



Article

The Role of Beliefs in Identifying Rising Powers

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Abstract

The concept of rising powers is central to international relations, and it is considered crucial for answering questions about war and peace. Yet the theoretical literature on rising powers is surprisingly sparse and highly contentious. One of the biggest shortcomings in this literature is that rising powers are conceptualized only in terms of their material capabilities, that is, their relative economic and military power. As a result, there is little agreement on who is a rising power, when they rose, and when they became or will become a great power. Drawing on primary and secondary sources, this article argues that rising powers are distinguished by very specific kinds of domestic beliefs. It uses two detailed cases, one historical (the United States 1898–1903) and one contemporary (China post-2002), to show that rising powers, despite different time periods, regimes, and cultures, have very particular kinds of beliefs about how to become a great power. It uses two additional mini cases, India post-2002 and Weimar Germany 1922–1933 to argue that if beliefs are not taken into account, states may be overestimated or underestimated as rising powers.

Introduction

Rising powers are a category of actors crucial to questions of war and peace in international relations (IR). Both academics and policy makers, when identifying rising powers, worry that they are challenger powers, and wonder what kind of great power they will become. They are concerned about their strategy, their behaviour, talk of their ‘assertiveness’, and discuss how states, particularly the status quo power(s), can ‘manage’ their rise. But they rarely systematically discuss how rising powers consider managing their own rise.

For the states that receive it, the label of rising power is a double-edged sword—it simultaneously confers prestige, because it implies the state is on the path to becoming a great power, while cautioning prudence, because international society needs to beware of the state. Yet the identification of rising powers is contentious. There is no ‘commonly accepted definition of what an emerging or rising power is’, and there are ‘no consistent indicators of

what a rising state looks like'.¹ Who is rising, when they rose, and when they became or will become a great power is the subject of many debates in IR. Yet, there is very little work on the ideational sources of their motivation.

This article argues that a significant weakness in the IR literature with respect to rising powers is that it relies predominantly on the relative material capabilities of a state to classify it as a rising power. It ignores the fact that rising powers have a proliferation of specific beliefs about becoming a great power that exist in conjunction with their capabilities. This article puts forward three arguments to address this weakness. First, it posits that rising powers can be identified not just through their capabilities but also through their beliefs. Policy elites within rising powers construct contesting policy narratives of imminent great power status, and seek to make the state in question behave like a great power in the making. As a result, there are specific kinds of domestic beliefs about attaining great power that exist within rising powers. These beliefs can be used as a measure, in addition to capabilities, to help identify rising powers. Second, it postulates that there is a commonality of such beliefs within and across rising powers. To demonstrate this, it uses two detailed cases of rising powers—the United States in the period 1898–1903, and China in the period post-2002—to show that both states, despite different time periods, regime types, and cultures, hold very similar kinds of beliefs about their rise. Last, it examines two additional mini cases—a state that has the capabilities to be termed a rising power, but no specific beliefs about becoming a great power (India post-2002); and a state that did not have the capabilities to be termed a rising power but had beliefs about gaining great power (Weimar Germany 1922–1933). I term these, respectively, overestimated and underestimated rising powers.

The article is organized in the following way. The first section examines how we currently identify rising powers and what attributes we observe in them. It lays out the problems of using material capabilities as the predominant measure of rising powers, and briefly canvasses the historical record to introduce an additional attribute—beliefs about becoming a great power. The second section defines a rising power, shows why beliefs about attaining great power are indicative of rising powers, and discusses how to observe these beliefs and when they matter. The third section discusses case selection and alternative explanations for these beliefs, other than as indicators of rising power status. The last section discusses each case—the United States 1898–1903, China post-2002, India post-2002, and Weimar Germany 1922–1933. It concludes with implications and questions for future research.

How Do We Identify Rising Powers?

There are three types of work on rising powers. The origins of work on these states can be traced back to the literature on power transitions. Power transition theories and their variations seek to answer meta-questions about war and peace, conflict and cooperation, and stability and instability in the international system.² There is a 'recurring pattern' in

- 1 Andrew F. Hart and Bruce D. Jones, 'How Do Rising Powers Rise?', *Survival*, Vol. 52, No. 6 (2010), p. 65; Sheena Chestnut and Alastair Iain Johnston, 'Is China Rising?', in Eva Paus et al., eds., *Is China Changing the Rules of the Game?* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), p. 237.
- 2 A. F. K. Organski, *World Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958); A. F. K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Jacek Kugler

international politics—there exists an international order led by an overwhelmingly powerful nation, and eventually there is a challenge to that leadership and the order. The rise of a new challenger usually results in conflict.³ Both classic power transition theories and their variations have focused almost entirely on general theories of power shifts and systemic compulsions of state behaviour, and less frequently on the details of specific rising powers and their propensity for conflict.⁴

A more in-depth scrutiny of rising powers and their behaviour has been undertaken implicitly by historians—the classic example of this is Paul Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*—as well as political scientists seeking to understand great powers.⁵ The last type of work on rising powers focuses either on case analyses of a single country that also happens to be a rising power (usually China or India),⁶ or on comparisons of the rise of India and China to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each, and the obstacles faced by them as they rise.⁷

States with Increasing Capabilities?

All of the three types of literature on rising powers assume that since it is the relative power of the challenger and defender that determines the likelihood of engaging in war, rising powers can be identified and compared primarily by measuring their relative material

and Douglas Lemke, eds., *Parity and War: Evaluations and Extensions of the War Ledger* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Brian Eford, Jacek Kugler, and Gaspare Genna, 'From War to Integration: Generalizing Power Transition Theory', *International Interactions*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (2003), pp. 293–313.

- 3 Organski, *World Politics*, p. 361.
- 4 Some examples of power transition theorists discussing specific cases like China are Jacek Kugler and Ronald Tammen, 'Regional Challenge: China's Rise to Power', in Jim Rolfe, ed., *The Asia-Pacific: A Region in Transition* (Honolulu: Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies, 2004); Douglas Lemke and Ronald Tammen, 'Power Transition Theory and the Rise of China', *International Interactions*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (2003), pp. 315–42.
- 5 For example, Jack Levy, *War and the Modern Great Power System, 1945-1975* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1983).
- 6 There is a large body of work by country experts on China and India who provide insight into their domestic politics and foreign policy and how they affect their rise. A variation on this also focuses on the implications of each one's rise for the United States and the international system. Examples of the latter are Alastair Iain Johnston, 'Is China a Status Quo Power?', *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (2003), pp. 5–56; Zheng Bijian, 'China's "Peaceful Rise" to Great Power Status', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 5 (2005), pp. 18–24; G. John Ikenberry, 'The Rise of China and the Future of the West', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 87, No. 1 (2008), pp. 23–37; Barry Buzan, 'China in International Society: Is "Peaceful Rise" Possible?', *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 3, No.1 (2010), pp. 5–36.
- 7 This is the smallest body of work. Examples include Robyn Meredith, *The Elephant and the Dragon: The Rise of India and China and What It Means* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008); Pranab Bardhan, *Awakening Giants, Feet of Clay: Assessing the Economic Rise of India and China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); George Gilboy and Eric Heginbotham, *Chinese and Indian Strategic Behavior: Growing Power and Alarm* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

capabilities.⁸ Occasionally this is enhanced with other measures such as influence in global affairs⁹ and visibility.¹⁰ A state that is increasing its material capabilities is understood also to be increasing, or aspiring to increase, its soft co-optive power.¹¹

Identifying a rising power on the basis of its capabilities has rarely been questioned. But, as it turns out, power, hard or soft, is an uneven identifier of rising powers. To begin with, using material capabilities alone, there is little consensus as to which state can be unreservedly labelled a rising power, which state has already risen, and whether the status quo state is now declining. Some contemporary accounts focus on only India and China as rising powers, while others focus on the BRICs as a group. The BRICs acronym was bestowed by Goldman Sachs to concoct a group of rising powers on the basis of their rapid economic growth and their exclusion from the governance structures of the world economy.¹² But Brazil's status as a rising power with no nuclear weapons can be questioned, while Russia can reasonably be called a declining rather than rising power. The acronym BRICS now includes South Africa, another puzzling choice as a rising power.¹³ Even China's rise has been debated—'China's power as a proportion of US power is increasing but the absolute advantage in capabilities favouring America continues to widen.'¹⁴

Moreover, the literature on soft power is contentious, and there is no agreement on what constitutes 'influence' and how much of it a state must possess to be called a rising power. Thus, power, either hard or soft, seems an incomplete measure of rising powers. While capabilities are a necessary condition for identifying a rising power, they are certainly not sufficient. An additional measure to identify these states is called for. We turn, therefore, to another phenomenon that has been observed in rising powers, but which is either treated peripherally or noted only in order to explain events related to their rise—the presence of ideas about attaining great power.

States with Ideas?

If we examine the international system in the mid-19th to the mid-20th century there are some states that we accept, today, in hindsight, to have indisputably been rising. Japan (1868–1905), Germany (1800–1918, 1930–1945), and the United States (1853–1940), for example, are some of the states that we now categorize as historical rising powers.¹⁵ In addition to increasing economic and military growth, these states had an important commonality that has been

8 More specifically 'capabilities are an aggregation of world population, urban population, military expenditures, military personnel, iron and steel production, and coal and oil consumption'. Kugler and Tammen, 'Regional Challenge', p. 38.

9 Hart and Jones, 'How Do Rising Powers Rise?', p. 65.

10 Chestnut and Johnston, 'Is China Rising?', pp. 239–40.

11 Joseph S. Nye, 'Soft Power and American Foreign Policy', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 119, No. 2 (2004), p. 256.

12 Marion Fourcade, 'The Material and Symbolic Construction of the BRICs', *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (2013), pp. 261–62.

13 Apart from other problems, South Africa was one of only 11 countries that actually saw a drop in its life expectancy between 1990 and 2013, <http://mg.co.za/article/2014-12-19-sa-life-expectancy-drops>.

14 Chestnut and Johnston, 'Is China Rising?', p. 244.

15 Jeffery W. Meiser, *Power and Restraint: The Rise of the United States 1898–1941* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2015), p. xxiii.

overlooked. As historians who study these countries have extensively recorded, these states all had extensive and conflictual ideas on how to become a great power.

In Japan, for example, the Meiji Restoration set out 'Japan's determination to acquire the power to be the equal of the Western world, or even to overtake the Western world.'¹⁶ The Meiji Restoration was achieved by a section of the old ruling class and young, low-ranking samurai, and was triggered by events that forced Japan to enter the international system.¹⁷ This elite became 'obsessed with the goal of overtaking the West and doing whatever was necessary, even risking Japan's very cultural identity, to achieve that goal'.¹⁸ Forced modernization, the economic and military revitalization of Japan, was accompanied by certain ideas that were 'not only necessary to expansion' but also influenced the way it was carried out.¹⁹ Some ideas looked to imitating the great powers of the day in order to become one. Thus, they advocated learning Western methods and adopting them. The only way to make Japan a great nation was to acquire the 'spirit' of the West—its self-reliance, its rationality, and its technology.²⁰ Other ideas advocated also behaving like Western countries—wholeheartedly adopting the rules of the existing international system and westernized legal codes,²¹ and using those rules to establish domination and bring countries under Japanese protection.²² These ideas were countered by others who believed in preserving traditional Japanese values or, at the very least, combining them with Western ideas.²³

Japan was not alone. Germany, too, had ideas and narratives of great power that accompanied its rise. Rising Nazi Germany was indelibly associated, for example, with the idea of *lebensraum*. *Lebensraum* has been called the 'greatest single underlying cause of the war and the keyword of the new (Nazi) empire'.²⁴ Literally, *lebensraum* means 'living space'. However, *lebensraum* meant much more than mere living space, and had implications well beyond considerations of self-determination. It was related to prestige, history, and geography.²⁵ It was the belief that Germany's territory needed to match the economic needs of its people, and that this enlarged state needed to engage in worldwide imperial politics.²⁶ While some ideas about *lebensraum* rooted it in 'geopolitik', using modern geography to advocate and justify commercial and territorial expansion, other ideas likened the state to an organism that needed to expand.²⁷ Ideas of *lebensraum* did not originate in Nazi

16 Kenneth B. Pyle, *Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose* (New York: Public Affairs, 2009), p. 98.

17 *Ibid.*

18 *Ibid.*, p. 99.

19 W. G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism 1894–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 27.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

21 Pyle, *Japan Rising*, p. 110.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

23 Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism*; Pyle, *Japan Rising*.

24 Charles Kruszewski, 'Germany's Lebensraum', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 34, No. 5 (1940), p. 964.

25 *Ibid.*

26 Richard Overy, 'Misjudging Hitler: A. J. P. Taylor and the Third Reich', in George Martel, ed., *The Origins of the Second World War Reconsidered: A. J. P. Taylor and the Historians* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 94.

27 Kruszewski, 'Germany's Lebensraum', p. 968.

Germany. They were, in fact, derived from another period of Germany's rise—pre-1914 German beliefs about great power and its role in the world.²⁸

The United States as a rising power, too, had what historian Michael Hunt has termed, 'visions of greatness'.²⁹ There were prolific domestic ideas that linked becoming a great power to liberty, racial hierarchy, and the limits of acceptable political and social change abroad.³⁰ Some advocated that liberty meant national greatness operationalized as territorial expansion. Others believed that advancing such ambitions abroad would 'betray' the cause of liberty at home and lead to the country's downfall. Still others promoted the idea that becoming a great power meant conquest and colonization, and racial fitness and pride.³¹ Presidents such as Woodrow Wilson personally held strong ideas about anti-imperialism and great power that were balanced with elite ideas of becoming a great power in the style of the colonial Western powers of the day.³²

Thus, these states that we know were rising powers historically did not just have increasing relative capabilities. They also had ideas about what their increasing power meant, and debated what they should do to become great powers. In the next section, I, first, define a rising power; second, show why such beliefs about attaining great power are indicative of rising powers and why they matter; and third, what these beliefs are and how we can observe them.

Rethinking Rising Powers

What is a Rising Power?

I define a rising power as a state that is rising to become a great power and, thus, engages in three types of behaviour: increasing its relative military and economic power, globalizing its interests, and exhibiting internal recognition of its changing status.

There is an important but implicit assumption about rising powers that is left unexplored in the rising power literature—that a rising power will, in the near future, become a great power. After all, the material capabilities of many states are constantly increasing relative to other states. Not all of these states are dubbed rising powers, although they may indeed be rising within a regional context. The term 'rising power' is specifically intended to capture a special category of actors—those who are in the near future expected to join the ranks of the great powers. We know that great powers eventually determine the structure, major processes, and general direction of the international system.³³ Their rise matters particularly to the status quo state whom they may replace, but also to international society as a whole. Thus, to identify them before they attain great power status I build on the existing assumption that a rising power will become a great power.

It is intuitive that the starting point for a discussion on rising powers would first establish our expectations of a great power. The IR literature is prolific on the question of how we can recognize a great power and how a great power behaves. The most commonly accepted definition of a great power utilizes military capabilities alone. A great power is one

28 Overy, 'Misjudging Hitler', p. 94.

29 Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 19.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

31 *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 32, 37.

32 Meiser, *Power and Restraint*, p. xvii.

33 Levy, *War and the Modern Great Power System*, p. 8.

that holds 5%³⁴ to 10% of global military power.³⁵ The Correlates of War project, which is the data set most widely used to identify major powers, includes power capabilities measured in terms of total population, urban population, iron and steel production, fuel consumption, military personnel, and military expenditure.³⁶ Yet because capabilities alone can result in mis-measurement of great powers,³⁷ other academics have added both the element of behavioural choice and of external recognition to the definition of a great power. Thus, in addition to possessing unusually high relative capabilities, a great power thinks of its interests as global rather than regional,³⁸ and it is recognized both formally and informally by other states as a great power.³⁹

We may, thus, assert that a rising power, a state that is on the path to great power, begins engaging in three types of behaviour. First, as discussed earlier in this article, a rising power actively seeks to increase its material capabilities relative to the status quo power(s). Second, a rising power should also perceive its self-defined national interests to be increasing in scope (expanding beyond the regional or local range) and depth (in complexity and breadth of affected issues). In other words, a rising power is a state that increasingly globalizes by taking on responsibility in the international system, through both alliances and institutions. Last, a rising power exhibits internal recognition that its status is changing, and engages in an internal contestation over its role and relation to the existing system.

It is internal rather than external recognition that is important for us to consider in the context of rising powers. External recognition, a key feature of great powers, is underlined by passivity. That is, it is an element that is bestowed by international society because it is contingent on both established capabilities and proven global interests, without which external recognition would presumably be non-existent. We know a great power when we see one. In a rising power, a state that is on its way to great power but not yet established as one, external recognition is more problematic, and goes back to the issue of correctly identifying rising powers.

For a rising power, engaging in internal recognition is important, because in order to justify acquiring and using its increasing capabilities and so expand its interests and commitments abroad, it needs domestic support and awareness. Also, because its international status is fluid rather than established, it has to be internally responsive to its reputation. That is, it actively tries to create and shape external perceptions of it to acquire recognition as a great-power-to-be. It has been shown that states in general attach importance to social

- 34 George Modelski, *World Power Concentrations: Typology, Data, Explanatory Framework* (Morristown: General Learning Press, 1974).
- 35 Daniel S. Geller and J. David Singer, *Nations at War: A Scientific Study of International Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- 36 Melvin Small and Joel David Singer, *Resort to Arms: International and Civil wars, 1816–1980* (London: Sage Publications Inc., 1982).
- 37 An example of this is Turkey and the United States in 1845, both of which ranked higher than Prussia using the Correlates of War scale, but only the latter is identified as a great power. See Levy, *War and the Modern Great Power System*, p. 16.
- 38 Levy, *War and the Modern Great Power System*, p. 16; R. Corbetta, et al., 'Major Powers, Major Power Status and Status Inconsistency in International Politics', unpublished paper, p. 3; Joel David Singer, 'Reconstructing the Correlates of War Data Set on Material Capabilities of States, 1816-1985', *International Interactions*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (1988), p. 119.
- 39 Singer, 'Reconstructing the Correlates of War Data Set', pp. 119–20; Levy, *War and the Modern Great Power System*, pp. 17–18.

reputation as an end in itself. This reputation is consistent with views of national identity, and its purpose is to achieve and manage ‘social standing, legitimacy and influence in international and national politics’.⁴⁰ Thus a state that is a rising power uses both domestic and international propaganda to shore up support.

Why Do Beliefs Matter For Rising Powers?

One could argue that perhaps all states have aspirational beliefs, and the phenomenon is not confined to rising powers. However, there are reasons why beliefs about attaining great power are indicative of rising powers.

First, the crucial point of the ideas outlined in the previous section on historical rising powers was that the status of these states in the world was changing, and they needed to understand the appropriate behaviour that would lead to great power. This can be directly related to the broadly accepted assumption in the rising power literature that it is the very quest for great power status which makes rising powers challenger states that are likely to clash with the status quo power(s). This, in turn, increases the risk of war in the international system. Ideas about how to attain great power are, thus, to be expected in rising powers.

Second, drawing from the great power literature, the three types of behaviour we expect of rising powers—increasing capabilities, globalizing interests, and exhibiting internal recognition—all necessitate beliefs about attaining great power.

We know that ideas can serve as ‘road maps’, either as causal or as principled beliefs, which guide individuals in selecting policy, even when self-interest plays a role. Actors have incomplete information and, in the absence of certainty about the consequence of their actions, rely on ideas to help choose strategies to further their goals. These influencing ideas become even more important in a rising power—a state that is actively increasing its material capabilities usually also has discussions on its grand strategy, the essence of which is the ability of political leaders to integrate military and non-military policies to preserve the long-term interests of a country during war and peace.⁴¹ Grand strategies are important for a state that is on the path to great power.⁴² The root of grand strategy is ideational—it is either comprised of ideas,⁴³ or influenced by them,⁴⁴ or both.⁴⁵

Moreover, as the power transition literature points out, rising powers are dissatisfied with the distribution of goods in the international system.⁴⁶ But the concept of satisfaction

40 Jennifer Erickson, *Dangerous Trade: Arms Exports, Human Rights and International Reputation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), p. 32.

41 Paul M. Kennedy, ed., *Grand Strategies in War and Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 4–5.

42 Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

43 Basil Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (New York: Praeger 1954); John M. Collins, *Grand Strategy: Principles and Practices* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press 1973).

44 Kennedy, ed., *Grand Strategies in War and Peace*; Richard Rosecrance and Arthur Stein, eds., *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

45 John Mueller, ‘The Impact of Ideas on Grand Strategy’, in Rosecrance and Stein, eds., *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy*.

46 Organski, *World Politics*, pp. 366–67; Jacek Kugler and A. F. K. Organski, ‘The Power Transition: A Retrospective and Prospective Evaluation’, in Marcus Midlarsky, ed., *The Handbook of War Studies* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 173.

and dissatisfaction that is central to these theories of rising powers actually rests on the premise of the domestic beliefs of the rising power about the distribution of goods in the international system, rather than the distribution of goods itself. Just as international society feels the need to ‘manage’ a rising power because it is a challenger power and will eventually become a great power and assess its satisfaction/dissatisfaction, a rising power needs to manage its own rise. On the one hand, old domestic paradigms are confronted by a new climate with a new set of challenges. On the other, the state needs to judge which international regimes and institutions it accepts or rejects as its power grows. The beliefs of a rising power about the distribution of goods and the consequences of a status that is fluid and changing are the ‘road maps’ that help it stay on the path to becoming a great power.

Which Beliefs Matter and When Do They Matter?

States, even rising powers, have many different kinds of ideas about foreign policy. Which of these beliefs matter for our purpose of identifying rising powers? When would we expect such beliefs to be significant enough to count as a measure? There is little agreement about how much economic and military power a rising power needs to possess before it gets dubbed a rising power. Thus, when can we assert that the beliefs in a state are significant enough to contribute to rising power status?

Drawing from the behaviours, outlined earlier, that rising powers engage in we can posit that there are three kinds of beliefs that are most relevant for rising powers.

First, the beliefs have to reconcile the material capability of the rising power with the constraints of the international order. In other words, as their material capabilities increase they focus attention on those goals that are now perceived to be materially attainable.

Second, the beliefs have to explain the purpose and goals of the rising power’s international involvement in order for its domestic public to gain its support.

Third, the beliefs have to focus on both the state’s regional role and its international role, particularly its relationship with its neighbours and the status quo power(s). This is the crucial audience for whom its changing status arguably has the most impact. These beliefs, therefore, target the purpose and goals of its international involvement towards this audience as well as other nations.

These influencing ideas can be derived from a set of elite individuals comprising a formal or informal epistemic community or a single leader.⁴⁷ Thus, these debates may be top-down, i.e. initiated by leaders and taken up by elites, or initiated by elites and taken up by leaders. We expect these beliefs about attaining great power to be significant when we observe elite debates about its role in the world. It is when the beliefs about the path to great power are contested that it matters most in signifying rising power status. This will indicate elites’ generating of new ideas, or recombining existing ideas to form new narratives that will spur the state to behave like a great power-to-be, re-framing its interests as global rather than regional or local, and creating both internal and external awareness of its rise.

47 Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, eds., *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993); Jeffrey Checkel, *Ideas and International Political Change: Soviet/Russian Behavior and the End of the Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Matthew Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces: The Transnational Movement to End the Cold War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press 1999); Daniel Béland and Robert Henry Cox, eds., *Ideas and Politics in Social Science Research* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Eventually, of course, as some beliefs matter more than others, there may emerge a consensus. It is outside the scope of this article to examine why certain beliefs become more popular than others and affect behaviour, or even how these beliefs arise. But when we observe elite level debates in states that already have rapidly increasing capabilities which focus on materially attainable goals, explaining their globalizing interests to a domestic and international audience, and their relationship with their neighbours and status quo power(s), we may take this as an additional indicator of rising power status. It is thus not any single belief per se but rather the contestation of beliefs about the path to great power that matters.

It is not my contention that rising powers can be identified or understood without the framework of material capabilities. However, capabilities are considered both necessary and sufficient in the IR literature to identify a state as a rising power, which has led to problematic classifications. I contend that only if capabilities are seen in conjunction with these domestic belief debates can we more successfully classify a state as a rising power, i.e. a state that is rising to become a great power.

I turn now to show this through case studies—the United States (1898–1903), China (post-2002), India (post-2002), and Weimar Germany (1922–1933). In the next section, I outline and justify my case selection to show how both capabilities and beliefs matter to identify rising powers. In the academic literature and popular media, the first three states, the United States, China, and India, using material capabilities alone, are considered rising powers. The fourth state, Weimar Germany, is not, because it lacked the necessary capabilities. As we will see, only two out of these four states, the United States and China, can be as classified rising powers, as regards both beliefs and capabilities. The other two are cases of overestimated (India) and underestimated (Germany) rising powers.

Case Selection

I select four cases to show how both capabilities and beliefs matter to identifying rising powers. These cases were selected for a number of reasons.

First, on the face of it, it may seem unremarkable that a state with rapidly increasing military and economic capabilities would have ideas about what to do with its subsequently increasing power. It would seem that these ideas are simply a side-effect of the growth in its capabilities. The case of India counters this by showing that it is possible for a state to possess rapidly increasing capabilities, and even be dubbed a rising power because of such increase, but still lack beliefs. Meanwhile, one may assert that beliefs have no independent value beyond capabilities. That is, they only matter when capabilities are taken into account. The case of Weimar Germany was selected to show how beliefs, even without capabilities, can be important, because they may strongly promote the acquisition of capabilities in the service of attaining great power. Thus, underestimating states with these beliefs simply because they lack the capabilities can have dangerous consequences.

Second, one may assert that the ideas about attaining great power that can be observed in historical rising powers were simply a product of the era—a multipolar world with several great powers jockeying for space. The cross-temporal and cross-cultural case of China negates this assertion. Third, one may assume that regime type has impact on the likelihood of these beliefs, and particularly on the contestation of beliefs. Thus, democratic regimes are more likely to produce them than authoritarian regimes. The case of the United States, a democracy, certainly shows that these beliefs existed when it was a rising power. But the

cases of China and India are in striking contrast to the United States. China is not a democracy and India is. Yet China, today, has similar beliefs to the US historically, while India does not.

Fourth, one may assert that rather than being a commonality across rising powers these beliefs were scattered ideas that were unique to each country. In other words, there is no commonality beyond the fact that these beliefs refer, in a very general fashion, to great power. I will show, however, that the beliefs in the United States, China, and Germany conform to the three types outlined earlier, and cut across the states.

To sum up, elite belief contestations about great power are independently important in identifying rising powers. They cannot simply be classified as some sort of grand strategy that is a by-product of increasing capabilities, although they may certainly contribute to grand strategy. Contrary to expectations, they can be observed across time, across culture, and across regime type. Moreover, they are not unique to each rising power. Rather, these beliefs fall into three categories that cut across states. None of this is to say that capabilities do not matter. Rather that capabilities and beliefs can both be used as measures to identify these states. A state in which we observe rapidly increasing capabilities and debates about attaining great power is a state that can be classified as a rising power.

The Cases: Rising Powers

The United States in the period 1898–1903 was considered a rising power.⁴⁸ China post-2002 has been predominantly referred to as a rising power.⁴⁹ While there can be found a proliferation of domestic beliefs on rise in both the United States historically and China today, I focus on a selection of contested beliefs to show debates about how to attain great power.

In the case of the United States, I document the beliefs around a political issue—the aftermath of the Spanish-American war. The term ‘rising power’ is a modern one. Consequently, searching the archives or newspapers for general domestic discussions in the United States during this period on its rising status is not useful.⁵⁰ Rather, how the United States perceived its changing status or aspired to become a great power can best be observed through the foreign policy issues of the time that dominated the political landscape, and the

48 Paul Kennedy, ‘The Rise of the United States to Great Power Status’, in Thomas G. Paterson and Stephen G. Rabe, eds., *Imperial Surge: The United States Abroad, The 1890s–Early 1900s* (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1992), p. 5; Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion 1860–1898* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963), p. 9.

49 China’s rise can be dated to even earlier. Based on its share of global GDP, some scholars have suggested that China’s rise began in the mid-1980s after the Chinese Communist Party launched *gaige kaifang* (open and reform). Others would suggest post-1989 as more definitive because it includes its share of global military expenditures as an additional measure. Daniel M. Kliman, ‘Is China the Fastest-Rising Power in History?’ *Foreign Policy*, 16 May, 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/05/16/is-china-the-fastest-rising-power-in-history>. Post-2002 was selected as a period when China’s status as rising power was undisputed externally and internally.

50 A search of the New York Times, for example, for the late 19th century and early 20th century does not bring up the term.

Spanish-American war and the subsequent Treaty of Philippines was the dominant issue of the day.

In the case of China, I focus on the debates on rise under two presidents—Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping—both of whom took office when the international references to the rise of China had proliferated, and China was established as a rising power. While in the United States these beliefs emanated from an elite set of politicians, intellectuals, and business magnates who raised vocal and influential ideas about its role in the world, in China these beliefs are associated with an elite epistemic community represented by a core group of academics and policy analysts in key think tanks⁵¹ who debated/are still debating leader beliefs, and in turn, informed/are informing the leadership.

Although both countries can be classified and compared as rising powers during these time periods,⁵² there are key differences that need to be taken into account when documenting these beliefs. The regime types of the United States and China are vastly different. The United States at the turn of the 20th century was a limited democracy but a democracy nonetheless. China is an authoritarian state. Thus, domestic beliefs in China are subject to state approval. This does not mean that they are indistinguishable from state propaganda, but that they have to exist with the blessing of the Chinese Communist Party. The passionate and public debates that existed in the United States as a rising power would be hard to duplicate in China today.

Also, ideas in China are, more often than not, deliberately solicited by the government. While it is impossible to say whether or how a particular elite idea will be picked up by the leadership,⁵³ the possibility exists that it could be, and there is little doubt, therefore, that the leadership is, in fact, informed by these ideas—which gives these beliefs a significance that one may otherwise ignore simply because China is an authoritarian state.⁵⁴ Last, in the

- 51 Think tanks in China are not independent in the Western sense—they cannot determine the mission and timing of research to be undertaken. However, they are ‘stable and autonomous’ and conduct research and provide advice on policy issues. See Xufeng Zhu and Lan Xue, ‘Think Tanks in Transitional China’, *Public Administration and Development*, Vol. 27, No. 5 (2007), p. 453. Some of the most influential think tanks in China today on foreign security policy include the Chinese Institutes of Contemporary International Relations or CICIR (Zhongguo xiandai guoji guanxi yanjiuyuan), China Institute of International Studies (Zhongguo guoji wenti yanjiuyuan), Shanghai Institute of International Studies (Shanghai guoji wenti yanjiuyuan), Centre for International and Strategic Studies, Peking University (Beijing daxue guoji zhanlue yanjiusuo), and the Institute of International Studies, Tsinghua University (Qinghua daxue guoji guanxi yanjiuyuan). They regularly provide reports and research that may even be actively solicited by the government, they convene meetings, again often on request from the government, on specific issues that are attended by government personnel, and key academics and analysts from these think tanks are often invited to high-level meetings.
- 52 Other work has also compared the United States and China in these periods as emerging powers. See Barry Buzan and Michael Cox, ‘China and the US: Comparable Cases of “Peaceful Rise”?’ *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2013), pp. 109–32.
- 53 As evidenced, for example, by appearing in a speech or policy initiative.
- 54 For example, before President Xi Jinping’s visit to the United States in 2013, the Chinese Foreign Ministry (*waijiao bu*) went to a think tank and asked them to convene a seminar to discuss thoughts on a ‘new type of great power relations’ (*xinxing daguo guanxi*). The

United States, beliefs that were initiated by elites and influenced the leadership were as well documented as leadership ideas that percolated down to the elite. In China today, while elites do initiate new ideas, the actual influence of these on the leadership is not as transparent because of the nature of the Chinese regime and the contemporary character of the debates. Thus, one of the optimal ways to observe beliefs is by examining the elite debates that take place under the larger umbrella of concepts that are accepted or put forward by China's leaders. This does not imply elite consensus, nor is it a claim that authoritarian regimes are more likely to have top-down beliefs while democracies have bottom-up beliefs. In fact, just as in the United States historically, there are ideational divisions in China today about the best path to becoming a great power, and these divisions are becoming starker.

The United States 1898–1903

At the turn of the 20th century, one of the major issues through which these beliefs could be detected was the Spanish-American war of 1898 and the subsequent American annexation of the Philippines. Through its victory in the war and the subsequent Treaty of Paris,⁵⁵ the United States acquired the territories of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. This event forced the United States to move away from its long-held principle of non-intervention⁵⁶ and led to its gradual emergence as a world power.⁵⁷ Ultimately, the United States had to grapple with the domestic problems caused by the war and confront the question of what kind of role the country would now want to play in international politics.⁵⁸

Particularly, the acquisition of the Philippines was highly significant for many reasons—it was the first time that the United States involved itself in the international politics of the Far East, policed the affairs of the Caribbean, and fought ‘men of a different colour in an Asian guerrilla war’.⁵⁹ The status of the United States was changing in global politics, and there was both international and domestic awareness of the country as a great-power-to-be.⁶⁰ European observers were worrying about a world order dominated by the ‘American moneybags’, or as British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury put it, ‘a world divided into the living and dying powers’.⁶¹ As LaFeber points out, ‘the United States began measuring itself

Foreign Ministry officials did not participate but they attended the seminar and took detailed notes. It was clear to the analysts present that the notes were going to be sent up through the leadership channels. Interview 8, Shanghai, China, June 2013.

- 55 The Treaty of Paris was ratified by the United States in 1899 and it ended its first foreign war in 50 years. It destroyed the Spanish empire and began America's acquisition of overseas territories.
- 56 James C. Bradford, ed., *Crucible of Empire: The Spanish-American War and Its Aftermath* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1993), p. xiv.
- 57 Ephraim K. Smith, ‘William McKinley's Enduring Legacy: The Historiographical Debate on the Taking of the Philippine Islands’ in Bradford, ed., *Crucible of Empire*, p. 210.
- 58 Robert Beisner, *Twelve Against Empire: The Anti-Imperialists 1898-1900* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1968), p. xiv.
- 59 *Ibid.*, p. xv.
- 60 Kennedy, ‘The Rise of the United States to Great Power Status’, p. 5; LaFeber, *The New Empire*, p. 9.
- 61 Kennedy, ‘The Rise of the United States to Great Power Status’, p. 5.

for Britain's shoes'.⁶² The war and the issue of the Philippines led to a clash of beliefs as to how the United States should become a great power.

A Contestation of Beliefs

Thus arose one of the 'great debates'⁶³ in American foreign policy—should the United States be a colonial great power, in the tradition of the great powers of the day who held and profited from overseas colonies, or be a different kind of great power? The beliefs around this issue can be broadly divided into two elite ideational camps, the anti-imperialists and the expansionists.

'Anti-imperialism became a nationwide movement that captivated headlines and made a significant impact on US foreign policy.'⁶⁴ Reacting to the conception that the United States was now an interventionist state with colonial territories, anti-imperialists sought to oppose America's overseas expansion. The most fascinating element of anti-imperialism was the unity it generated among Americans from vastly different, even contradictory, backgrounds—'Democrats, Republicans, progressives, conservatives, party stalwarts, independents, businessmen, and labour union chiefs.'⁶⁵ Anti-imperialism had widespread support that cut across many otherwise divisive lines. A number of highly influential elites, including Carl Schurz who had been a senator, George Hoar who was a prominent senator, Andrew Carnegie the industrialist who even by then had become one of the most famous men in the nation, William James the philosopher, and Edward Atkinson the economist, vocally subscribed to anti-imperialist ideas.⁶⁶

These men adamantly opposed to the United States becoming an expansionist colonizing power in the tradition of the European great powers, and they put forth varying ideas through speeches, letters, pamphlets, editorials, and Congress and Senate debates. 'Their arguments were moral, humanitarian, economic, military, and racist.'⁶⁷ Some of the anti-imperialists argued, for example, that empire was contrary to the ideal of American liberty,⁶⁸ and greatness lay in preserving American ideas of liberty. George Hoar in a letter declared, 'no man will successfully challenge (first) the affirmation that under the constitution of the United States, the acquisition of territory, as of other property, is not a constitutional end, but only a means to a constitutional end, and that there is therefore, no constitutional warrant for acquiring or holding territory for that purpose'.⁶⁹

62 LaFeber, *The New Empire*, p. 9.

63 Fabian Hilfrich, *Debating American Exceptionalism: Empire and Democracy in the Wake of the Spanish-American War* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).

64 Michael Patrick Cullinane, *Liberty and American Anti-Imperialism 1898-1909* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), p. 17.

65 Beisner, *Twelve Against Empire*, p. xii.

66 *Ibid.*

67 Frank Friedel, 'Dissent in the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection', *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Vol. 81 (1969), p. 175.

68 Cullinane, *Liberty and American Anti-Imperialism*, p. 31.

69 Letter from the Hon. George F. Hoar, 29 March, 1899, p. 12, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/service/gdc/scd0001/2007/200712060011e/200712060011e.pdf>.

Others claimed that the United States needed to become a great power through leading by example—following the path of empire, on the other hand, would result in the downfall of free institutions and the country itself. Democrat Senator Benjamin Ryan Tillman announced, ‘We assert that no nation can long endure half republic and half empire.’⁷⁰ Still others argued that other races were incapable of governing themselves, and the United States should keep away from these populations which would debase its own civilization and impending greatness.⁷¹

The imperialists naturally offered opposing arguments. Despite the popularity of the anti-imperialists, the imperialists dominated the foreign policy elites. Highly influential luminaries such as Alfred Thayer Mahan had dreams of national greatness, arguing that the United States needed a large navy, and overseas bases to protect its commercial and strategic interests.⁷² Senator Henry Cabot Lodge urged Americans to realize their place ‘as one of the great nations of the world’.⁷³ In a passionate speech he also declared, ‘I do not think the Filipinos are fit for self-government as we understand it, and I am certain that if we left them alone the result would be disastrous to them and discreditable to us . . . I hope we have too much self-respect to hand them over to European powers with the confession that they can restore peace and order more kindly and justly than we, and lead the inhabitants on to a larger liberty and a more complete self-government than we can bestow upon them.’⁷⁴ Apart from imperialist arguments that foreign powers needed to be challenged, and that expansion would develop American character and strengthen national pride, the business community spokesmen pushed to build a commercial empire in Asia and Latin America.⁷⁵ The dominant imperialist vision of national greatness equated ‘the cause of liberty with the active pursuit of national greatness in world affairs’.⁷⁶

Theodore Roosevelt, both as Governor of New York and Vice President, subscribed strongly to this view—‘nations that expand and nations that do not expand may both ultimately go down, but the one leaves heirs and a glorious memory, and the other leaves neither. The Roman expanded and he has left a memory which has profoundly influenced the history of mankind’.⁷⁷ He, along with Mahan and Lodge, also viewed colonial acquisitions as a path to domination of the Latin American and Asian markets.⁷⁸ While there is controversy over the exact motivations of President William McKinley that led him to intervene in the Spanish-Cuban conflict and acquire the Philippines,⁷⁹ there is evidence he was acutely

70 *Ibid.*, p. 61.

71 Hilfrich, *Debating American Exceptionalism*, p. 42.

72 Michael H. Hunt, ‘American Ideology: Visions of National Greatness and Racism’, in Paterson and Rabe, eds., *Imperial Surge*, p. 16.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

74 Speech by Henry Cabot Lodge in the United States Senate, 7 March, 1900, Harvard College Library, p. 15, <https://ia600301.us.archive.org/13/items/retentionphilip00lodggoog/retentionphilip00lodggoog.pdf>.

75 Walter LaFeber, ‘The Business Community’s Push for War’ in Paterson and Rabe, eds., *Imperial Surge*; LaFeber, *The New Empire*.

76 Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, p. 43.

77 Theodore Roosevelt, ‘Expansion and Peace’, *Independent* 51, 21 December, 1899.

78 LaFeber, *The New Empire*, p. 91.

79 Smith, ‘William McKinley’s Enduring Legacy’.

sensitive to and influenced by the debate over the United States' changing status.⁸⁰ Even before he took office, the themes of his election campaign outlined the key US foreign policy goals of spurring commerce and 'civilizing' other peoples around the world.⁸¹ In interviews given after the acquiring of the territories, McKinley emphasized on each occasion that he had initially been opposed to the acquisition, but concluded finally that he had no choice but to follow the policy that he did.⁸²

Beliefs as Indicator of Rising Power Status

The imperialist view ultimately prevailed. The imperialists saw this period as the closing of the first chapter of American history and the start of a new era. They posited that victories in international relations were often decided by violent means in addition to peaceful competition. This was a new concept, because before this period Americans had viewed war 'as an evil to be avoided not cultivated'.⁸³ However, it was not the beliefs that ultimately prevailed that matter so much for identifying the United States as a rising power at that time. It was the debate, the fierce contestation over how to become a great power and what type of great power the United States should be.

The beliefs that existed in either contested camp were of the three types we expect to see. They focused attention on goals that were actually attainable—acquiring overseas territories in the pursuit of power in the fashion of the great powers of the day, or preventing overreach. They also competed to explain to a domestic audience the deviation from the hitherto held policy of non-intervention and the flexing of military muscle as necessary for national greatness. They focused attention on the United States' regional role (the dominance of markets in Latin America) and its relationship with Great Britain. Imperialists, in fact, often explicitly emphasized the latter by arguing that the use of military force, and simultaneous cooperation with Great Britain, would enable the assumption of power by the fittest race, the Anglo-Saxons. Thus, the Anglo-American alliance needed to be developed.⁸⁴

The United States was behaving like a rising power, increasing capabilities, globalizing interests, and internally recognizing its rise, and these behaviours were underlined by vocal debates and ideas about the best path to attain great power.

If we now turn the page forward to China post-2002, we find evidence of similar debates. While the content of the beliefs is very different from that of the United States, these beliefs conform to the similar types we expect in rising powers and which are also contested.

China Post-2002

One of the most explicit domestic debates about China's changing status was, not surprisingly, under the regime of President Hu Jintao.⁸⁵ He took office at a time when China's rise

80 Lewis L. Gould, 'President McKinley's Strong Leadership and the Road to War' in Paterson and Rabe, eds., *Imperial Surge*, p. 41; Ephraim K. Smith, 'William McKinley's Enduring Legacy', p. 207.

81 Louis L. Gould, 'President McKinley's Strong Leadership and the Road to War' in Paterson and Rabe, eds., *Imperial Surge*, p. 41.

82 Smith, 'William McKinley's Enduring Legacy', p. 207.

83 LaFeber, *The New Empire*, pp. 95–98.

84 *Ibid.*, p. 98.

85 President Jiang Zemin was the first to actively begin soliciting ideas from scholars and think tanks. However, the drive was economic rather than related to foreign policy or the role of China in the world. Interview 3, Beijing, China, June 2013.

was, like the United States in 1898, undisputed. Shortly after Hu Jintao came to power, one of his confidants, Zheng Bijian, visited the United States and became concerned about the pervasive ‘China collapse’ and ‘China threat’ theories there.⁸⁶ Although there had been international rhetoric about China’s rise prior to this period, this was the first time the Chinese community felt that there was an external conception of China’s rise that needed to be responded to.⁸⁷ On Zheng’s return, he put forth the idea of the ‘development path of China’s peaceful rise’ (*zhongguo heping jueqi fazhan de daolu*). Hu Jintao approved his idea, and the theory of China’s ‘peaceful rise’ (*heping jueqi*) was advanced. Some contend that the idea predated Zheng and Hu, and had already been prevalent in academic and think tank circles, particularly in Shanghai.⁸⁸ Whatever its origin, it was clear that this was a new type of belief about China’s changing status, and it led to elite debates about its implications.

Contestation of Beliefs

At its most fundamental it was meant to convey that China would avoid the path of previous colonialists and imperialists because it would not pursue expansion but instead promote peace, cooperation, and development.⁸⁹ Thus, unlike historical power transitions, the coming power transition would not be conflictual. It had three concepts that emanated from the leadership—developing socialist economic and political institutions, fostering Chinese civilization, and promoting an appropriate social environment to guarantee that China would rise peacefully without seeking hegemony.⁹⁰ These elements of ‘peaceful rise’ were not simply accepted as a given by the Chinese epistemic community. Rather, there was much discussion and debate among elite scholars and policy analysts about what exactly it meant, what China’s behaviour in the international system should be, and whether China’s ‘peaceful rise’ was even possible.

A survey of the flagship journal of the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR)⁹¹—*Contemporary International Relations* (*xiandai guoji guanxi*)—from the years 2004–2005, as well as interviews conducted by the author, reveal a range of beliefs on the concept. For example, some writers emphasized that a ‘peaceful rise’ was dependent on China’s external environment, and that China had a responsibility to create such an environment.⁹² Some located responsibility in reputation—in order to affect a peaceful rise, China needed to increase its national power yet maintain the image of a

86 Bonnie S. Glaser and Evan S. Medeiros, ‘The Changing Ecology of Foreign Policy-Making in China: The Ascension and Demise of the Theory of ‘Peaceful Rise’’, *China Quarterly*, Vol. 190 (2007), p. 293.

87 Interview 5, Shanghai, China, June 2013.

88 Robert Suettinger, ‘The Rise and Descent of Peaceful Rise,’ *China Leadership Monitor* Vol. 12 No. 2, 2004, p. 3.

89 Glaser and Medeiros, ‘The Changing Ecology of Foreign Policy-Making in China’, p. 294.

90 *Ibid.*, pp. 294–95.

91 This journal is an example of both showing restraint in its articles as well as evidence of a plurality of beliefs.

92 ‘2004 nian shijie dashi qianzhan’ (‘2004 World Trends’), *Xiandai guoji guanxi* (*Contemporary International Relations*), No. 1 (2004), p. 19.

responsible great power for the international community.⁹³ Others emphasized that China needed to go beyond a mere projection of image, and not only maintain a commitment to peace but create a framework to do so within the constraints and rules of the international system.⁹⁴ But there were also sceptics who deviated from these beliefs. They were not only more pessimistic about China's ability to control its rise, but also sceptical of even the possibility of a peaceful power transition.⁹⁵ Still others believed a peaceful rise to be conditional not on China's policies as much as on the existence of an opportune geopolitical structure.⁹⁶ Other naysayers believed that the United States would never tolerate the rise of China, making a peaceful rise moot.⁹⁷

However, soon after the theory of 'peaceful rise' fell out of favour and was replaced by discussions of 'peaceful development' (*heping fazhan*). The first wind of this came when Hu Jintao mentioned in a speech 'peace and stability' and 'peaceful co-existence' but not 'peaceful rise'. Rather, he emphasized that China would follow the road of 'peaceful development'. The consensus was that the leadership made the decision to allow the discussion of 'peaceful rise' in academic circles, but not to use it in 'leadership speeches, or government and Party documents'.⁹⁸ The opacity of decision making means that we do not know exactly what transpired and exactly why 'peaceful rise' was replaced. An interviewee said in conversation with the author that he disagreed with Bonnie Glaser and Evan Medeiros' theory of the 'demise' of peaceful rise,⁹⁹ which suggested a certain passivity—rather, he believed, the fact that it was replaced was a deliberate compromise worked out at the highest levels.¹⁰⁰ Other interviewees suggested that the reasons could have been prosaic (Zheng Bijian falling out of favour), but was most likely related to domestic belief disputes about the appropriateness of the concept.

Some believed the word 'rise' in 'peaceful rise' unsettled China's neighbours. Others thought that 'rise' (*jueqi*) itself was an immodest term—it was acceptable for foreigners to talk of China's rise but not modest of the Chinese themselves to do so.¹⁰¹ Some suggested that there should be more focus on the idea of China as 'a responsible stake holder'.¹⁰²

93 Shi Xin, 'Zonghe anquan yu guojia yingxiang' ('Comprehensive Security and National Image'), *Xiandai guoji guanxi* (*Contemporary International Relations*), No. 6 (2004), p. 54; Wang Xuedong, 'Guojia jueqi yu guojia shengyu' ('National Rise and National Prestige'), *Xiandai guoji guanxi* (*Contemporary International Relations*), No. 7 (2004).

94 Yang Wenjing, 'Daguo jueqi lilun tansuo' ('Exploring Theories of the Rise of Great Powers'), *Xiandai guoji guanxi* (*Contemporary International Relations*), No. 6 (2004), p. 54.

95 Yang Wenjing, 'Zhongguo rongru guoji jizhi yu Meiguo yinsu' ('The US factor in China's Engagement in International Structures'), *Xiandai guoji guanxi* (*Contemporary International Relations*), No. 10 (2004), p. 35.

96 Lin Limin, 'Dangqian shijie diyuan zhanlue taishi jiqi qianjing' ('Current Global and Regional Strategic Situation and Prospects'), *Xiandai guoji guanxi* (*Contemporary International Relations*), No. 1 (2004), p. 49.

97 Interview 12, Beijing, China, June 2013.

98 Glaser and Medeiros, 'The Changing Ecology of Foreign Policy-making in China', pp. 298, 300.

99 *Ibid.*

100 Interview 5, Shanghai, China, June 2013.

101 Interviews by author, Beijing and Shanghai, China, June 2013.

102 Interview 11, Beijing, China, June 2013.

Peaceful development as a concept did not generate as much of a divergence of beliefs as peaceful rise. Rather, it was parsed out by elites more or less along the same lines as earlier. Some did attempt to root out specific differences between the two concepts of peaceful rise and peaceful development, locating it, for example, in the pace of change of China's status—whether it was or was not rising quickly.¹⁰³ Others, while accepting 'development' (*fazhan*) as a way to avoid misinterpretation of the word 'rise', noted that whether it became widely accepted or not would depend on China's actions, not claims.¹⁰⁴ A search of the *Contemporary International Relations* articles in 2005 reveals more usage of peaceful development, but also that the two terms were often used almost interchangeably.

When President Xi Jinping took the reins, another burst of domestic debates about China's rise began.¹⁰⁵ Xi espoused three key interrelated concepts—*zhongguo meng* (China dream),¹⁰⁶ *xinxing daguo guanxi* (new type of great power relations), and *fen fa you wei* (striving for achievement). 'China dream' emphasizes the glorious past, the future of states, celebrates the two centennials,¹⁰⁷ and asserts national rejuvenation and continued domestic modernization.¹⁰⁸ A 'new type of great power relations' calls for resetting the relationship between China and the United States and accepting each other's differences to escape the Thucydides Trap.¹⁰⁹ Striving for achievement emphasized national rejuvenation and the active shaping of China's external environment.¹¹⁰ Out of these concepts put forward by Xi, 'a new type of great power relations' is that most directly linked to China's rise and has, unsurprisingly, generated the most elite debates. While it is still a relatively new idea, some academics, such as Qi Hao, have already begun compiling the different debates within China that have been spurred by the 'new type of great power relations'. Qi points out that there are several ways in which a 'new type of great power relations' has been unpacked.¹¹¹ There are divergent beliefs about using it as a diplomatic tool—some assert that it refers only to relations between rising and established powers (i.e. China and the United States), others that it encompasses the relationships between rising non-Western and established

103 Yuan Peng, 'Zhongguo jueqi yu Zhongguo de guoji chujing' ('China's Rise and Its Unfavourable International Environment'), *Xiandai guoji guanxi* (*Contemporary International Relations*), No. 10 (2005), p. 20.

104 Li Ming, 'Zhongguo dalu heping fazhan yu chaoxian bandao xingshi' ('Mainland China's Peaceful Development and the Situation in the Korean Peninsula'), *Xiandai guoji guanxi* (*Contemporary International Relations*), No. 12 (2005), p. 27.

105 Note that these were not unrelated to previous concepts about China's rise. Rather, Xi's assumption of power gave fresh impetus to other debates about China's changing status.

106 This is the literal translation, and when interviewees referred to it in English, they used this term.

107 The 100th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party in 2020 and attain developed nation status by 2050.

108 Interview 9, Beijing, China, June 2013; Zheng Wang, 'The Chinese Dream: Concept and Context,' *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2014), pp. 1–13.

109 Andrew S. Erickson, and Adam P. Liff, 'Not-So-Empty Talk', *Foreign Affairs*, 9 October, 2014, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2014-10-09/not-so-empty-talk>.

110 Xuetong Yan, 'From Keeping a Low Profile to Striving for Achievement', *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2014), p. 166.

111 Hao Qi, 'China Debates the "New Type of Great Power Relations"', *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2015), pp. 349–70.

Western powers, and still others that it includes all China's foreign relations in general.¹¹² There are also belief differences about the content of new relations—that it variously refers to different kinds of China's partnerships, that it is about strategic cooperation, particularly with the United States, and that it is about maintaining harmony between the great powers.¹¹³ Articles in *Contemporary International Relations* for 2014 show evidence of Qi's categories of the debate,¹¹⁴ but the majority revolve around unpacking the 'new type of great power relations' within the context of the Sino-US relationship—whether through a strategic partnership,¹¹⁵ diplomacy and non-confrontation,¹¹⁶ or economic cooperation.¹¹⁷

Beliefs as Indicator of Rising Power Status

The debates around 'peaceful rise/peaceful development' under Hu and the new concepts put forward by Xi were not isolated from each other. The crux of both bodies of beliefs lies not just in China's rising but in contesting how it should attain great power, and what kind of great power it should be. However, the emphasis has sometimes differed. For example, that China should be a responsible great power (*fuzeren de daguo*) is accepted, but the emphasis was different under Hu. Under Hu Jintao it was believed that a more proactive foreign policy needed to relate to domestic development to bring about a 'prosperous and powerful country' (*fuguo qianbing*), whereas Xi Jinping's national rejuvenation links the development of China to the development of other nations, and hence also emphasizes state responsibility for common development. A big debate under Hu, and much more explicitly under Xi, has been whether China should explicitly have the goal of becoming a superpower. Those that fall in the yes camp range from those who believe China should think back to Maoist strategies to rise and eschew responsibility to those who think conflict between China and the United States is inevitable and, therefore, that China should assume only moderate responsibility as it rises. Those that fall in the no camp believe that democratization is a key before China can rise, while others believe that even the goal of becoming a superpower is premature, and that China needs to keep a low profile and focus on

112 *Ibid.*, pp. 351–53.

113 *Ibid.*, pp. 356–57.

114 Some, for example, refer to China's relationships with the BRICs as well as relationships within China's neighbourhood. Lin Hongyu, 'Zhongguo canyu guoji zhixu de lishi jincheng' ('The Historical Progression of China's Participation in the International Order'), *Xiandai guoji guanxi (Contemporary International Relations)*, No. 7 (2014); Xu Kaiyi, 'Yazhou anquan: guannian, tiaozhan yu qianjing' ('Asian Security: Ideas, Challenges and Prospects'), *Xiandai guoji guanxi (Contemporary International Relations)*, No. 11 (2014).

115 Liu Feitao, 'Guanyu ZhongMei zhanlue fenqi guankong de sikao' ('Reflections on the Management of Sino-American Strategic Differences'), *Xiandai guoji guanxi (Contemporary International Relations)*, No. 12 (2014), p. 54.

116 Chu Xulong and Tao Shasha, 'Dui lengzhanhou ZhongMei guanxi de zai renshi, zai sikao' ('Rethinking post-Cold War Sino-American Relations'), *Xiandai guoji guanxi (Contemporary International Relations)*, No. 8 (2014), p. 18.

117 Zhang Jiye, 'Aobama zhengfu jingji waijiao pingxi' ('A Critical Analysis of the Obama Administration's Economic Diplomacy'), *Xiandai guoji guanxi (Contemporary International Relations)*, No. 2 (2014).

modernization.¹¹⁸ Others debate what the Chinese as opposed to Western path to great power should be.

Even though some of these beliefs emphasize the uniqueness of Chinese thought and its distinction from the West as it rises—Chinese academic Qin Yaqing has suggested, ‘the Chinese way of thinking or world view is different from the West . . . society is a process, an open process of complex social relations in motion . . . this understanding of society originates in the Chinese philosophical and intellectual traditions’¹¹⁹—the case of the United States a century ago shows that while the specifics of the ideas may differ, Chinese domestic beliefs, both under Hu and Xi, have the same awareness of China’s status as a great-power-to-be as that in the United States historically, and they fulfil the same tasks. They focus on attainable goals—for example the ‘China dream’ encompasses the goal of lifting the country to developed nation status by 2050, while the beliefs around whether China should explicitly embrace the idea of becoming a superpower debate whether or not China should be assertive in response to neighbours who may be needling China in efforts to secure the status quo before China becomes a great power.¹²⁰ They explain China’s rise for a domestic audience—peaceful rise/development was variously associated with expanding the domestic market, and scientific and technological advancement to solve resource and environmental problems. They focus on China’s regional role—for example, the need to gain support for China’s rise, and how China’s rise is intricately linked to economic development and cooperation with its neighbours. They also focus on the status quo power, the United States—for example, the emphasis under Xi to accept each other’s differences and reset relations, and the drawing of comparisons between the Chinese way and the Western way. It is said, for example, that the ‘China dream’ is different from the American dream in that it is about states, not individuals.¹²¹ Just as the United States debated whether it should become a colonial great power in the tradition of the great powers of the day, China is debating carving out a different, non-American path to great power.

China, like the historical case of the United States, is also behaving like a rising power—increasing its capabilities, globalizing its interests (e.g. through economic and political diplomacy in Africa and Latin America), and engaging in internal recognition of its rise. These behaviours are underlined by contesting beliefs about the best path to attaining great power.

The Cases: Overestimated and Underestimated Rising Powers

India Post-2002

India’s case provides an illustrative example that not all states have beliefs about becoming a great power, even if, using capabilities alone, they would be classified as a rising power. Based on its capabilities, India is widely considered a rising power. It has been well documented, however, that post-2002 India lacks domestic beliefs on foreign policy, on its growing power, and even on defence. In 2009, Pratap Bhanu Mehta’s work discussed how India lacks an ideational template that ‘gives overall direction to the conduct of

118 Interview 1, 9, 10, Beijing, China, June 2013.

119 Yaqing Qin, ‘International Society as a Process: Institutions, Identities, and China’s Peaceful Rise’, *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2010), p. 138.

120 Interview 6, Shanghai, China, June 2013.

121 Interview 9, Beijing, China, June 2013.

foreign policy'.¹²² Mehta argued that 'the concerns that would prompt the formulation of such a template simply do not exist . . . In foreign affairs, India has traditionally subscribed to a kind of ideological minimalism. Indeed, a commitment to honouring the principle of sovereignty as the basis for world order was, at the same time, a commitment to eschew an ambition of producing an ideological convergence. There has also been no equivalent of a civilizing mission that could drive its foreign policy, or an expansionary ideology that would shape its relations with other countries'.¹²³

As we saw in the case of the United States and China, these beliefs come from elites with access to the foreign policy decision-making process. In India, therefore, if these beliefs existed, we would expect to observe them within certain government bodies and within the foreign policy epistemic community. However, Miller's interviews with senior foreign policy officials and government and private think tank experts in New Delhi, India reveal the absence of these beliefs.¹²⁴

Miller points out that foreign policy decision making in India rests predominantly with three bodies—the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), and the National Security Advisor and his office. While these are all separate bodies, one of the key things that link them is that all three are heavily staffed in crucial positions by officers of the exclusive and powerful Indian Foreign Service (IFS). All the most significant ambassadorial and foreign policy appointments and offices are likely to be filled by IFS officers rather than political appointees.

The IFS has two additional defining characteristics which makes its officers the predominant actors in foreign policy decision making in India, and resistant to outside influences such as think tanks. First, the exclusive admission process means that IFS officers are seen as capable of assuming massive authority. This powerful role produces a decision-making process that is highly individualistic. Officers have a lot of leeway in crafting policy. Interviews with top officials reveal that there are few, if any, top-down guidelines.

An official said, 'We have a great deal of flexibility and autonomy in shaping policy on a day-to-day basis within the overarching framework of policy.' On being pressed to detail the 'overarching framework', he first said, 'It is not written anywhere or formalized . . . it's expressed in speeches and parliamentary statements' before admitting with a laugh, 'but those damn things are also written by us (the IFS)'.¹²⁵ The sample of statements below from top ambassadors corroborates the officer's statement on the enormous latitude given to the IFS.¹²⁶

You make up your own goals which is hugely enjoyable and has impact. [But] it would have been nice to have direction from time to time.

122 Pratap Bhanu Mehta, 'Still Under Nehru's Shadow? The Absence of Foreign Policy Frameworks in India', *India Review*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (2009), p. 212.

123 *Ibid.*

124 Manjari Chatterjee Miller, 'The Un-Argumentative Indian?: Ideas About the Rise of India and Their Interaction With Domestic Structures', *India Review*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2014), pp. 1–14; Manjari Chatterjee Miller, 'India's Feeble Foreign Policy', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 92, No. 3 (2013), pp. 14–19.

125 *Ibid.*

126 *Ibid.*

I could never find any direction or any paper from the Foreign Office to tell me what India's long-term attitude should be towards Country X. Positions are the prerogative of the individual ambassador.

I was completely autonomous as ambassador. There is little to no instruction from the PMO, even in case of major countries. I had to take decisions based on a hunch. I sometimes got very very broad directives. But I virtually violated all of them. The PM was a temperamental man who told me that politically it was suicide and that if it were made public he would disown me. The fact that I got it right had a lot to do with luck.

Although there is a political head who bears ultimate responsibility for decisions, the Minister of External Affairs or the Prime Minister for example, the IFS often shoulders the task of persuading him to accede to their decisions. Jaswant Singh, politician and former Minister of External Affairs, points out: 'If a minister (of external affairs) has the skills to command the respect of the MEA officers, he will make policy and implement it. Otherwise it is the civil servants who make the policy and the minister is simply the figurehead.'

Second, as another consequence of its exclusivity, the IFS is severely understaffed. As a result, individual officers are given large portfolios with immense responsibility and left with little time or inclination for long-term strategizing or ideological thought. Across the interviews, officials confirmed that there are no internal documents or white papers produced on long-term strategy or ideational frameworks. Moreover, newly minted ambassadors are given very loose guidelines and background about their region of responsibility, and have neither to read nor to produce reports on long-term goals.

'[There are] no internal [documents] or white papers on long-term foreign policy assessment. We realize of course foreign policy goals have to be emphasized, so we chant all the mantras.'

'There's not much thinking about India or what it will be doing in five or ten years. Goals are not set out anywhere.'¹²⁷

The dominance of the IFS is compounded by a weak foreign policy epistemic community as represented by think tanks. Think tanks in India are relatively new, and either do not have adequate funding or when they do are often funded by industrialists, so focus on economics rather than foreign policy. Unlike think tanks in China, Indian foreign policy think tanks do not have flagship journals that publish work. Not surprisingly, the University of Pennsylvania's ranking of top think tanks worldwide for 2015¹²⁸ did not list a single Indian think tank in the top 50.¹²⁹ IFS officers are quite candid about their lack of reliance on think tanks:¹³⁰

'It is very different from the United States . . . I sometimes talk to individuals [at think tanks] but on a personal basis - the problem is think tanks don't have much information or access to government information.'

127 *Ibid.*

128 '2015 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report', University of Pennsylvania, http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1009&context=think_tanks.

129 By way of contrast, three Chinese think tanks—CICIR, China Institute of International Studies (CII), and Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS)—made it into the top 50 ranks.

130 Miller, 'India's Feeble Foreign Policy'.

'We just don't have that kind of intellectual input yet. We recognize that we can't become a superpower without it.'

Frank O'Donnell and Harsh Pant's work on Indian defence strategy echoes Miller's conclusions. They point out that the very existence of an Indian grand strategy that 'sets out political objectives for Indian power projection—and then ensures military, economic, intelligence, and educational development—coordinated towards these objectives' is debated.¹³¹ They argue that Indian history contains resources to build a necessary debate on grand strategy and suggest it should be a necessary component of Indian military and foreign policy moving forward.¹³²

This does not mean that India has no ideas on foreign policy. India today still pays attention, for example, to the ideology of the non-aligned movement (NAM). However, NAM or an attempt to overhaul it as 'Non Alignment 2.0'¹³³ has little to say about India's rising status and goals. Thus, lacking the domestic debates about how to attain great power, India is unable to systematically consider the implications of its growing power.¹³⁴ This may explain why it often frustrates countries like the United States and Japan, which expect it to behave like a rising power.¹³⁵

Germany 1922–1933

The enabling act of March 1933 that brought Hitler unrestricted power to rule Germany was a seminal event that resulted in the military resurgence of Germany. When interwar Germany is discussed in the IR literature as a rising power, the period under scrutiny is invariably post-1933 when Hitler ascended to power and set in motion Germany's overt rearmament. Between 1933 and 1939, the rise of Germany, the failure to contain it, and the outbreak of WWII led to much hand-wringing about the policy of appeasement, where it came from, who propagated it, and who was to blame. Weimar Germany, including in its later period, is passed over as a rising power, because it emerged from national defeat and was both militarily and economically weakened. However, Weimar Germany, too, held

131 Frank O'Donnell and Harsh V. Pant, 'Managing Indian Defense Policy: The Missing Grand Strategy Connection', *Orbis*, Foreign Policy Research Institute, 14 February, 2015, p. 200.

132 *Ibid.*

133 Sunil Khilnani et al., 'Non-Alignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty First Century', Centre for Policy Research, February 2012.

134 For an excellent discussion on India's lack of integration into the international order compared to other major power actors with similar capabilities, see T. V. Paul and Baldev Raj Nayar, *India in the World Order: Searching for Major Power Status* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

135 Tunku Varadarajan, 'John Kerry Just Visited: But Should We Just Forget About India?', *The Daily Beast*, 3 August, 2014, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/08/03/john-kerry-just-visited-but-should-we-just-forget-about-india.html>; 'Deeply Disappointed', *First Post*, 1 August, 2014, <http://www.firstpost.com/business/corporate-business/international-corporate-business/deeply-disappointed-wto-members-voice-frustration-as-india-blocks-global-trade-deal-1981933.html>.

strong domestic beliefs that Germany was destined once more to become a great power, even if that led to another war.¹³⁶

Historians accept that Nazi ideology was not organic. Many elements such as ‘territorial unity and independence of all racial Germans’, the need for ‘living space’ (*Lebensraum*) to match the territory with the economic needs of a people, and the idea of an enlarged state engaging in worldwide imperial politics derived from pre-1914 German beliefs about its role in the world.¹³⁷ However, it would be erroneous to assert that there was a significant break between the ideas of pre-1914 and subsequent Nazi ideology. There was, in fact, a consistent emphasis on the need for Germany to reassert itself as a great power. These beliefs were enhanced by various factors such as the humiliating ‘war guilt’ clause in the Treaty of Versailles, the psychological burden of reparations, the unfair imposition of the borders in the eastern frontiers, counter-revolutionary strands that drew on Pan-German ideas, and imperialist dreams of world power and colonial grandeur.

In the period 1922–1933, the elite/leader beliefs can be divided into two camps: the moderates and the later overtly nationalistic. In 1924, Germany entered a relatively stable period under Chancellor Gustav Stresemann. Stresemann, along with close aides such as von Schubert, emphasized both rapprochement with the West as well the restoration of the Reich to its former position. The moderate policies of this period led to a surprisingly swift change in Germany’s position in international politics.¹³⁸ Tapping Germany’s economic potential to boost its global political weight led to a limited economic resurgence. This, along with greater participation in the world economy and accepting the treaty obligations of Versailles, led to a more conciliatory international role.¹³⁹ Stresemann’s death and the impact of the Great Depression made way for the more overtly nationalistic beliefs of political figures such as Chancellor Brüning, Julius Curtius, and Bernhard von Bülow. There was now a marked emphasis on Germany’s self-assertion, and the idea that it should be willing to engage in confrontation and regain its great power status.

The beliefs of this period do not just represent continuity between pre-1914 and post-1933; they were very similar to the debates in the United States historically and China today. They discussed attainable goals—given the constraints on Germany, Stresemann, for example, focused on piecemeal revision. He considered and abandoned the idea of an Austro-German customs union.¹⁴⁰ These beliefs also explained to the German public the need for territorial revision while emphasizing national greatness and the goal of restoring Germany’s great power status. Through the Locarno Treaty of 1925, for example, Germany, along with France and Belgium, reaffirmed the Versailles frontiers and the demilitarized state of the Rhineland while agreeing to less robust arbitration procedures for future disputes about Germany’s eastern frontiers. This meant that those borders could

136 Jürgen Forster, ‘Germany’s Twisted Road to War, 1919-1939’, in Frank McDonough, ed., *The Origins of the Second World War: An International Perspective* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), p. 114.

137 Overy, ‘Misjudging Hitler’, p. 94.

138 Detlev J. K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, trans. Richard Deveson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), p. 193.

139 *Ibid.*, pp. 194–99.

140 Conan Fischer, ‘The Failure of Detente? German-French Relations between Stresemann and Hitler, 1929-32’, in McDonough, ed., *The Origins of the Second World War*, p. 85.

eventually be revised.¹⁴¹ The beliefs discussed Germany's regional role—Stresemann, for example, secured Allied military evacuation of the southern Rhineland, but when France honoured this agreement after his death and evacuated its troops in June 1930, 'the official response in Germany bordered on triumphal'.¹⁴² In 1931, Curtius pushed ahead with the Austro-German customs agreement. They also discussed Germany's international role and its relationship with the United States—the need to complete the reparations agreement, the joining of the League of Nations, and the need for economic cooperation.

Even though Germany at this time did not have the capabilities, the domestic beliefs strongly promoted rearmament. The 'stab in the back' legend helped to sustain the idea that the German empire had been defeated because the army had been 'betrayed'.¹⁴³ Army manuals made it clear that Germany was 'a major military power' with a modern army, so helping the officers avoid the bleak reality of the present and think instead of a bright military future.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, the Reichswehr and the German Foreign Office began demanding that Germany's armed forces be allowed to gain parity with other countries, before a new round of rearmament.¹⁴⁵ The Reichswehr under General Scleicher also began to move away from reorganizing existing units to long-term plans for rearmament and 'became more active politically' as it sought to align these plans 'with the revisionist foreign policy of the government'.¹⁴⁶ In short, 'the persistence of the mystique of nationalist integration and the desire to reassert Germany's position as a great power also helped inspire the revanchist shift in foreign policy that began in 1929-30'.¹⁴⁷

Conclusion

Even though the concept of rising powers is central to IR, the theoretical literature on rising powers is surprisingly scanty. One of the most prominent deficits is that theorists frame rising powers in terms of their material capabilities or their military and economic power. There is little attention paid to the domestic beliefs of rising powers, and no acknowledgement that rising powers could have a commonality of beliefs. Using both historical and contemporary cases of rising powers, this article discusses the importance of beliefs in rising powers and finds similar kinds of beliefs in two different rising powers across time, the United States at the turn of the 20th century and China today.

The content of these beliefs within the United States and China about exactly how to be a great power, and what kind of great power they should be are different. The United States, for example, was debating whether it should or should not be explicitly colonial in its quest for power, a concept that would be anathema to China today. China, on the other hand, is explicitly discussing the idea of a Chinese way to great power, and how to be a different kind of great power from the United States. However, these beliefs fulfil the same

141 *Ibid.*, p. 83.

142 *Ibid.*, p. 85.

143 Paul von Hindenburg's Testimony before the Parliamentary Investigatory Committee ('The Stab in the Back'), 18 November, 1919, http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=3829.

144 Forster, 'Germany's Twisted Road to War', p. 112.

145 Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, p. 205.

146 *Ibid.*, p. 227.

147 *Ibid.*, p. 278.

goals despite different regime types and time periods. They discuss attainable goals for these countries' changing status, explain the country's rise to a domestic audience, and how to relate to the status quo power(s) of the day. Their behaviours as rising powers—increasing capabilities, globalizing, and exhibiting internal recognition—necessitate ideas of attaining great power. Thus the elites in the United States historically, and China today, generated new ideas or recombined existing ones to form new narratives about behaving like a great-power-to-be, re-framing its interests as global rather than regional or local, and creating both internal and external awareness of its rise.

The multitude of beliefs in China about its rise shows us that China is following the path of rising powers before it, and allows us to see how China aspires to the status of a great power. By understanding, for example, in what ways China sees itself as assuming responsibilities in the international arena, we can frame expectations accordingly. While China is undoubtedly and markedly different from the United States in many ways, domestic beliefs indicate that China is also struggling with deliberations over similar norms of great power behaviour and responsibility. For example, Chinese elites are questioning some of its long-held foreign policy positions, such as its energy cooperation with Iran, and whether China should openly join Iran's nuclear opponents.¹⁴⁸ Similarly, understanding the debates over regional priorities helps us understand behaviour in, for example, the South China Sea dispute. Recent, more aggressive actions by the Chinese government could be a result of the belief that China is being deliberately provoked by its neighbours because these neighbours expect China's rise to be rapid and, therefore, its power very soon unchallengeable.

Thus, while capabilities are of course crucial to identifying rising powers, adding beliefs as a measure provides us a better method to categorize these states. India, for example, has the capabilities but lacks the beliefs, and is an overestimated rising power. This explains why it often does not behave like a great-power-to-be in the international arena. Witness and contrast, for example, its approach to climate change with China's evolving attitude. If we accept the assumption in the power transition literature that rising powers are usually a threat to the stability of the international system, underrating a potential rising power by ignoring its beliefs has risky consequences. Weimar Germany, which had the beliefs but lacked the capabilities, is an example of a state that had passionately held ideas of regaining great power that played no small role in its rearmament.

This article also raises a number of interesting questions for further research. This article focused on a selection of beliefs on rise to show their existence across time, culture, and regime type. But in both the United States and China there are other beliefs that can be observed about attaining great power. For example, despite the interventionist tendencies of both Theodore Roosevelt and, following him, Woodrow Wilson, American isolationism continued to be an enduring idea in US foreign policy at the time.¹⁴⁹ In China today, *tao-guang yanghui* (hide one's capacities and bide one's time), an idea raised by Deng

148 John Garver, 'China-Iran Relations: Cautious Friendship with America's Nemesis', *China Report*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (2013), pp. 72–75.

149 David M. Kennedy, 'The Similarities are Surprising', *The New York Times*, 20 November, 1983, <http://www.nytimes.com/1983/11/20/books/the-similarities-are-surprising.html?page-wanted=all>.

Xiaoping, has again become a part of the debate about China's foreign policy—this time explicitly about China's rise, and particularly in opposition to *fenfa youwei* (striving for achievement).¹⁵⁰ This raises the question of which ideas become influential, when, and how. Moreover, while there are many theories on why states acquire capabilities and become rising powers, we know less about when and why some states acquire the beliefs of rising powers while others do not. When will India, for example, acquire these beliefs? While we know from the case of Germany that these beliefs are not necessarily the product of capabilities, do increasing capabilities inevitably lead to such beliefs? While answering these questions is outside the scope of this article, they offer a rich avenue for further research about not only the cases in this article but also other rising powers.

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150 Dingding Chen, 'Chinese Foreign Policy Needs Major Reform', *The Diplomat*, 21 August, 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/08/chinese-foreign-policy-needs-major-reform/>.