Stephen Krasner, and to some extent, George Modelski, developed the hegemonic stability theory (HST), which analyzes world leadership, and presents the essential characteristics needed by a country to be the global hegemon. According to the hegemonic stability theory, the world order is most stable and open when a single powerful nation dominates (Webb & Krasner, 1989). The HST argues that stability is maintained under hegemonic power because the dominant nation, the one with the most extensive military, economic, and political advantage, provides collective goods to the world system to maintain order and stability (Ting Liu & Ming-Te, 2011).

In 1929, Charles Kindleberger was the first economist to present the hegemonic stability theory (Cohen, 2008). In his 1929 book, *The world in depression: 1929-1939*, he indicates that the Great Depression marked the end of British dominance over the world (1973). As a result, it lacked a political leader to support international financial stability (Milner, 1998). However, Kindleberger's reasoning focused on more than just economics: he also analyzed international politics and law. In addition, he stated that the stability of the global system relies on the hegemon developing and enforcing the system's rules.

The term "hegemonic stability theory" was coined by Robert Keohane in 1980. Keohane discusses the importance of setting up an international regime, recognizing that hegemony has played a significant role in the establishment of the global order. He asserts, however, that a regime can exist without the existence of hegemony. He further states that a hegemon is not necessary for international cooperation (Keohane, 2005).

Robert Gilpin's view of hegemonic stability is unique. Gilpin's realistic insight is that "world politics remains characterized by struggles for power, prestige, and wealth in a state of global anarchy" (Gilpin, 1981). In Gilpin's analysis, the dominant state, the hegemon, plays a crucial role in promoting stability and leadership through its military and economic dominance. As a result, it can set the rules for economic transactions and protect foreign investments. It is also beneficial to the other powers to maintain the status quo. When the hegemon loses its dominant position, the stability of the system is threatened (Kohout, 2003).

Thus, the central theme of hegemonic stability theory suggests that a hegemon should be more powerful than any allied nation in three aspects, military, economy, and politics; also, the hegemon must have the capability to maintain a stable international order. Furthermore, the global hegemon must provide public goods to maintain stability in the international economic

system (Ting Liu & Ming-Te, 2011); the leading country must be able to maintain global economic stability by ensuring adequate distribution of global credit. In case of crisis, it provides liquidity as a lender of last resort and ensures stable exchange rates and macroeconomic coordination so that open markets are ensured (Chavagneux, 2004).

The strength of the theory lies in its testing capability based on independent variables like the military, economic and political power of states. This theory helps analyze the hegemon's capability to lead or decline and shows the path towards a new possible hegemonic power in the global system with its analytical capacity. One problem with this theory is that scholars of the hegemonic stability theory explain military, political, economic, and cultural features differently. Because of this, there is a divergence on whether U.S. hegemony has declined or not. (Cohn, 2007).

When comparing the long cycle and the hegemonic stability theory, the following areas of agreement emerge: 1) the rise and fall of nations are systemic; 2) international order is shaped by dominant nations; 3) stability is easier to maintain in a unipolar world order; and 4) states that primarily dominate economics, also dominate military and political affairs. The long cycle theory claims that every hegemon must expire after a certain period, no matter how strong it is. These power shifts occur cyclically every 100-120 years; they occur when the challenger state has a better strategy of maintaining stability in the international system through technological innovation and other development ideas than the current hegemon. The challenger state must have a strong economy, the ability to fight wars, and strong stands in the international system. In contrast, hegemonic stability theory states that for global peace and stability, there must be a hegemon who leads the international system for the benefit of all nations. In addition, hegemony requires strong problem-solving abilities.

Interestingly, the driving factors behind the actions of a dominant nation and its challenger are the same under both theories, the long cycle theory and the hegemonic stability theory. Since these theories are about hegemons and their rise and decline, scholars tend to analyze hegemonic power by looking at these three independent variables: military power, economic dominance, and the ability of hegemons to solve problems and maintain their influence on both the domestic and international political landscape. Thus, this paper will examine both dominant and emerging powers to compare the U.S. with China and who is best suited as a hegemon in the present day.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter examines how the long cycle theory interacts with the hegemonic stability theory as it relates to the U.S. and China's changing economic, military, and political situations. This study will use a qualitative methodology, specifically a collective case study comparing data on the United States' current status as a hegemon and China as a rising great power. The collective case study will give an in-depth understanding of the factors impacting the rise and/or decline of both the United States and China. The collective case study also best lends itself to utilizing already-existing primary sources (oral histories, recorded interviews, government documents, military, and economic data) and secondary resources instead of traveling to China to interview people there. The long cycle theory and the hegemonic stability theory will be utilized to analyze the collected data in order to respond to the questions: under what conditions might U.S. hegemony decline? And, is China the best candidate for taking over the hegemony?

Therefore, the articles chosen for this thesis are based primarily on knowledge of the relevant topics. These articles also match personal interests and motivate further learning about the U.S.-China hegemonic roles. The U.S.-China relationship debate is highly strategic and delicate; it touches on topics that could affect both the international order and the national security of the two nations. To reduce the risk of using less trustworthy sources, this study will use data, reports, scientific papers, edited books, and other materials from non-governmental organizations as well as from international institutions like the International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, and the World Bank.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion

This chapter will use the long cycle theory and the hegemonic stability theory to analyze and compare the economic supremacy, military power, and political aspects of both the domestic and international sectors of the United States and China. The discussion of the results will answer the following questions: Under what conditions is the hegemonic status of the United States facing threats from a rising China? And is China going to be the hegemon in the coming 20 years?

According to the long cycle theory, a hegemonic shift occurs within 100-120 years (Modelski, 1987). During this time technology changes and develops, the world faces new needs, and a new type of crisis takes place in which the existing leader somehow fails to meet the demands of the moment. The new superpower, then, comes to light. Again, the hegemonic stability theory talks about economic supremacy as one of the essential aspects of being a hegemon because it gives the hegemon the power to influence and dominate the world economy. The shift from Great Britain to the United States as the world's hegemonic power during World Wars I and II offers an example: Britain failed to lead the critical organizations of the world and needed the U.S.'s financial help and support during the wars. After the wars, the United States emerged as the world's hegemon.

The rapid displacement of Britain's hegemony by the United States after Great Britain's two-century dominance offers scholars a template for studying other hegemonic shifts. The decline of Britain's industrial and economic power triggered its descent, according to many historians. British policy focused on free trade during the nineteenth century (O'Brien & Pigman, 1992). America was able to identify and take advantage of the weakness in British economics.

The reigning hegemon depended more on trade than the United States. As a result, Britain lost out when trade collapsed (Lacher & Germann, 2012).

China, in comparison, is following the same pattern the United States established when it became the hegemon after the World Wars. The key to their strategy is to take the lead in world economics. The following section offers a deeper analysis.

Comparing the U.S. and China's Economic Strength

According to a new estimate, China has surpassed the United States as the world's most prosperous country. The world's net worth rose from \$156 trillion in 2000 to \$514 trillion in 2020, and China accounted for about a third of this growth. In the national balance sheets of ten nations that accounted for 60% of global income, China accounted for 50% of the increase in net worth, followed by the United States (22%) and Japan (11%) (Samson, 2021).

The scope of China's economic revolution is unrivalled in history. China was one of the world's poorest countries in 1978 (Zhu, 2012): China's real per capita GDP was \$156, one-fifth that of the United States during that time, which had a GDP per capita of \$10,565 (World Bank, 2021). In comparison, China's real per capita GDP increased at an annual rate of more than 8.3% in 2021, while the U.S.'s real per capita GDP growth rate was 5.67% in 2021 (Achille et al., 2021). China has a 4.3% greater growth rate than the United States. Because of this, China is now considered the world's second-largest economy due to its rapid and consistent growth. How, ~~then~~, did China build itself to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the present hegemon of the world, the United States? This section seeks to answer that question, concluding that China threatens the hegemonic power of the United States with its consistent economic growth.

First, this paper offers a comparison of the U.S. and China's market exchange rates for GDP and purchasing power parity (PPP) to understand how the two countries are developing

over time to lead the international economy. Next, the paper will focus on China being the global trading and manufacturing center, which ultimately results in China's position as a regional hegemon. After that, the paper will discuss China's economic initiatives, which are grand strategies to slowly spread its economic influence around the world: The Made in China 2025 Initiative and The Belt and Road Initiative. These two initiatives will help answer the thesis questions.

Comparing Market Exchange Rate to Calculate the GDP of the U.S. and China

A country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and its Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) offer a picture of the nation's economic health. Economists typically calculate GDP based on a metric called MER (market exchange rate). Since the United States played a dominant role in the global economy after World War II, the U.S. economy is used as a baseline in this calculation. To calculate a nation's GDP, the method adds up all goods and services produced in their own currency and converts those totals into U.S. dollars at the current exchange rate to get the market exchange rate (Allison et al., 2022).

Using this metric, China's economy has grown tenfold from \$1.2 trillion in 2000 to \$17.7 trillion in 2021, the most significant and most prolonged economic boom in history (The Economist, 2022). In contrast, the U.S. GDP grew from \$10.3 trillion in 2000 to \$24.0 trillion by 2021, with real GDP growth averaging 2% annually (IMF, 2022), slower than China's growth rate.

At the beginning of the century, Americans had an annual income 36 times higher than the Chinese: \$36,000 compared to \$1,000. While U.S. GDP per capita nearly doubled to \$63,000 by 2020, China's increased tenfold to \$10,000. Over the past four decades, China has created a more significant increase in the annual income of people in the country than in its more than

4,000-year history (Allison, 2018). An extraordinary number have become millionaires and billionaires. According to Forbes, China now has more billionaires than the United States, adding a billionaire per week (Tognini, 2021).

Comparison Based on Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) of the U.S. and China

In the past decade, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have concluded that purchasing power parity (PPP) is a much better way to compare national economies than nominal exchange rates (MER). In PPP, nations are compared according to how much they can buy with their own currencies at the market prices for their products. A CIA report explained why it switched from MER to PPP to evaluate national economies: "GDP at official exchange rates substantially underestimates China's real output in comparison with the rest of the world" (Allison, et al., 2022). According to the IMF report on the world economic outlook database (2021), PPP is "the best available basis for comparing the economic strength of a country."

By studying the national PPPs, economists can compare the relative weight of the American and Chinese economies. There is no escaping the conclusion that, measured by its PPP in 2000, China had a 36% larger economy than the United States. By 2020, the IMF estimated China would be 115% larger than the U.S. economy (IMF, 2021). As Presidents Obama, Trump, and Biden discussed a historic "pivot" to Asia, America's feet have dangled entirely above the ground.

Moreover, even though the GDP does not directly correlate with economic or military strength, nations with larger GDPs tend to control international affairs with more significant influence. As the hegemonic stability theory says, a hegemon needs to have supreme economic power, which will help the hegemon influence world organizations: economic, military, or

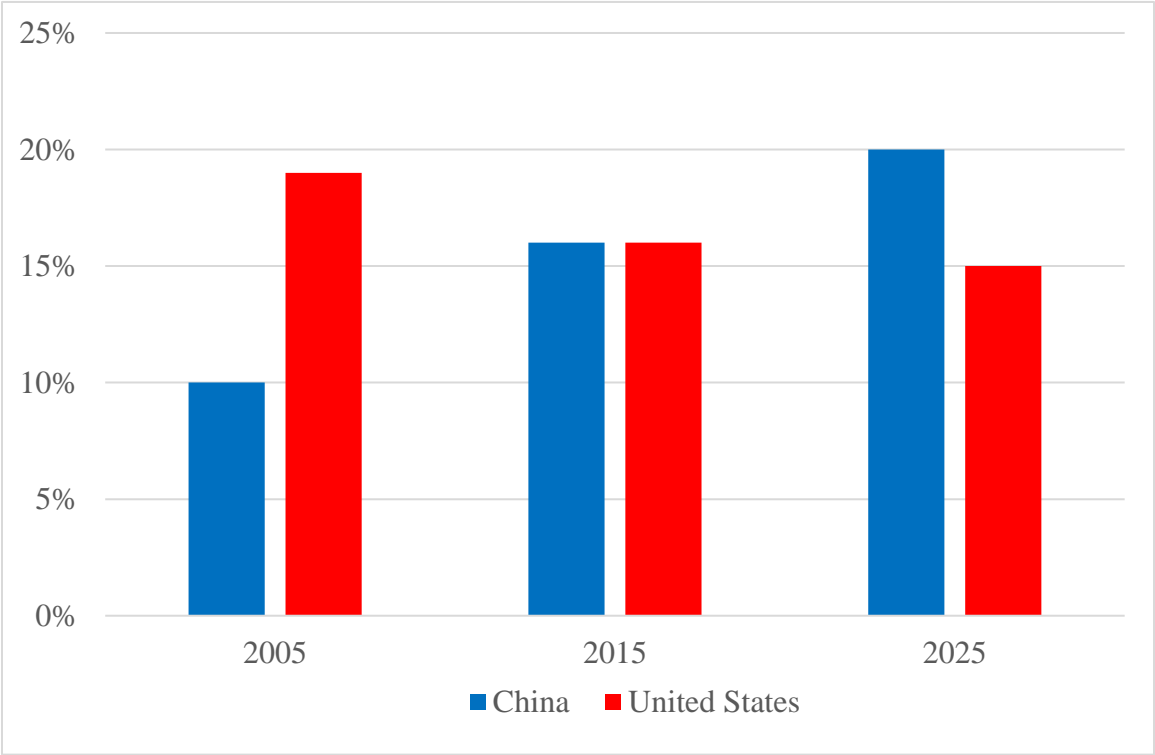
political. Economic supremacy comes with capital power which is the fuel to run any global organization. By tracing China's accelerated growth, economic scholars and international institutions observe that China is moving forward to reach economic supremacy in the coming 10 years, overtaking the United States (See Figure 1). In 2005, the United States' percentage share of global GDP was almost 10% larger than China's. By 2015,

China's percentage share of global GDP equalled the share of the United States.

Researchers predict that China's share will be 5% greater by 2025. China's strategies to achieve economic supremacy are mentioned below.

Figure 1

Share of Global GDP (PPP): U.S. and China



Note. The World Economic Outlook (WEO) database contains selected macroeconomic data series from the statistical appendix of the World Economic Outlook report. From International Monetary Fund (IMF), October 2021, WEO database.

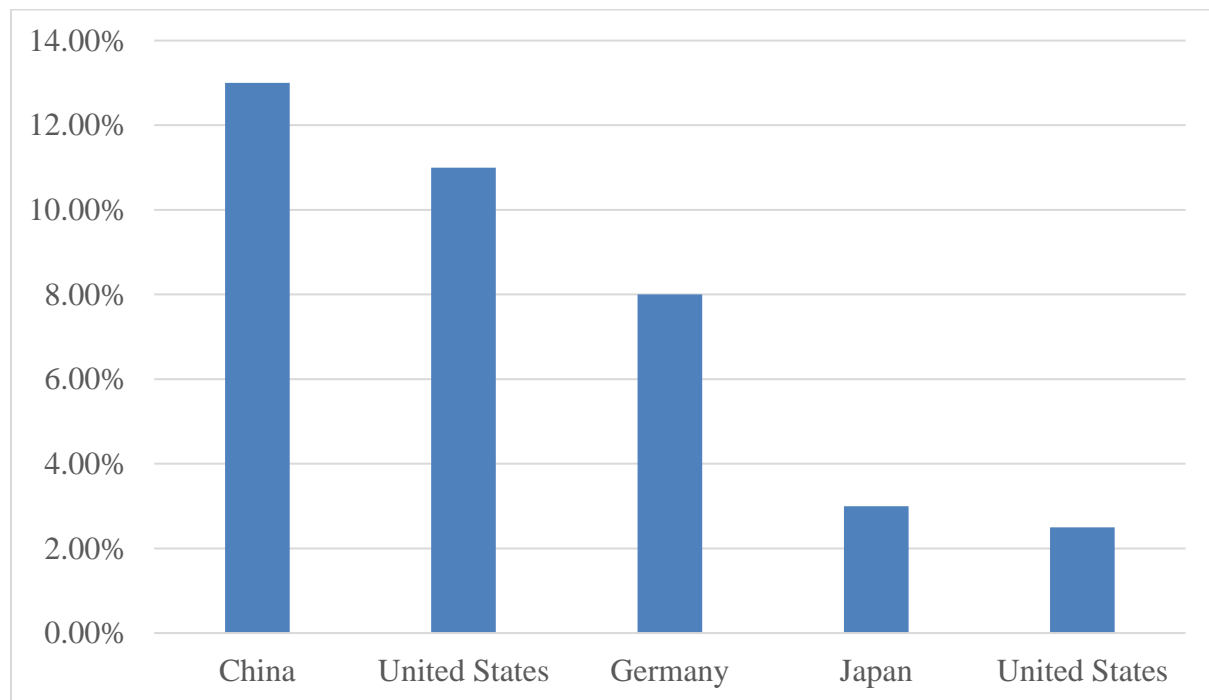
China, the Global Trader

One of China's grand strategies is to make the world depend on it. In 2001, when China entered the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United States was the world's largest trading partner, but now, China is the world's predominant trading partner. According to the World Economic Forum, China became the number one manufacturing nation in 2010. In today's world, China accounts for more than one-third of manufacturing value-added, while the U.S. share has dwindled to less than one-fifth (Wang et al., 2020).

According to the bar diagram below (Figure 2), China has the highest merchandise trade net worth of 13.1%, followed by the U.S. at 10.8%. Germany is next with 7.8%. The UK, the last

Figure 2

Share of Global Merchandise Trade by Country (2020)



Note. Share of Global Merchandise Trade (2020). China's trade with the USA, UK, Japan, South Korea, Germany, France, Italy, and the Netherlands. World Trade Organization Data, adapted from UBS data. (UBS is a multinational investment bank and financial services company founded and based in Switzerland.)

superpower before the U.S. has a trade net worth of 2.9% at present (General Administration of Customs, 2020).

There is no question that China is the world's dominant economy in trade relations in the 21st century as shown by the bar chart. Over two-thirds of the 130 countries in the world trade more with China than with the U.S. (Leng & Rajah, 2019). China also has now surpassed the U.S. as the leader of the world's largest free trade bloc with the launch of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in January 2022. RCEP is the first free trade agreement among the largest economies in Asia, including China, Indonesia, Japan, and South Korea (Zhou, 2020). China's strategy includes not only working with the states of Asia but with the United States as well. In 2021, nearly half of America's \$1 trillion trade deficit came from purchases from China (IMF, 2021).

China's Investment in Latin America

China has built relationships with Latin American countries since the sixteenth century when the Manila galleon trade route made it possible for China and Mexico to exchange porcelain, silk, and spices. Thousands of Chinese immigrants were employed as indentured workers in Cuba and Peru by the 1840s, frequently on sugar plantations or in silver mines. China engaged with the region over the following century primarily through migration while Beijing remained engaged with internal unrest (Ezrati, 2022).

Less than 2% of Latin America's exports went to China in 2000, but China's rapid economic development and resulting demand fueled the region's subsequent commodities boom. Trade increased over the following eight years at an average annual rate of 31%, reaching a value of \$180 billion in 2010. Trade reached \$450 billion in value by 2021, and according to analysts, it may reach \$700 billion or more by 2035. China is currently Latin America's second-

largest trading partner behind the United States. Soybeans, copper, oil, petroleum, and other raw resources that China requires to support its industrial development make up the majority of Latin American exports to that nation. In exchange, the region mostly imports manufactured items with a greater value-added, which some experts claim has caused Chinese imports to undercut domestic industries. Twenty countries from Latin America have so far endorsed China's Belt and Road Initiative, and Beijing has free trade deals with Chile, Costa Rica, and Peru (BRI) (Roy, 2022).

Chinese loans and overseas foreign direct investment are also important. The majority of the \$17 billion in Chinese loans and overseas foreign direct investment in Latin America in 2020 was concentrated in South America. The Export-Import Bank of China and the state-owned China Development Bank are also among the top lenders in the region; between 2005 and 2020, they together lent Latin American governments \$137 billion, frequently in return for oil and used to finance infrastructure and energy projects. The largest borrower, Venezuela, has taken on loans totalling \$62 billion since 2007. Additionally, China has voting rights at both the Caribbean Development Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (Dawson, 2022).

Despite the fact that Chinese loans frequently come with fewer restrictions, reliance on them can force economically unstable nations like Venezuela into what opponents refer to as "debt traps" that could lead to default. Additionally, detractors claim that Chinese businesses adhere to lesser labor and environmental standards, and they warn that China's expanding influence over vital infrastructures, such as energy grids, poses hazards to national security. Additionally, there are worries about economic dependence in nations like Chile, which sent roughly 39% of its total output to China in 2020 (Roy, 2022).

The U.S., China's Largest Trading Partner

In 2020, the United States ranked first among China's trading partners with US\$512 billion (17.2% of China's total export). With \$559.2 billion in total (two-way) goods trade during 2020, China is the United States' largest goods trading partner. Exports of goods from the U.S. to China totalled \$124.5 billion, while imports of goods totalled from China to the United States, \$434.7 billion. Even though imports and exports between these two countries continue, there is a trade deficit. The U.S. goods trade deficit with China was \$310.3 billion in 2020. In June, the deficit increased by \$4.7 billion to \$36.9 billion. In 2022, exports decreased by \$0.6 billion to \$11.9 billion, and imports increased by \$4.1 billion to \$48.8 billion (Office of the United States Trade Representative, 2022).

As a result, China's economy became the second largest in the world (using nominal exchange rates) after the United States. Chinese economic initiatives like Belt and Road, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and "Made in China 2025" alarmed some U.S. policymakers. China's economic growth has been viewed by the U.S. government as a threat to American dominance (Chong et al., 2019).

China, the Global Manufacturer

China has created an ecosystem that allows it to dominate the production of almost anything. In 2010, China became the world's largest manufacturer, accounting for 29% of global manufacturing value added in 2019, a 20-point increase over 2000 of 8.49%. (A sector's value-added output comes from adding up all outputs and subtracting intermediate inputs. In this calculation, depreciation of manufactured assets and natural resource extraction are not deducted.) In that time frame, the U.S.'s global manufacturing position declined from 26% to 18% (Richter, 2020). China's rise as a manufacturing powerhouse has resulted in a substantial

increase in economic production based on global needs. The position of the United States as a global manufacturer has dropped from first place in 2000 to fourth, while China has risen from 23rd to second place, just behind Germany. China's jump to 2nd as a manufacturing nation should give the U.S. pause (Allison, 2017).

Research and Development (R&D)-intensive industries such as those developing and producing aircraft; computer, electronic, and optical products; pharmaceuticals; scientific R&D services, and software publishing have similar reports on China's progress as a global manufacturer. From 2003 to 2018, China's global value-added output increased from 7% to 26% in medium-high R&D-intensive industries, while the U.S. fell from 25% to 22%. During the same period, the U.S. National Science Foundation (2020) also found that China's share of global value-added grew from 6% to 21% in high R&D-intensive industries, while America's place declined from 38% to 32%.

Historically, nations trade the title of the largest exporter of goods numerous times, and it is likely to change again soon. Britain ruled a global trade empire in the 19th century and was known as the "workshop of the world." China claimed that role in 2009: In 2013, China became the largest trading nation in the world. As of 2019, the country's exports totalled \$2.641 trillion. Before that, the United States held the top spot. Though China became "the world's factory" during the early 21st century, the Silk Route and its size indicate that it was often the largest exporter of goods during previous centuries (Jahn, 2021).

China is rushing toward dominating global industries. This paper predicts that in the next ten years, China's rise will at least be a threat to the hegemonic position of the United States if not take over the hegemony completely. The Made in China 2025 Initiative will support this argument. Scholars indicate that China created this strategy along with the Belt and Road

Initiative, to give it global dominance, both requiring patient implementation over years, and providing positive publicity while keeping a low profile. These two initiatives also create risk for China: Some scholars believe these strategic initiatives are familiar moves and wastes of China's wealth and resources (Mattoo, 2022). But China's strategic thinking advocates risk acceptance behavior, which means taking risks now while sowing the seeds of success for future victory—nothing ventured, nothing gained, or "how do you catch the tiger cub without entering the tiger's lair?" (Shwe & Htay, 2021).

The Made in China Initiative 2025.

China's Made in China Initiative 2025, announced in 2015, is one of several ambitious, recent projects that aim to boost the competitiveness of Chinese industries, develop Chinese brands, stimulate innovation, and decrease the reliance on foreign technology by transforming China into a major or dominant global manufacturer of a wide range of technologies.

Chinese media report that the initiative aims to "transform China into a world manufacturing power" by 2049 (McBride & Chatzky, 2019). The term manufacturing giant refers to the capability to produce in large quantities, and manufacturing power refers to the capability of being the center of production with new research and ideas: specifically, the plan aims to manufacture 40% of essential components and materials domestically by 2020 and 70% by 2025.

In January 2018, China released a revised version of the plan, which stated that the country would become the world's largest manufacturer of telecommunications, railway, and electrical power equipment by 2025, and the country's robotics, high-end automation, and new energy vehicles industries would rank second or third globally by then (Yulong, 2018).

According to the United States Chamber of Commerce (2017), the main goal of Made in China 2025 is to capture the global market and lead global trade policies.

To materialize the MIC 2025 plan, China has implemented several specific policies: reduced taxation rates for high-tech companies, incentives for foreign technology mergers and acquisitions, increased research and development (R&D) funding by large manufacturing enterprises, direct state-funding of R&D, and a roadmap setting specific targets for factors such as R&D spending share, productivity, digitization, and environmental protection (Agarwala et al., 2021). The Chinese Communist Party has also implemented other supplemental projects that will build research and development centers throughout China (40 by 2025), develop high-technology projects across all key industries, create sustainable production, and lead in worldwide green manufacturing practices and smart manufacturing. In 2021, new materials will be made less dependent on manual labor thanks to robotics and digitization (Talin, 2021).

According to the long cycle and the hegemonic stability theories, change over time gives rise to newly perceived needs in people's lives which an existing hegemon might find difficult to fulfill, opening an opportunity for a new hegemonic power to lead. Here China can be the new hegemon according to the long cycle theory. With the new technological approaches and creative strategies, China is already spreading its influence; this gives China global economic leadership, one of the core requirements of the hegemonic stability theory to be a hegemon.

China the Largest Regional Trading Pact

Trade and commerce need a solid network of nations. Because of this, China makes allies and pacts, giving China easy access to the raw materials they need. In the post-World War II era, the U.S. promoted free trade by establishing the GATT, NAFTA, and WTO (Petri, 2020). The United States also designed the Trans-Pacific Partnership; however, it has been unable to join the

agreement due to domestic political opposition. With Japan stepping up, new trade rules were established in 2018 under the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership, CPTPP (Solis, 2021). During the same period, China established the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) with the participation of most major Asian nations (Tani, 2020). The RCEP covers 2.2 billion people and is composed of China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and ASEAN (a political and economic union of 10 member states in Southeast Asia) members. The member states of RCEP work in cooperation to smooth trade relations with each other; however, China forms most of the agendas to operate RCEP. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) has been very beneficial for China in promoting its trade relationship with the Asian Regions.

In 2016, President Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the TPP. After that, the RCEP has become China's most effective tool for preventing U.S. trade restrictions. This bloc has now become the world's largest bloc for trade. This sector generates almost a third of the global GDP, which studies anticipate will lead to a \$500 billion increase in global trade by 2030. In terms of population and gross domestic product, RCEP members account for 30% of the world's population, surpassing the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMC) and the European Customs Union (Petri, 2020).

The Belt and Road Initiative

In 2013, the Chinese government launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), formerly known as One Belt One Road, investing in nearly 150 countries and international organizations to connect China with the rest of the world (Bala, R, et al., 2017). The BRI has three primary motivations. First, China's rivalry with the United States: a large portion of Chinese international trade passes through the Malacca Strait off the coast of Singapore, which is a major ally of the

United States. The initiative helps China create its own, more secure trade routes. China also wants participating nations to become interdependent with the Chinese economy and therefore build Chinese political and economic influence. The BRI resembles the Marshall Plan that followed the Second World War, except China allocates funds solely based on shared economic interests.

Secondly, the financial crisis of 2008 is also a key reason for the initiative. The Chinese government responded to the emergency with a \$4 trillion stimulus package, issuing contracts to build railways, bridges, and airports, also saturating the Chinese market. The BRI provides Chinese state-owned companies an alternative market beyond their home borders. Third and finally, the Belt and Road Initiative makes MIC 2025 a reality. With different infrastructure routes spread across different world regions, China can capture the global market for its manufactured goods. The BRI initiative plays a crucial role in Chinese efforts to stimulate the economies of the central provinces, which historically trail wealthier coastal regions. The Chinese government allocates funds generously and encourages businesses to compete for Belt and Road contracts in these central regions with the Belt and Road Initiative (Jie, 2021).

According to the long cycle theory, hegemony has strong dominance in both land and water routes. China is moving to achieve dominance through the Belt and Road Initiative, creating connections between road and water routes and connecting China to the surrounding regions. The BRI initiative has already spread from Asia to Africa and to Europe. For China, the BRI is vital for securing its borders on the Asian continent: it shares land borders with 15 nations, including unstable states like Afghanistan and nations eager to form new partnerships against the United States, like Russia. Chinese banks have also funded several projects in Africa, including a major gas pipeline in Nigeria, railways in Ethiopia, and projects in Uganda and

Egypt, among other countries. Western commentators are most concerned about the Belt and Road Initiative's expansion of Chinese influence into developed nations like Greece and Italy, members of the G7 (Ramasamy et al., 2017).

Among the Belt and Road projects, two stand out as prestigious projects. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor features bridges, railways, energy installations, a redeveloped highway, and the expansion of the Pakistani port of Gwadar. China regards it as the most critical element of the Belt. Another is the China-Europe express railway, which has reduced delivery times from China to Europe by 15 days (Jie, 2021).

The Success of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Hegemonic stability theory scholars argue that when a country is a hegemon, rather than dominating the other nations, the hegemonic country has leadership capacity and gets the consent of the other weaker nations to operate the global system for successful and peaceful international relations. China's Belt and Road Initiative fits this description. With China's influence in the world and its substantial share in the markets of most nations of the world, China is becoming the economic hegemon. According to some scholars, China has achieved this already.

Long cycle theory also discusses the changes that occur over time: hegemonic shifts occur after 100-120 years. Technological innovations, new needs in people's lives, and changes in international politics create opportunities for these shifts. A year ago, Xi Jinping announced that China would reach carbon neutrality by 2060 and peak carbon emissions by 2030, placing China in a position to lead the world in this area. By the end of the next decade, the world will have a much clearer understanding of how the Belt and Road Initiative will affect green infrastructure, industry, and energy solutions around the globe (Hu & Zhang, 2018).

China's leadership in global manufacturing, its leading PPP, its control of the most significant trading pact, and its transformative initiatives indicate that in the next decade, the United States hegemony might face a threat from China.

Comparing the U.S. and China's Military Strength

The long cycle theory scholars observe the effects of hegemony on the major wars for the period 1500-1986 and conclude that when economic and/or military power is concentrated in one hegemon, a period of peace ensues, while a period of dispersed power is associated with war (Modelski & Thompson, 1988). Power shifts in the world system occur in cycles according to the long cycle theory of Modelski and Thompson (1988). According to Modelski and Thompson, a new hegemon or hegemonic shift occurs after a regional or global war. The hegemonic stability theory indicates that one of the significant elements of hegemony is military supremacy: the hegemon must have strong, dominating military power to protect its status and lead the international system.

This paper focuses on China's threat to U.S. hegemony. Using the long cycle and hegemonic stability theories, this paper will analyze the changing nature of the military development of China and will compare the U.S. and China's military power. The theories will also evaluate the hegemonic shifts during different major wars.

After WW I (1914-1918) and WWII (1939-1945), the United States took over world hegemony. The U.S. led as a unipolar power after the cold war ended. Soon after leading as the sole superpower, the U.S. became involved in different wars, including its war with Afghanistan in 2001, the U.S. invasion of Iraq soon after the September 11, 2001 attack began the "war on terror," and the ongoing war in Syria in 2014. Nothing seemed to shake the U.S. hegemony. The U.S. is stronger than before, with a military power ranking first out of 142 countries as of 2022.

Table 1*China's Defense Budget 2018-2022*

Year	Increased Percentage of Spending in Defense Budget	Increase of Spending in Defense Budget (Yuan)
2018	8.1%	1106 trillion
2019	7.5%	1189 trillion
2020	6.6%	1268 trillion
2021	6.8%	1350 trillion
2022	7.1%	1450 trillion

Note. China's increase in defense budget from 1350 trillion Yuan to 1450 trillion Yuan in 2022. From Xinhua News Agency, or New China News Agency, the official state news agency of the People's Republic of China. The figure was published in a Global Times news report by Liu Xuanzun on March 5, 2022.

The U.S. spends more on the military than any other nation: \$750 billion, according to the Department of Defense's discretionary budget authority for the fiscal year 2022. Whereas China spends \$230 billion; with its economic supremacy; however, China is now able to spend more on its security than it did in 2005 (Funaiole & Hart, 2021). Even though the United States is currently dominant in this area, China rarely shows its actual plans; it moves very slowly, but in times of crisis, China can act the way it needs to gain dominance (See Table 1).

The hegemonic stability and long cycle theories state that a country needs economic and military supremacy to lead as a hegemon. Some scholars believe economic supremacy is the only aspect needed to lead (Kondratief, 1935). In the 21st century, China is on the path to leading in international trade. A developed economy provides capital for the state to invest in further

development, including military development, which China is also doing. China has increased its budget for security: defense spending grew to 7.1 percent in 2022 (Jash, 2022). Based on China's advances, will the U.S. still be able to lead?

Scholars consider the dependence of the United States on China for trade as the greatest threat to its hegemony. In addition, the United States and China do not have common allies, another potential area of conflict. China disapproves of the U.S.'s friendship with Taiwan, and the U.S. considers Russia's friendship with China a threat. Nancy Pelosi's August 2022 visit to Taiwan led China to dispatch warships and military aircraft all over the island democracy and fire ballistic missiles into the nearby waters of Taiwan's border (Rising, 2022).

The ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia, where the United States is arming Ukraine against Russia, presents another potential threat to U.S. hegemony. Since the war started in late February 2022, the international community has not been able to find a positive outcome—which is surprising to the international community. Vladimir Putin already announced the annexation of 20 percent of Ukraine on June 2, 2022 (Karklis & Cunningham, 2022). Scholars wonder if this war might be the seed for WWII's beginning. Ukraine's defeat would mean a loss to the U.S. as well. In this war, Russia is not taking any suggestions from the U.S. or other developed nations, which means the U.S.'s era of hegemony is already under threat.

U.S./China Military Force Comparison

Ground Force Comparison.

Currently, China has the largest military in the world, with more than 2 million soldiers on duty. According to the Pentagon's budget request for the next financial year, the U.S. military has around 1.35 million active personnel and 800,000 in reserve. However, in modern warfare, technology and equipment are more critical than manpower, and both countries are reducing

their emphasis on it. China's President Xi Jinping pledged in 2015 to cut the People's Liberation Army's (PLA's) number of troops by 300,000, while U.S. President Joe Biden's budget plan for the upcoming financial year also included a reduction of about 5,400 in the American military (Zhang, 2021).

The PLA is the largest standing ground force in the world, with 915,000 active-duty personnel, almost twice the U.S. figure of 486,000. Nevertheless, the PLA's ground forces rely on obsolete equipment and will only be able to deploy modern weapons effectively with better equipment or training. In recent years, China has switched from physical grunt work to digital technology for its ground forces, yet experts say training has not kept up (Hartung, 2022). According to David Axe, a staff reporter for Forbes, in 2020, the United States had the second-largest armor holdings in the world after Russia, with 6,333 tanks, while China had 5,800 tanks.

Air Force Comparison.

The United States operates more than 13,000 military aircraft, including 5,163 aircraft owned by the U.S. Air Force. Among its aircraft are the F-35 Lightning and F-22 Raptor, rated among the best in the world in the World Air Forces Report by Flight Global (2021). Despite this, China has the third-largest aviation force in the world, with over 2,500 aircraft, of which over 2,000 are combat aircraft. According to the China Military Power Report (United States Department of Defense, 2020), China has two aviation forces: the People's Liberation Army Air Force and the People's Liberation Army Naval Air Force.

Regarding stealth technology, China's J-20, or Mighty Dragon, is the world's most advanced stealth fighter jet, and its speed and combat capability are designed to compete with the U.S. F-22s. Currently, work is underway on a turbofan engine with a high thrust that could speed up mass production. Both countries are also developing new bombers, with China developing its

Xian H-20. Additionally, the Air Force released images and details of the next-generation B-21 Raider stealth bomber (Swanson & Wong, 2022).

Naval Comparison.

Based on a U.S. Congressional report, China now has the largest navy, with 360 ships to the U.S.'s 297 (Wooley, 2021). However, China's numerical advantage is due to smaller vessels, such as coastal patrol ships. Among larger warships, the United States has a numerical, technological, and experience advantage (Zhang, 2021). The U.S., for instance, has 11 nuclear-powered aircraft carriers, which can travel longer distances than conventional ships, and each carrier can accommodate 60 or more aircraft.

In comparison, China has only two carriers, the Liaoning and Shandong. Both carriers were patterned after Soviet-designed Kuznetsov-class carriers from the 1980s, powered by conventional oil-fired boilers, and carry 24 to 36 J-15 fighter jets. Despite this, China planned to launch two dozen large warships in 2019, from corvettes and destroyers to massive amphibious landing docks. In 2022, the company planned to launch a third aircraft carrier with electromagnetic launch catapults and start work on a fourth (Xuanzun, 2022).

Nuclear Warheads and Missiles Comparison.

According to the World Population Review (2022), the U.S. has the second-largest nuclear arsenal in the world after Russia, France, and China in fourth. The latest U.S. Defense Department report on the Chinese military estimated the number of Chinese warheads at around 200. At the same time, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute put the number at 350. China has not disclosed how many warheads it has.

According to a source close to the Chinese military, the military has amassed 1,000 nuclear warheads in recent years, but fewer than 100 are active. Nevertheless, these estimates

pale compared to the total U.S. nuclear warhead inventory of 5,800 warheads, of which 3,000 are available for deployment, and 1,400 are on alert. The United States and Russia also extended the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty until 2026, which may give China a chance to close the nuclear gap. According to the agreement, Washington and Moscow can each deploy no more than 1,550 strategic warheads (Zhang, 2021).

Missiles.

Although the U.S. has far more nuclear warheads, China has a monopoly in one area: ground-based ballistic missiles that can carry nuclear and conventional weapons. The 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty with the Soviet Union prohibited the U.S. from deploying ground-based intermediate-range missiles, but the U.S. formally withdrew from the treaty in August 2019 (Kimball, 2019). Following withdrawal from the pact, the U.S. launched its first intermediate-range ballistic missiles since the 1980s, two weeks after it launched a ground-based variant of a sea-launched cruise missile. For now, China still has the upper hand in this field. Dong Feng 26 is China's only IRBM, nicknamed the "Guam killer," as it can attack the key U.S. Air Force base on the island, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (Lendon, 2016). In 2020, China will have 72 IRBM launchers in its arsenal (Harper, 2022).

The U.S. still leads in military power, however. In their article, "China's hollow military," Gill & Halon stated twenty-four years ago, "China is a rising power that may one day pose a significant challenge to the United States and its allies in East Asia, despite the numerous defects in its military establishment. That day will not come anytime soon; it will take China at least twenty years to threaten the world in such a way" (1999). In that sense, China is already moving towards becoming the next hegemon, having the most robust economy and now a strong military

rivalry with the United States. This transition of power in the last twenty years supports the long cycle theory's concept of hegemonic change after an interval of years.

Comparing the U.S. and China's Political Stability

There are multiple political signs that the United States is facing a crisis in its position as a hegemon: the uncoordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic, political partisanship, school shootings, racism, and its democratic form of government losing ground to authoritarian/autocratic forms, (forms which prevail in Russia, North Korea, and China, for example). All these signs indicate that U.S. domestic politics is experiencing turmoil.

COVID-19 Pandemic Response

U.S. COVID-19 Pandemic Response.

Since 2020, the horrific devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has held center-stage worldwide. On December 31, 2019, China notified the world of a disease outbreak; the Trump Administration responded with inaction or partial response, confusion, and inaccurate public statements (Blake, 2020). Due to this, the U.S. lost opportunities to contain and suppress the outbreak based on testing, contact tracing, and isolation following the confirmation of the first U.S. case in January (Parker & Stern, 2022). According to the COVID-19 Dashboard by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE), the pandemic could cost the U.S. almost one billion dollars in damages (2020).

China's COVID-19 Pandemic Response.

In contrast to the U.S. response, two weeks after China identified the virus cluster, the virus was isolated, identified, and sequenced, and its sequence was shared globally. The State Council established a national, multi-sectoral, joint prevention and control mechanism (WHO, 2019). It required that all levels of government establish corresponding prevention and control

headquarters, led by the local government directors and made up of heads of the ports, health, transportation, public security, and information departments. Every school, work unit, and community established a working group to combat COVID-19.

China utilized a grid-based management system, subdividing communities into buildings with managers responsible for maintaining control measures. Volunteers from the community participated in control activities, including measuring the temperature at entry, educating people about health, monitoring people returning from high-risk areas, providing services to people under lockdown, and ensuring compliance with prevention and control measures. To combat covid-19, strict organizational management, social cohesiveness, and citizens' altruistic values were the "magic weapons" (Chen et al., 2021).

China actively identified patients and managed them with early detection, isolation of every patient, and identification of close contacts for 14 days of individual quarantine with periodic PCR (polymerase chain reaction testing) (Li et al., 2020). China rapidly expanded its PCR capacity, ensured isolation and treatment, practiced routine screening in critical populations and medical institutions, mandated lockdowns to achieve initial containment, and established tight control on its borders. China's lockdown and restrictions could be precise because their testing was thorough enough to know who was infected down to the block level.

In the Pew Research survey 2020-2021, just 37% of respondents thought that the United States had done a good job responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast, 49% of people rate China's response to the pandemic as positive (Devlin et al., 2021).

Deep Partisan Divisions in the U.S.

Partisan animosity and ideological differences between Republicans and Democrats are more widespread today than 20 years ago. Today, 58% of Republicans hold a very unfavorable

view of the Democratic Party, up from 46% in 2014 and 32% during the 2008 election. A similar trend has been observed among Democrats, going from 37% in 2008 to 43% in 2014, and 55% today view the Republican Party as very unfavorable (Pew Research Center, 2014).

The 2016 presidential election's partisanship contributed to the animosity, followed by four years of divisive political rhetoric between the two parties. Then, on January 6, 2021, a mob of then-U.S. President Donald Trump supporters attacked the Capitol Building in Washington, DC, following his defeat in the 2020 presidential election. To keep Trump in power, the mob tried to prevent Congress from counting the electoral college votes that would formalize Joe Biden's victory. The attack was the culmination of Trump's seven-part plan to overturn the election, according to the House select committee investigating the incident. Five people died either before, during, or after the event. Many people were injured, including 138 police officers. Americans have never experienced or even imagined such a historic and violent response by a candidate to the outcome of an election (Bash et al., 2022).

Gun Violence and School Shootings in the U.S.

Every day, 12 children die due to gun violence in America. In addition, 32 other people are injured. In the U.S., one in ten deaths by a gun occurs among people under the age of 19, making guns the number one cause of death for kids and teens. Firearm deaths are five times more common than drownings in the U.S. (Sandy Hook Promise, 2022). There have been 2,032 school shootings since 1970, and these numbers are on the rise. Since the December 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, 948 school shootings have occurred (Despart, 2022).

Racism in the U.S.

Discrimination Against Black Americans.

Racism is not something new in the U.S. In assessing the magnitude of problems that Black Americans face, the majority of Black Americans say racism (63%), police brutality (60%), and economic inequality (54%) are extremely or very significant. In addition to criticizing U.S. institutions, Black adults also experience racial inequality personally. A majority of Black adults report experiencing unfair treatment because of their race or ethnicity (79%). Several states, including Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, and Georgia, restricted COVID vaccines to Black Americans (Ndugga et al., 2022). Out of the U.S. population, only 23.3 percent of black Americans got the first dose of the vaccine, and 19.7 percent are fully vaccinated (Bogart et al., 2021).

Asian Hate Crimes.

Asian Americans, with ancestry in East Asia and Southeast Asia, have been particularly burdened by heightened racial tensions and associated racist microaggressions and verbal attacks. These tensions occurred as Americans grew accustomed to a "new normal" of social distancing, stay-at-home orders, and mounting concerns about the spread of COVID-19 (Gover et al., 2020). During this time, Asian Americans reported an increase in a second epidemic targeting them (Chiu, 2020). A survey by Stop AAPI Hate, a national organization that keeps track of such instances and campaigns to stop hate crimes against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, found that between March 2020 and March 2022, more than 11,400 hate incidents against Asian Americans were reported across the country (Edwin, 2022).

Violence on Latinos.

In 2019, hate crimes against Latinos, including that year's El Paso, Texas shooting massacre, increased. Meanwhile the number of reports of hate-motivated killings reached the highest level since the early 1990s, according to a report released by the FBI (FBI, 2019).

According to the FBI, 527 reported anti-Hispanic hate crimes in 2019, up from 485 in 2018, an 8.7% rise. These crimes include robberies, assaults, and other offenses (Li, 2019).

Summary Statement on U.S. Domestic Politics

This level of instability in a nation's domestic politics can threaten that nation's hegemony. Before concentrating on international agendas, the United States needs to address major domestic issues. Strengthening the military will not solve the problem. Although it gives the U.S. a strong image worldwide, its domestic and international policies are at risk. When a democracy's freedoms result in the level of chaos the U.S. is experiencing, authoritarian forms of government can look more promising. The U.S. has a long history of liberal government, and its victory over autocracy seemed assured after the end of the cold war in 1991. However, the authoritarian form of government in China has created an opportunity for its nation's international success.

Authoritarian Chinese Domestic Politics

In contrast to the old superpower contest between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the incipient cold war between China and the U.S. is not based as much on the irreconcilable ideologies of communism and capitalism. Instead, today's Sino-American rivalry is portrayed as an epic struggle between autocratic and democratic forces. Moreover, the facts suggest autocracy has won while democracy has faltered. According to many findings, many people in the world assume that authoritarianism is a superior form of government to liberal democracy (Ang, 2020).

The rise of authoritarianism is a serious threat to world freedom. The adversaries of liberal democracy, a type of self-government where the government upholds human rights and provides everyone equal treatment under the law, are stepping up their attacks worldwide. The institutions and norms intended to protect fundamental freedoms have become more easily co-opted or avoided. Meanwhile, authoritarian regimes have gotten more adept at helping others who want to do the same. Internal forces have taken advantage of the flaws in long-established democracies, distorting national politics to further hatred, violence, and unchecked power. Meanwhile, those nations that have struggled to balance democracy and authoritarianism are moving more and more in that direction. The authoritarian model will triumph if those who support democracy do not cooperate to help ensure freedom for everyone as the world order is about to tip (Repucci & Slipowitz, 2022).

The economic success of Beijing's authoritarian capitalism has fuelled its illiberal influence. In 1978, China was poorer than Bangladesh and Chad, with a per capita income of \$156, roughly as wealthy as Malawi (Chhabra, 2019). Today, China is the world's largest exporter and the second-largest economy, and it had more high-speed rail lines within a decade than the rest of the world combined. Analysts have argued that democratic, inclusive institutions are required to achieve dynamic and sustainable economic growth; however, China has succeeded because of its autocratic governing style. While China faces significant demographic headwinds beginning around 2030, technology-driven productivity gains may offset this challenge significantly, primarily as artificial intelligence and machine learning facilitate automation with its authoritarian capitalist ideas (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2017).

China's authoritarian government faces less threat from its citizens. The central government leaders, however, remain adamantly opposed to fundamental political reform. China

rejects representative democracy and free speech. As with the Tiananmen student demonstrations in 1989 and the Falun Gong spiritual movement after 1999, they violently suppressed peaceful protests. A moderate call for political reform is met with long prison sentences. For example, Liu Xiaobo, the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize winner, is serving an 11-year sentence for organizing Charter 08, a petition signed by thousands of Chinese citizens and intellectuals (Minzner, 2011).

China's, Russia's, and other dictatorships' leaders have successfully changed global incentives, undermining the belief that democracy is the only practical route to wealth and security and promoting increasingly authoritarian forms of government. They have significantly increased their influence in the international system. In contrast, more liberal nations have seen the legitimacy of their long-standing norms questioned and weakened. Democracy gives freedom, but too much freedom can cause danger. The January 6, 2021 capital attack by the supporters of President Trump offers an example of this. All who value their rights and the rights of others should be alarmed by the current situation of world freedom (Repucci & Slipowitz, 2022).

The percentage of people living in authoritarian countries has increased to 38% since 1997 (Repucci & Slipowitz, 2022). To reverse the decline in the nation's political stability on both domestic and international platforms, the United States must strengthen its institutions and legal framework and take bold, well-coordinated action to support the struggle for its democratic ideals around the world.

Comparing the U.S. and China's Foreign Policy

According to the hegemonic stability theory, hegemonic stability depends on nation-states having a solid relationship with the hegemon. Solving international issues requires collective action involving both domestic and international agendas. A strong hegemon is

prepared and able to offer solutions that serve the common interest of the nations involved to sustain the international order and achieve peaceful outcomes (Norrlöf, 2010).

In the 21st century, China and Russia have created new international institutions and regional forums that generally exclude the United States and the West. The BRICS grouping comprises Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. In 2009, the group established itself as a dynamic forum for discussing international governance and global leadership, including developing alternatives to Western-controlled institutions in Internet governance, international payment systems, and development assistance. BRICS countries created the New Development Bank in 2016 to finance infrastructure projects in developing countries (Cooley & Nexon, 2020). In comparison, the U.S. went in an opposite direction.

U.S. Foreign Policy under Trump

In contrast, the U.S.'s former President Trump withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal and Paris peace agreement for climate change. He also changed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to the United States, Mexico, Canada Agreement (USMCA), which threatened the U.S. economy (Finnegan, 2021). Trump's "America first policy" and his retreat from global leadership isolated the United States from the international community in ways not seen in recent decades, threatening its hegemony.

The U.S. allies regularly criticized Trump's threats to pull the U.S. out of NATO, his support of the breakup of the European Union, his withdrawal from international organizations and agreements, and his pandering to autocrats like Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un before the pandemic. Trump questioned the value of placing liberal values such as democracy and human rights at the center of foreign policy. Viewing international affairs from scarcity rather than abundance, Trump preferred zero-sum, transactional politics,

leading the United States away from a liberal international order. By the way, the people following Trump into zero-sum politics were also the ones who attacked the capitol on January 6 and performed hate crimes toward different races. These events led to even deeper partisan divisions in the United States.

The United States during Trump's era mostly rejected collective decisions for the benefit of everyone in the international community and favored decisions that he considered that benefited the United States alone. According to the hegemonic stability theory, a hegemon must have a strong economy, military, and socio-political approach both in domestic and international arenas. Trump's administration made the U. S.'s position as a hegemon shaky.

U.S. Foreign Policy under Biden

The foreign policy of the Joe Biden administration has been centered on repairing U.S. relations with other countries, which Biden claims were damaged by the Trump administration, and restoring the U.S. to a “position of trusted leadership” among other nations that are democracies. Biden is attempting to counter the challenges presented by China and Russia globally (Finnegan, 2021). Biden is doing so by hosting more foreign policy negotiations, creating strong international cooperative agendas, and working not to damage any strong international relationships. Biden’s foreign policy focuses on moving toward other nations instead of isolating the U.S. from the world.

When Joe Biden took office as the 46th president, his agenda focused on the challenges at home. The slogan "Build Back Better" centered on dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic, reviving the U.S. economy, and addressing systemic racism and economic inequality. In foreign policy, Biden has worked to fortify the ties that bind the United States and Europe together and has reaffirmed America's commitment to NATO and global security. In addition to taking other

actions to tackle climate change, Biden brought the United States back into the Paris Climate Agreement. His government emphasizes U.S. defense against foreign-sponsored cyberattacks and cyberespionage, as well as international cooperation in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. However, putting America's allies in alignment to manage a rising China should be at the top of Biden's agenda instead, according to Schake (2022).

Wolf-Warrior Diplomacy and China's International Approaches

Chinese diplomats have started using aggressive, coercive diplomatic tactics under the leadership of Xi Jinping. This style of diplomacy is called "wolf warrior diplomacy." It is a new form of danger to global foreign policy.

Leaders preceding Xi Jinping utilized a different foreign policy strategy. Following Mao Zedong's passing in the late 1970s, Deng Xiaoping instituted a foreign policy best summarized by the Chinese proverb "to conceal one's light and cultivate in the dark," emphasizing the avoidance of controversy and the employment of cooperative discourse. The above idiom encapsulates Deng's strategy: "observe calmly, secure our position, cope with affairs calmly, hide our capacities and bide our time, be good at maintaining a low profile, and never claim leadership." In other words, Deng favored waiting for one's turn without displaying strength (Dent, 2010).

The Chinese government's wolf warrior diplomacy, in contrast, is characterized in the 21st century using confrontational rhetoric by Chinese diplomats, coercive behavior, as well as their increased willingness to reject criticism of the government and its policies, and court controversy in interviews and on social media (Wendy, 2020). It marks a change from the previous Chinese foreign policy, which centered on operating covertly, avoiding conflict, and embracing a language of international collaboration, as represented by the dictum that China

"must hide its might" in international diplomacy. This adjustment reflects a broader shift in the Chinese Communist Party's and the Chinese government's perceptions of and interactions with the outside world. Another innovation was the Chinese diaspora's inclusion in China's foreign policy has also been a focus of increased effort (Brian, 2020).

China's foreign ministry spokesman, Zhao Lijian's response to the Brereton Report, offers an example of this wolf warrior approach. Lijian used his Twitter account to spread a digitally altered image of a child having their throat slit by an Australian soldier in late 2020. Anthony Galloway, a security analyst, later called the incident "a grey zone attack if there ever was one on ethnic allegiance over national loyalty (2021). According to Kirsky Needham (2020), Scott Morrison, the prime minister of Australia, called Zhao's tweet "really repulsive" and stated that the Chinese government should be "utterly ashamed of this statement." The Chinese foreign ministry turned down Australian requests for an apology the next day, hurting ties between Australia and China. Zhao's tweet caused Australian politicians from all parties to agree to denounce the incident and China more generally.

Conversely, Zhao's tweet also sparked a significant upsurge in support for Chinese nationalism throughout China (Needham, 2020). China's behavior reflects its willingness to step into the superpower position and not to seek consent from any state. In the 21st century, China is moving forward with an aggressive and careless outlook (Subramanian, 2011).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

China's rise poses a threat to American hegemony. If it is true that China's goal is to become a superpower with hegemonic status, there are two possible routes it could follow to get there. Regional hegemony will be the next goal after overcoming economic hegemony. In contrast to what the Soviet Union did during the Cold War, this regional hegemony does not entail physically conquering neighboring nations (except for Taiwan). However, it uses the Belt and Road initiative to expand its economic influence in a chain-like fashion, creating trade routes or markets for China's goods, as described in the Made in China 2025 project, and rendering the entire world dependent on Chinese-made goods. China will also respect the United States as its most significant trading partner in this process. The analysis segment demonstrates that China's economy is expanding rapidly.

The military power of a state is the second factor considered when determining hegemonic power. China is building up its military while avoiding any overt displays of rivalry. However, China is very concerned about the Taiwan problem. China is developing a more robust military than the United States, and its missiles can compete with those of developed nations.

According to this study, China's authoritarian regime is fiercely competing with the democracy in the United States. People living under China's regime are significantly safer, as the state has supreme authority, and its security comes first. China's official policies are gaining ground thanks to authoritarian governance on both domestic and international platforms. Both developing nations and many developed nations can now locate other patrons instead of relying solely on Western largesse. Additionally, illiberal, frequently right-wing transnational networks are working to undermine the principles and standards of the liberal international order, formerly believed to be unbreakable. So, based on the hegemonic stability theory, China meets all the

criteria to pose a threat to the hegemon. A hegemon must have a powerful military, a robust economy, and a political foundation that other states may respect.

Furthermore, the long cycle theory supports the conclusion that China threatens American hegemony. China is adapting to the times and thriving in the modern era. China is creating and trading goods with the rest of the world, ranging from robots to electric automobiles, medicines, and simple lifestyle equipment. Moreover, despite what its leaders and reformers claim, China will not stop. China will work toward its victory by utilizing various projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative and Made in China 2025.

According to the long cycle theory, hegemonic shifts typically occur after 70 to 100 years. Since the end of World War II seventy-seven years ago, the United States has ruled as the sole global hegemon. World politics focused on global security because of the concerns brought on by the Cold War, affecting most of the world. The United States gave a strong impression that it had the resources and power necessary to lead.

Now in the 21st century, world citizens are tired of warring. Even though nations are at war, their citizens increasingly desire cooperation and peace with the resources necessary to live well. Countries with fewer international disputes are respected more. China is one country that has so far avoided the negative publicity of international wars. Chinese markets and products also make people's lives easier.

Additionally, they are not overly expensive, making them easily accessible to everyone. According to the long cycle theory, hegemonic shifts take place systemically, following the populace's desires at the time. As a result, China has a significant chance to challenge American hegemony and could be the next hegemon under the interpretation of the long cycle theory.

The hegemonic stability theory and the long cycle theory indicate that China could take over hegemony in the next two decades. The long cycle theory indicates that it is almost time for the hegemony to change hands, and China has a significant opportunity to take it over. Although predictions for U.S. decline are not new and have often been wrong, more and more indicators now point to this hegemonic shift to China.

The United States itself is its own most significant threat at this point, following the end of President Trump's presidency. The United States must now re-evaluate and reconstruct. The United States, run by and for the people, should serve not just its people but people in all other countries. The United States' position as the only hegemon has been called into question numerous times, yet it has remained unchanged. Nevertheless, the three facets of the Trump administration—political, military, and economic—have endangered the United States' status as the only hegemon and turned China into a rival.

China has already surpassed the U.S.'s economic dominance. Additionally, China is developing a more extensive military than the United States, imposing restrictions on its citizens for their safety and standing abroad as part of its authoritarian government. China has made technological advancements recently and enhanced consumer demand depending on its market. This paper anticipates China becoming the next hegemon in the next 10 to 20 years.

Further Study

This paper confidently asserts China's threat to U.S. hegemony. However, whether United States' internal struggles or China's growing dominance will prove to be the more significant threat to U.S. hegemony needs further research. Researchers also need to study what the United States can do to address the threats to its hegemony mentioned in this paper.

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