

Legitimation, Foreign Policy and the Sources of Realpolitik¹

by

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Introduction

The discussion of realpolitik practice in international relations theory has been monopolized by various versions of realism. The arguments are familiar. Structural realism contends that realpolitik behavior is result of the imperatives of survival in anarchical material structures. Classical and so-called neo-classical realists argue that realpolitik is a function of more reductionist human drives for power, status and the acquisition of other scarce goods.² In both cases realpolitik practice and its epiphenomenon, realpolitik worldviews or ideologies, are considered to be immutable features of world politics. Variation in the 'hardness' of realpolitik practice (e.g. the degree to which the other is viewed as a dangerous competitor, and the degree to which violent conflict is seen as inevitable and strategically valuable) is a function of variation in the degree to which distributions of power are disadvantageous and/or the degree to the resources perceived to be necessary for survival are scarce. While constructivists should, for obvious reasons, have a lot to say about the origins and persistence of realpolitik, they haven't said much, preferring quite naturally to concentrate on showing that socially constructed 'identities' and norms matter by illustrating how these lead to non-realpolitik practices that mainstream IR theory can not explain -- the so-called deviant cases. This is all worthwhile. But the focus on all these

¹ I would like to thank Allen Carlson, John Owen, and Susan Whiting for comments and criticisms on an earlier drafts of this paper.

² See Randall L. Schweller, "Realism and the Present Great Power System: Growth and Positional Conflict over Scarce Resources" in Ethan B. Kapstein and Michael Mastanduno eds., Unipolar Politics: Realism and State Strategies After the Cold War (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999) pp.28-68.

deviant cases leaves the 'non-deviant' ones to realism. What might constructivists and their sympathizers have to contribute to understanding these cases?

Wendt has speculated as to how one might explain the development and persistence of realpolitik norms at the system level that are independent of anarchical structures and human nature. He suggests that the appearance and success of a sufficient number of predator states in altering the social structure of state interaction will lead eventually to a "tipping point" where the fundamental nature of anarchy is Hobbesian in nature; states will be forced to conform to the realpolitik norms of this type of anarchy in order to survive. But he is unclear where predator states come from in the first place, prior to the creation of this Hobbesian anarchy, and how or why the tipping point, where quantitative accumulation of realpolitik agents leads to qualitative change in the nature of the structure, occurs. In addition the subsequent 'socialization' process seems to differ little from what neorealist theory suggests occurs under anarchy, namely a process of selecting out non-realpolitik practices and/or practitioners. A theory about the origins of predator states would have more starkly distinguished his arguments from those of structural realism.³

Unlike Wendt, David Campbell goes inside the state for an answer. He theorizes about why actors in international relations might, in a sense, have an interest in developing a realpolitik ideology manifested in the 'discourses of danger' that constitute foreign policy⁴: essentially the

³ Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy if What States Make of It: The Social Construction of State Politics" International Organization 46:2 (1992) pp.391-425. See also his Social Theory of International Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) p.264.

⁴ David Campbell, Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992). This notion that the creation of insecurity is part and parcel of the creation of identity (through the construction of devalued differences with 'others') runs through the essays in Jutte Weldes et al, eds, The Culture of Insecurity: States, Communities and the Production of Danger (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). See in particular pp.10-13. Jon Mercer makes a similar argument, drawing more explicitly on social identity theory. He does this in defense of neorealist assumptions about competition in IR even though, it seems to me, social identity theory violates neorealism's starting assumptions about the structural sources of realpolitik behavior. See his "Anarchy and Identity." International Organization 49:2 (1995) pp.229-252. Wendt, in contrast, identifies three reasons why a state might conform to realpolitik norms of behavior: because it is coerced, because of positive self-interest, or because of an internalization of Hobbesian axioms. He doesn't explore this fourth possibility -- the requirements of domestic legitimation.

cohesion of ingroups depends on establishing the danger posed by outgroups. Generally, however, he doesn't really focus on the microprocess by which this ideology of threat occurs. Nor, for the most part, does he focus on why there might be variation across ingroups in the degree of 'realpolitikness' in this ideology.

John Owen addresses this problem of variation to some extent when he looks inside the state at beliefs about threats to visions of legitimate domestic order for the sources of cooperative and competitive foreign policies. Cooperative policies will be adopted towards states that are believed to share the same kind of domestic threat, hence the same concept of legitimate domestic order. Competitive, or realpolitik, policies will be adopted towards states that are believed to be the sources of threat to this legitimate domestic order.⁵ These cooperating states are said to share a collective identity, and to the extent they do, as social identity theory would suggest, their competitive behavior will be directed at 'outgroup' states. I think Owen's argument goes a long way in connecting constructivist arguments with a robust literature in social psychology and sociology about identity formation and the behavior of ingroups towards outgroups. And he is absolutely right to point out why this should lead constructivists to be pessimistic about the amelioration of conflict in international relations, though for reasons that are very different from those advanced by realist theories. In a sense, however, his is an explanation of variation in 'realpolitikness' across space, not across time. But temporal variation within an actor is an important possibility as well because domestic threats to ingroup order and cohesion may precede rather than follow from the construction of external enemies.

I want to take advantage of some of the gaps in the literature to propose an argument about realpolitik-as-ideology that explores variation in the intensity or hardness of realpolitik as a function of variation in the requirements for the legitimation of power inside a social group.

⁵ John Owen, "Pessimistic Constructivism: Common Identities, Common Enemies" (Paper presented to American Political Science Associate annual meeting, Boston, September 1998).

Specifically, I want to make the following related arguments, moving from least to most controversial:

- Regime legitimization involves, among other things, the construction of a ‘national identity’ among the members of a society.⁶
- Identity construction rests on establishing and perpetuating differences between the ingroup and all other outgroups.
- Foreign policy is a process in which differences between a sovereign nation-state ingroup and a sovereign nation state outgroup are (re)created.
- Foreign policy, therefore, is critical for identity construction and thus for legitimation.
- When state elites come to believe their legitimacy is declining or under challenge foreign policy will be a key tool/process used to intensify ingroup identity inside the nation state.
- Foreign policy strategies will be both positive (e.g. designed to cue pride and superiority in being a member of the ingroup) and negative (e.g. designed to cue fear and disdain towards outgroups).
- The specific content of these positive and negative strategies will depend on the specific, contingent contents of national identity. But as a general proposition, when elite legitimacy is challenged the purpose and effect of foreign policy strategies will be to increase the

⁶ I realize that ‘identity’ is a problematic term -- observing it, determining its content, and its behavioral effects are extremely under-developed topics in international relations. I am partial to Fearon's efforts to systematize a definition. He suggests that identity comes in two forms: 1) a social category (or role) that is linked to certain intersubjectively agreed upon "content features" (or scripts, though he doesn't use the term). Behavior is motivated by a sense of obligation to these content features. 2) personal identity, a "set of attributes, beliefs, desires or principles of action" that an individual "takes pride in" and forms the basis of self-esteem (See James Fearon, "What is Identity (As We Now Use the Word)?" Paper provided to the Workshop on Rationalism and Constructivism, Duke University, November 1997 pp. 8-9, 14). Self-esteem becomes a *motivation* for acting in ways that are consistent with identity, in other words it allows prediction about behavior on the basis of knowledge about the content of identity. Both classes of identities provide reasons or causal arguments for actors to behave in ways that are consistent with the roles associated with identity. This, I believe, and moves us beyond the standard but fuzzy notion that identity refers to "who I am". In this essay I am referring to ‘national identity’ as a social category: That is members of a group develop a common understanding of the name and content of the social category to which they belong. In this case, the name usually is country and the content usually refers to valued traits that are believed to characterize members of the group, and that are worth promoting domestically and defending internationally.

‘hardness’ of realpolitik understandings and practices directed towards the outside. The ‘hardness’ of this realpolitik will thus be causally unrelated to changes in material distributions of power.

I hope to make the connections between these statements clearer in this article. To this end, I want to extend some of the arguments in social identity theory developed by Jon Mercer and others a bit further by offering a ‘plausibility probe’ of these propositions using one of the great realpolitik states of the late 20th century, China, as a first cut.

What is Legitimacy and Why Do Elites Want It?

First things first. What do I mean by legitimacy and legitimation? To me a legitimate political, social, economic or international order means that members of the relevant ingroup are positively motivated to not want to see a change in the personnel and structures of policy and authority. By ‘positively’, I mean that they are not merely tolerating the status quo until something better comes around, but that they imagine there is little ‘out there’ in terms of alternative models worth fighting for.

In international relations, legitimacy usually refers to the sense of obligation to uphold international laws and contracts and maintain one’s commitments. This sense of obligation is based on very diffuse instrumentality, or ‘transcendental interests’⁷; so diffuse, in fact, that it takes on a ‘taken-for-grantedness’ for most actors most of the time. All other interests flow from this. This transcendental interest is based on fear that the state system would collapse if states did not follow their obligations and commitments. The short-term benefits from defection from obligations are outweighed by the long-term stream of benefits accruing if everyone follows rules. Thus a key indicator of legitimation is if those who would do better in the short-term by defecting, don’t do so because of this sense of obligation. Applied to domestic elite legitimacy,

elites have an interest in ensuring that those who might have an interest in defecting -- those who potentially do not do well under the status quo -- don't do so. Material incentives or sidepayments to potential defectors are tools for maintaining power, not for legitimating it -- just as material sidepayments are tools for maintaining international regimes, not for legitimating them. Legitimacy is the stickiness that keeps members of an ingroup complying with the rules of the power hierarchy even as the material benefits supplied by the power status quo drop off (see Fig. 1). If compliance were bought, as in a purely contractual relationship, it should drop off when material benefits decline (or alternatively, if compliance were coerced, it should drop off when coercion is no longer possible or credible).

The key indicator of legitimacy, then, is not that political winners cannot imagine a better order, but that the losers generally cannot do so either. That is, the legitimacy of an order requires that losers accept either that their losses are not so important (they suffer from a 'false consciousness' -- thus reminding us that legitimacy and hegemony are linked), or that they think there are existing channels and methods for recouping their losses.

⁷Andrea Hasenclever, Peter Mayer and Volker Rittberger, Theories of International Regimes (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997) p.171. See also Thomas M. Franck, The Power of Legitimacy Among Nations (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

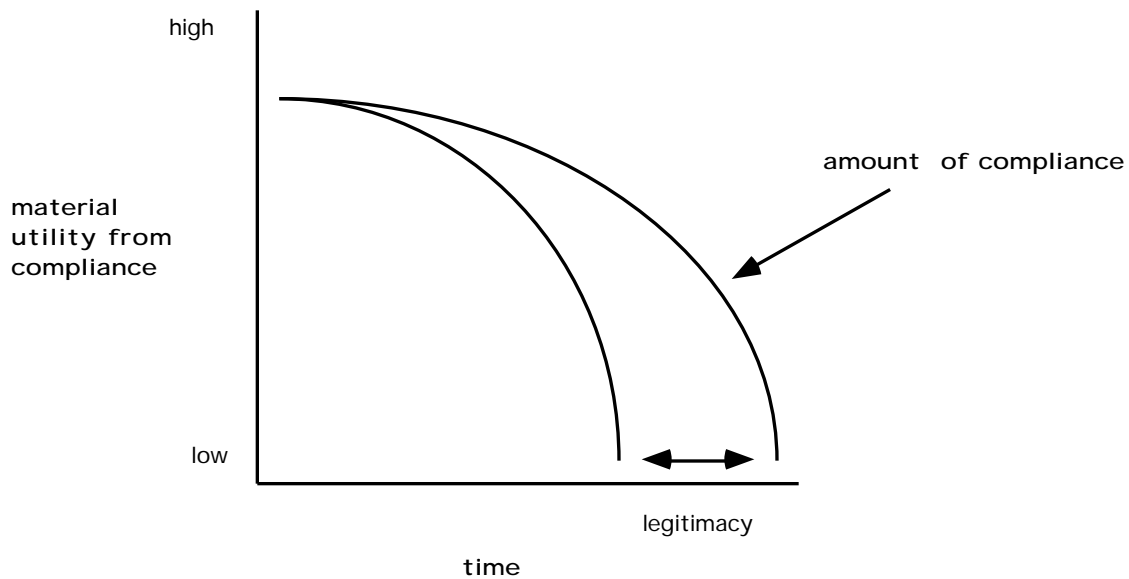


Fig 1: Legitimacy

Legitimacy depends on a widely accepted ‘oughtness’ attributed to the status quo. As Berger et al, put it concerning organizations, legitimation involves “explaining or justifying the social order in such a way as to make institutional arrangements subjectively plausible”.⁸ Berger and Luckman also note that “Legitimation is this process of ‘explaining’ and justifying”⁹ existing institutional arrangements to new generations. That is, it is intimately wrapped up in the creation of an ingroup history for the purposes of socialization.

Why would elites care about legitimacy? What can be done with it? There are at least three reasons: First, legitimacy may be key to what organizational culture studies have called “autocommunication” or self-legitimation. Leaders require, for cognitive purposes mostly, a sense of psychological well-being that comes from being viewed as competent, authoritative and

⁸ W. Richard Scott (1991) “Unpacking Institutional Arguments” in Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (Chicago, 1991) p. 169.

⁹ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York, Anchor Books, 1966) p. 93.

'strategic'.¹⁰ Second, a strong sense of identification with an ingroup makes it easier for leaders to mobilize resources against opponents in domestic or external arenas. Third, legitimacy, by its very nature, is essential to keeping ingroups together and cohesive. Without legitimate power/authority structures in the ingroup, then defense against the 'other' is more difficult. Alternative visions of political, social, economic and international reality are more easily proposed, since there is no dominant authoritative vision. As Ashley puts it, "In effect, difference, discontinuities, and conflicts that might be found *witrhin* all places and times must be converted into an absolute difference *between* a domain of domestic society, understood as an identity, and a domain of anarchy, understood as at one ambiguous, indeterminate, and dangerous."¹¹

What strategies do elites typically use to create the sense of obligation to the extant order among those with an interest or potential interest in defection? Clearly the basic strategy is socialization in the same myths, stories, values and visions of the ingroup, at what ever level of social organization this may be. Socialization at its root involves "the comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society or sector of it." It gives people identities; they are "assigned a specific place in the world". Socialization, then, involves internalization of shared identification such that people come to believe "We not only live in the same world, we participate in each other's being".¹² Thus socialization is aimed at creating membership in a society where the intersubjective understandings of the society become "objective facticities" that are taken for granted.¹³

But there are other mechanisms besides pure socialization and internalization. A lot of conformity to group norms doesn't come from the direct internalization of these norms, but from

¹⁰ Henri Broms and Henrik Gahmberg, "Communication to Self in Organizations and Cultures" Administrative Science Quarterly 28 (1983) pp.482-495

¹¹ Richard K. Ashley, "Untying the Sovereign State: A Double Reading of the Anarchy Problematique" Millenium 17 (1988) p.257

¹² Berger and Luckman, Social Construction pp. 129-130.

a recognition that there are social rewards/punishment that come with either accepting or ignoring these norms. That is, there are cognitive and social ‘goods’ that actors would like to maximize (self-esteem or status, for example) and that can only be maximized if they engage in behavior that is observed and rewarded by those who have internalized ingroup norms and values. Thus ingroup elites have an interest in ensuring that those who are not socialized completely in ingroup norms at least recognize that there may be others who are, and that these others will socially reward or punish non-conformist behavior. Elites, therefore, have an interest in communicating precisely what is non-conformist behavior such that it is obvious to those completely socialized and those incompletely socialized alike what constitutes defection from the group.

The specific content of the socialization stories and myths will determine the kinds of behavior considered non-conformist and threatening to the ingroup. But, as social identity theory makes clear, almost invariably an important component of these myths about the self, or the ingroup will describe large and unbridgable differences with an outgroup.¹⁴ In nation-state terms, all nationalisms imply a de-valuation of other nation-states, and thus they raise the implicit, sometimes explicit dangers that come from unregulated interaction among states. Even seemingly benign self-characterizations condescend towards or discount the ‘other’, and raise the possibility that these benign characteristics may, under certain conditions of ingroup weakness, be threatened

¹³Ibid: 44.

¹⁴ Marc Ross The Culture of Conflict: Interpretations and Interests in Comparative Perspective (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Mercer, "Anarchy and Identity"; Daniel Druckman, "Nationalism, Patriotism and Group Loyalty: A Social Psychological Perspective." Mershon International Studies Review, Vol. 38 Supplement 1 (1994); Eugene Burnstein et al "How the Mind Preserves the Image of the Enemy: The Mnemonics of Soviet-American Relations" in William Zimmerman and Harold Jacobson eds., Behavior, Culture and Conflict in World Politics (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press 1993); Chester A. Insko et al., "Individual-Group Discontinuity as a Function of Fear and Greed" Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 58:1 (1990) pp.68-79; Iver B. Neumann, The Uses of the Other. The 'East' in European Identity Construction (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1999); W. Wallace, "Foreign Policy and National Identity in the United Kingdom." International Affairs vol 67 no 1 (1991); William Bloom, Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990).

Foreign Policy and Legitimacy

At its most basic, foreign policy is central to legitimation since foreign policy *is*, among other things, a process and manifestation of defining boundaries between ingroups and outgroups in the modern state system.¹⁵ Foreign policy reproduces the ingroup (the nation-state) and its differences from others.¹⁶ Thus identity language infuses foreign policy discourse and practice. State elites constantly characterize their state as being like 'x' or having 'x' trait, implying others are not like 'x' and implying certain expected roles of self- and other that manifest these differences. Foreign policy manages these differences but starts by taking them for granted. Traditional usage of foreign policy in IR is "the external deployment of instrumental reason on behalf of an unproblematic internal identity situated in an anarchical realm of necessity".¹⁷ The assumption is that the state is prior to, or causal of, foreign policy. Yet the foreign policies of states, interactively, create the system of anarchical sovereign states because foreign policy is designed to preserve and accentuate differences along sovereign state lines. That is, traditional comparative foreign policy analysis has it backwards. Anarchy and the sovereignty state system don't create foreign policies. It is the other way around, or at least foreign policy is a key link in the iterative cycle of recreating the anarchical sovereign state system. Foreign policy is a collected "discourse of danger" (along with other domestic discourses of danger) that is politically, socially and cognitively central to ingroup identity/difference creation.¹⁸

Since foreign policy is an issue of how one sovereign ingroup relates to a sovereign outgroup, any foreign policy strategies to increase domestic legitimation will be strategies

¹⁵ Though *only* if the outgroup is another sovereign state -- the concept of a democratic security community suggests that inter-democratic interaction may no longer be properly understood as 'foreign policy', since inter-democratic practice has, in many respects, abandoned or replaced the realpolitik understandings that characterize 'regular' Westphalian inter-sovereign state relations.

¹⁶ This conception of foreign policy draws from Campbell, Writing Security.

¹⁷ Ibid p. 37.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.77. On the role of images of external danger and disorder as mechanisms of control -- specifically the delegitimation of non-realpolitik views of strategy in policy discourses -- see Robin Luckham, "Armament Culture," Alternatives. Vol. 10, No. 1 (1984); Bradley S. Klein, "Hegemony and Strategic Culture: American Power Projection and Alliance Defence Politics," Review of International Studies Vol.

designed to increase ingroup identification with the sovereign state. By definition this requires widening the gap between the values/norms of the ingroup and those of the outgroup. Foreign policy can do this in two ways. First it can do this through positive processes that reaffirm the values of the ingroup, that invoke pride and self-esteem that comes from being a member of a highly regarded actor in the international system. This can be done through symbolic foreign policy successes. These might typically include the publicization of successful defenses of territory, sovereignty, autonomy, the righting of historical wrongs, the acquisition of status markers from a valued international audiences, etc. These can feedback in into domestic legitimacy through the anthropomorphization of leaders and the state on the international stage.¹⁹

Second, foreign policy can widen the perceived value gap with the outgroup through negative processes (what Berger and Luckman call annihilation strategies)²⁰ that invoke disdain, distrust and competition with the 'other'. Elites would be expected, then, to focus on the production of enemies, or, perhaps more benignly, to use condescension strategies that discount the other without employing violent imagery. Condescension strategies rest on discourses about the uniqueness of the ingroup's traits as these apply to foreign relations.

The specific content of these strategies will depend on the content of national identity or national traits promoted by elites. For instance, the kinds of status markers state leaders will try to accumulate will depend on which international audiences are considered relevant (e.g. which audiences possess the kinds of status markers that a state's domestic constituencies believe are consistent with the their identity). Who is defined as an enemy or adversary, the content of these discourses of danger, the content of condescension and uniqueness discourses etc., will also

14 (1988) . On the relationship between identity creation, control and disorder see Harrison White, Identity and Control: A Structural Theory of Social Action (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

¹⁹ One might expect that foreign policy successes in the very concrete area of increasing military power and wealth would have more legitimation effect within the population than these symbolic successes. But I am not so sure this is true. For an action to have a positive, relatively immediate impact on legitimacy it has to be observed and processed quickly. The gradual accumulation of wealth through trade or the gradual accretion of relative power are not as immediately observable as a successful summit, a break-out from diplomatic isolation, or a steady stream of foreign dignitaries viewed on television.

depend on prior ingroup identities. But the general proposition still stands -- when elites believe they face a legitimacy crisis they will turn to ingroup identity-enhancing strategies which, in turn, will almost invariably try to make ingroup-outgroup differentiation starker. This, in turn, means, the production of foreign policy discourses that exhibit harder realpolitik features (e.g. where the world is competitive and dangerous, where relative power matters for security, and where conflicts are uniquely a function of the disposition of the other).

As I noted, the intended effect is twofold -- to mobilize those who have internalized a particular notion of ingroup identity, and to highlight the unacceptable behavior of those who have not internalized this identity, or who don't accept the myths and stories of the ingroup, or who try to preserve a cross-group identity (cosmopolitans).²¹ These strategies, of course, don't always work. Sometimes legitimation strategies in foreign policy can be contradictory. For instance, the status markers from participation in some external club or group may increase the domestic legitimacy of elites. But the behavior required for accumulating these status markers could also be in tension with behaviors required for domestic legitimation. Thus external strategies could be inefficient. Similarly, because domestic legitimation strategies could encourage behavior that undermines the ability to accumulate status markers from a broader external community, internal strategies could be inefficient.

There may be some optimal balance in the efficacy of internal and external legitimation strategies. These will be optimizing when there is consistency between internal identities, and the normatively appropriate, pro-group behavior expected by international audiences. Democratic states operating inside a democratic security communities maximize legitimation because domestic strategies (e.g. human rights, democratic deliberation, relative social peace) get high rewards from the community of democracies; these status rewards, in turn, get high rewards from

²⁰ Berger and Luckman, Social Construction pp. 114-115

²¹ In the context of inter-ethnic conflict Laitin calls this a deliberate policy of "boundary protection" conducted by ingroup elites. See David Laitin, Identity in Formation: The Russian-speaking Populations in the Near Abroad. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998) p.34.

domestic constituencies. Non-democracies operating in an era where a lot of emerging international norms stress democratization, human rights, humanitarian intervention etc, may be inefficient in this regard: What is required for internal legitimacy (e.g. unilateral and hypersovereign-centric demonstrations of wealth and power) often may be inefficient when it comes to the accumulation of external status markers (e.g. though the constructive participation in international institutions that constrain sovereignty and autonomy), and vice versa.

Thus the modal distribution of international norms, and the kinds of international normative communities this distribution creates, matter a great deal for the over-all efficiency of state legitimation. As long as international norms continue to evolve towards an emphasis on democratic governance, individual protection against the state, institutionalization and transparency in politics and economics, then dictatorships that rely on harsh 'othering' strategies will be at a disadvantage when it comes to legitimation. They did, and do, better in a more purely Westphalian world. Not surprisingly they tend to favor a return to such a world and often stress its key features in normative and descriptive discussions of international relations.

By way of illustration of these propositions and arguments, I want to turn to a specific example of a state where a domestic legitimacy crisis, not a disadvantageous change in the external distribution of power, led to an accentuation of realpolitik ideology and practice. I am, to be sure, selecting on the dependent variable, choosing a confirming case. But my escape clause is the 'plausibility probe'. This probe is somewhat more plausible than most, however, because of the temporal sequence of the legitimacy crisis and the one major alternative explanation, a disadvantageous change in the external power distribution. Specifically, in the late 1980s Chinese leaders confronted an intense domestic crisis of rule in the face of large demonstrations against the regime in all major cities. A couple of years later, the Soviet Union collapsed, leaving the United State as a the sole 'unipole'; in structural realist terms, China faced a disadvantageous shift in systemic polarity. To telegraph my tentative conclusion, the hardening of Chinese

realpolitik discourse through to at least the mid 1990s tracks with the domestic legitimacy crisis, not with the change in polarity.

Foreign Policy and Legitimacy: China as An Illustration²²

The common observation by China specialists is that with the collapse of Marxist-Leninist ideology as a force for social cohesion and political legitimacy the regime turned with more urgency to a victimization discourse²³, to a new amalgam of appeals to an ancient, glorious Confucian past²⁴, and to barely disguised racist discourses on the greatness of the Chinese people²⁵, on 'Asian' ways towards human rights and political and economic development²⁶, and

²² Some of the evidence for this section comes from, Alastair Iain Johnston, "Realism(s) and Chinese Security Policy in the Post-Cold War Period" in Ethan B. Kapstein and Michael Mastanduno, Unipolar Politics: Realism and State Strategies After the Cold War (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999)

²³ The efficacy of this victimization discourse is dependent on intense socialization of the Chinese public in particular interpretations of modern history. As one example, the first volume of a recently produced two-book set on modern Chinese history written for Chinese youth is entitled, National Shame. It lists over eighty instances of shame and insult to China, almost all of which were perpetrated by foreigners or Chinese working on behalf of foreign interests (the companion volume is entitled, National Prowess). See Che Jixin, ed., Guochi [National shame] (Jinan: Shandong Friendship Publishing House, 1992). The victimization has resonance even among Western-educated intellectuals. See for example, Wang Jianwei, United States-China Mutual Images in the Post-Tiananmen Era: A Regression or Sophistication? (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, Political Science Department, PhD diss, 1994) p. 267.

²⁴ See, for instance, the plea to traditional Chinese Confucian cultural values in a lengthy article on political education in the military written by Minister of Defense, Chi Haotian. See Chi Haotian, "Build An Ideological Great Wall to Resist Corruption and Prevent Degeneration" Renmin Ribao (People's Daily) (August 10, 1995) in FBIS-CHI-95-188 (September 28, 1995) pp.30-31. See also a recent book on China's traditional ethics issued by the State Education Commission, Luo Guojie, ed., Zhongguo chuantong daode [China's traditional morality] (Beijing, People's University Press, 1995).

²⁵ The racist elements of the Chinese nationalist discourse is an extremely sensitive and difficult-to-handle issue, but too important to ignore. There is ambiguity as to which Chinese China's leaders refer to when invoking nationalism -- ethnic Chinese or citizens of the PRC? Who is it that must 'stand up' and take their place in the sun? Conservative nationalists have referred to the threat from the "white race" and "white culture". They will condemn those who are perceived to damage the national interest, like dissidents, as race traitors (*han jian*). See for instance He Xin (1991) "Wang Zhen tongzhi tanhua ji yao" [Important points in discussions with Comrade Wang Zhen] (May 17, 1991) in He Xin Zhengzhi Jingji Lunwen Ji -- Nei bu yanjiu baogao [Collected political and economic writings of He Xin -- internal circulation research reports] (Harbin, Heilongjiang Education Press 1993) pp 254; and He Xin, "Weilai Zhong Mei guanxi" [Sino-US relations in the future] (September 7, 1992) in *ibid.*, p 125. While He Xin is personally not as influential as he was in the late 1980s and early 1990s -- he was close to Premier Li Peng for a time -- his views on foreign relations, at least, are probably fairly representative of mainstream nationalist voices in Beijing.

²⁶ Andrew Nathan, "Human Rights in Chinese Foreign Policy" The China Quarterly No. 139 (September 1994) pp.622-643 pp. 622-643; Chen Jie, "Human Rights: ASEAN's New Importance to China." Pacific Review. 6:3. (1993)

on the uniquely peaceful nature of China's culture and thus the benign nature of China's rising power.

If my basic proposition is right, however, as a first cut a domestic legitimacy crisis, not an external security threat per se, should be the primary trigger for an accentuation of these identity-related discourses. Basically, one would expect to see a rough positive correlation between the degree of crisis on the one hand, and the 'hardness' of realpolitik language and practice in Chinese foreign policy.

Anecdotally this seems to be the case. The efforts to increase the intensity of identification with the Chinese state -- while never absent in post 1949 history, of course -- picked up after June 4th. This should not be surprising. The protests against the regime and the aftermath of the crackdown in June 1989 constituted a severe crisis in the regime's legitimacy. In essence, June 4th democracy movement provided information to regime that 'revealed' not only that the outsiders were trying to undermine the integrity of the ingroup, but that they also held much different approaches to the inviolability of the internal affairs of sovereign states. In other words, June 4th provided information to Chinese leaders that suggested more work needed to be done to intensify ingroup identification (so as to maintain the legitimacy of the ingroup political status quo) AND suggested that differences with the outgroup were larger, more pressing, and involving higher and more competitive stakes, than they had previously acknowledged.

After June 1989, the regime began a concerted attack on those with marginal identities or who might try to hold multiple identities. The critique of cosmopolitanism (*shijie zhuyi*) picked up after June 1989, for instance, in part because the regime believed that some democracy activists saw themselves as part of a broader global historical ideological trend. Some scholars who worked on issues relating to cultural convergence (*wenhua qutong*) through the internationalization of national economies had to drop their research focii. In some internal circulation materials the "open consciousness" (*kaifang yishi*) prior to June 4th was blamed for the proliferation of such unpatriotic concepts as "citizen of the world" (*shijie gongmin*), "global

village consciousness" (*diqu cun yishi*), "convergence theory" (*qutong lun*), as well as "foreign worshipping" behavior and the negation of the cultural legacies of the Chinese ethno-nation.²⁷ Clearly these terms and their accompanying conceptions of the (diminished) role of the sovereign state in IR were considered antithetical to the tight ingroup identity embodied in traditional hyper-sovereignty discourses in Chinese foreign policy.

It appears that the regime thought fairly carefully about the politically instrumental purposes of these nationalist discourses. In what may have been the summary of an explicit research project on the uses of nationalism, an analyst with the State Council Information Office - the office charged with controlling information into and out of China -- wrote in 1995 that nationalism could have a number of functions. Among the positive ones were unification of a people and nation, and preservation of the nation-state in the face of external aggression.²⁸

Thus June 4th appeared to compel greater efforts by the Chinese leadership to foster identification with the Chinese state as led by the CCP. The symbolic content of this strategy was determined by a historically rooted identity as a victimized great power. Indeed, some political insiders in China explicitly recognized the importance of cultivating nationalist sentiments and an 'enemy psychology' (*diquing xinli*) to gird the population for competition with the US and to prevent internal disorder along the lines of June 1989. The language, they argued, should stress that the US intention is to exterminate China (*mie wang zhongguo*), as stark a zero-sum image as one can imagine.²⁹

²³ Wei Cizhu, "Zou chu aiguo zhuyi jiaoyu 'wuqu' de duice silu" [Countermeasures for the road out of 'error zones' in patriotic education], *Neibu wengao* [Internal manuscripts] No. 21 (1990) pp. 8-9. See also Chen Xiushan, "Qutong lun pingxi" [A critique of convergence theory], *Neibu wengao* [Internal Manuscripts] No. 19 (1989) pp. 5-8.

²⁸ Hua Qing, "Jiekai minzuzhuyi shenmi de mianmao" [Open up the mysterious face of nationalism] *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* [World economics and politics] No. 7 (1995) pp. 69-71. The more negatively described ones included the manufacturing of national hatreds and irrational ethno-national passions. There were implicitly distinguished from more progressive uses, as in the Chinese case.

²⁹ He, "Weilai Zhong Mei guanxi" p. 126 and He Xin, "Qianfu wei ji yu qianjing yuce -- dangqian Zhongguo nei wai xingshi de yanjiu baogao." [Hidden crisis and prospective predictions -- research report on the current internal and external situation] (September 25, 1989) in *He Xin Zhengzhi Jingji Lunwen Ji*. Note this is similar to the rhetorical strategy of invoking Croatian fascism among Serbs: even though the probability of extermination is low, it is greater than zero, given modern history in China. Thus the effects

This anecdotal impression of the up-turn in identity/difference and related realpolitik discourses seems confirmed by some simple content analysis and frequency counts. Generally, for example, foreign policy analysts were more likely to view 'interdependence' with some scepticism, at least to the extent that it could be used as a cover for asymmetric power relations between Western states and developing countries. In addition, interdependence and associated concepts such as 'new world order' were identified with challenges to state sovereignty and thus, in principle, potentially at odds with the preservation of independence and autonomy. A count of the relative frequency of the terms 'independence' and 'interdependence' taken from the premier internal circulation journal on international relations, World Economics and Politics, are suggestive on this score.³⁰ Figure 2 shows the relative frequency of the terms 'independence' and 'interdependence'. The peak year for the sovereign-centric discourse is 1989, while 1995 saw a rather large jump in references to interdependence.³¹

of American strategy would be disastrous for China. This expected utility, manufactured through the invocation of historically rooted symbols, then rallies support for regime. See Robert H. Bates and Barry R. Weingast "A New Comparative Politics: Integrating Rational Choice and Interpretivist Perspectives" (Cambridge: Center for International Affairs, Working Paper No.95-3, April 1995).

³⁰ Although this has been the official journal of Institute of World Economics and Politics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, in practice it has been a forum for policy-relevant scholarship on IR topics from specialists from a wide range of institutes including the military, the Foreign Ministry, and the intelligence community. It was classified "internal circulation" (*neibu faxing*) until the end of 1994, meaning foreigners were not supposed to have access to it. Thus, it has some degree of face validity as a source of authoritative thinking about IR and China's role in the world. My coding procedures were kept simple. I randomly selected 10 articles from each of 7 years spanning the 1989 divide. Each explicit mention of these terms was then counted for each article. The face validity of frequency counts in this instance is relatively strong. While frequency of a concept does not necessarily mean normative endorsement, many of these articles provide descriptions of international political and economic issues. Thus the frequency of particular characterizations of these issues is at least an indicator of how the author believes international relations to work, if not how she/he thinks it ought to work. I thank Robert Ross for lending me his copies of the journal, and Fu Jun and Qiu Dong for doing the coding work. When the coding was done we were, unfortunately, unable to find complete runs for 1987, 1990, 1993 and 1994.

³¹ Arguably one found in the mid 1980s, when the military challenge to China (from the USSR and Vietnam) was greater than the 1990s, and when China's integration into economic institutions was lower, the discourse about global order was less shrilly realpolitik. Contrast, for instance, Zhao Ziyang's discussion of foreign policy in his report to the 13th Party Congress in 1987 with Jiang Zeming's report at the 14th Party Congress of 1992. Zhao stressed disarmament and development themes, while Jiang's was replete with references to preserving state sovereignty and independence.

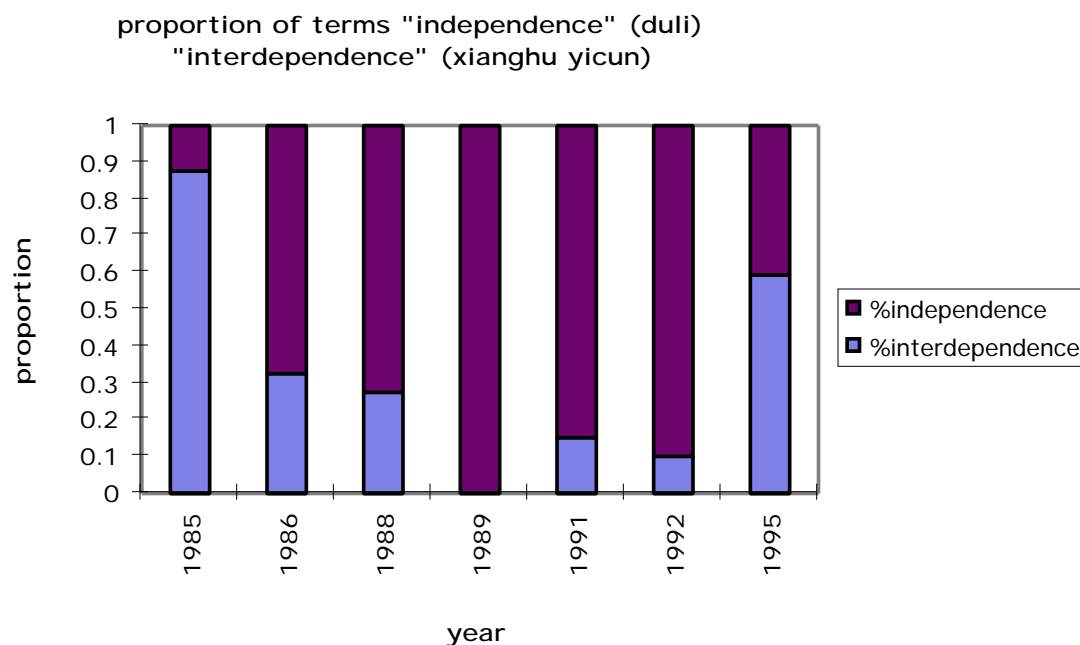


Fig. 2

In Figure 3 one sees a clear shift in articles in World Economics and Politics in the preference for the term 'new international order' over 'new world order' through the 1990s. Thereafter the preferred term is 'new international order'. The reason appears, in part, to have been that 'new *world* order' connotes a system where 'global' interests might take precedence over national interests and undermine state sovereignty ostensibly in the search for cooperative solutions to global problems. In a new *international* order, however, the primary objective is to preserve the sovereignty and independence of states.³² This is what international institutions -- designed to regulate relations among sovereign states -- such as the United Nations are supposed to do.

³² Li Shisheng, (1992) "Guanyu guoji xin zhixu ji ge wenti de tan tao." [Discussion of several questions relating to the new international order] Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi. [World Economics and politics] No.10 pp. 43-44. The pattern in the relative frequency of these two terms is consistent with what one Chinese analyst told me was a political decision sometime in 1991 to downplay the term new world order. Such a dramatic jump in the ratio is unlikely to reflect a random inconsistency in the use of the two terms across time.

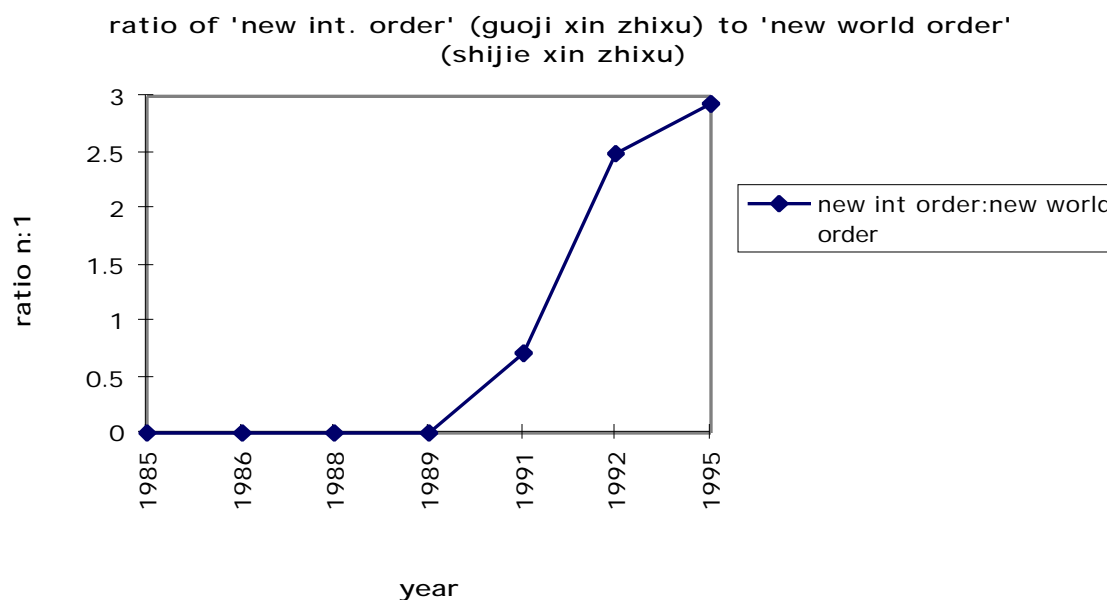


Fig. 3

Figures 4 and 5 show the raw frequencies of 'sovereignty claims' appearing in Beijing Review from 1986 to 1997, and in Waijiao Gailan, an official history of each year's foreign affairs work compiled by the Foreign Ministry. Note again, the dramatic jump occurred immediately after 1989, the time of the June 4th crisis, and not after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.³³

³³ This pattern in these data is evidence that mainstream realist focus on changing polarity does not do a very good job in accounting for variations in China's realpolitik discourse. First the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent radical redistribution of global power occurred in 1991, after June 4. Second, with the emergence of the US as the lone superpower or unipole after 1991, realists would expect China to adopt a harder realpolitik foreign policy stance consistent with efforts to balance against US power. Since this quasi-unipolar distribution of power has not changed since 1991, realists would not expect such variation in the 'hardness' of China's realpolitik discourses

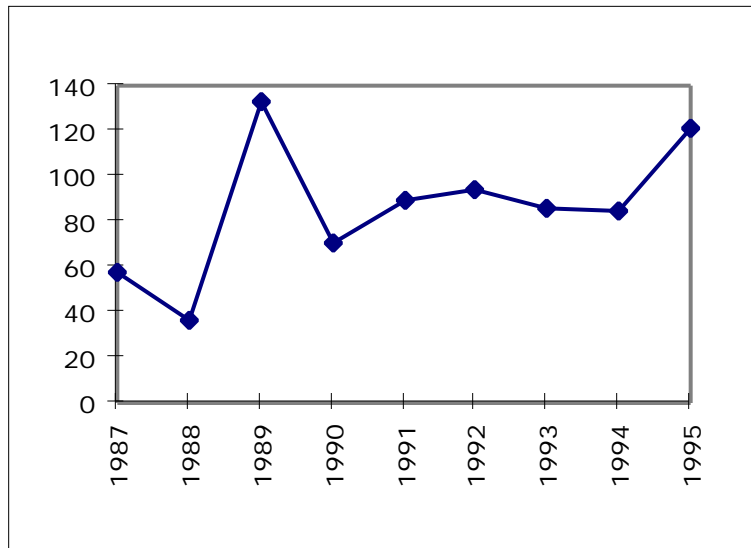


Fig. 4. Sovereignty Claims³⁴
Source: Beijing Review.

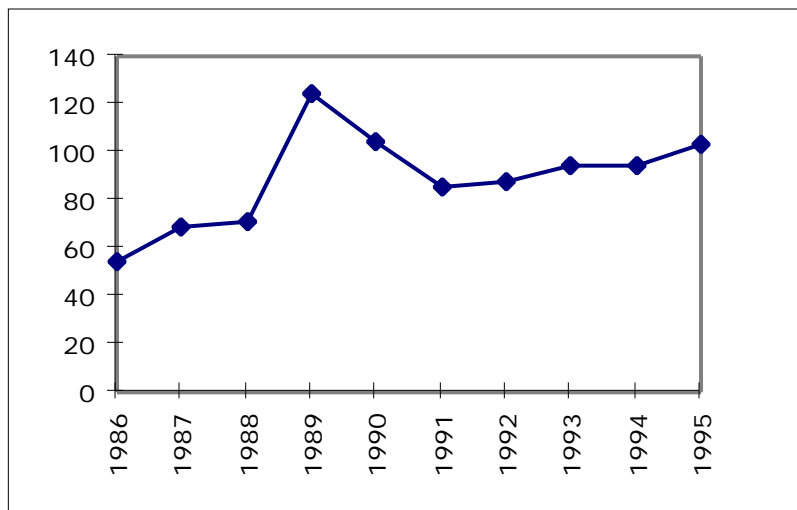


Fig. 5. Sovereignty Claims.³⁵ Source: Waijiao Gailan.

³⁴ The content analysis and data compilation were all done by Allen Carlson. See his The Lock on China's Door: P.R.C. Foreign Policy and the Norm of State Sovereignty in the Reform Period (Yale University, Department of Political Science, draft PhD dissertation, 1999). Carlson coded the entire contents of each issue, using the sentence as the unit of analysis. He found 1074 official sovereignty claims. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of his coding procedures.

³⁵ With the exception of technical appendixes, Carlson coded the entire text, finding 636 official sovereignty claims (excluding the missing years). See *ibid.*, Chapter 3 for coding rules.

There is one puzzle in all of this, however. Shortly after the regime accentuated the hyper-sovereignty elements of its diplomatic discourse in 1989, it also began to experiment with multilateral diplomacy discourses designed to confirm China's identity as 'responsible major power'. Since the mid 1990s, in particular, President Jiang Zemin has stressed the importance of participation in international institutions as an indicator of China's responsible status as a major power. One could even argue that the status markers accumulated from participation in the major institutions that regular interstate life have become an important incentive (and the opprobrium markers from obstruction or non-participation, a disincentive) for Chinese cooperation in global nonproliferation efforts. There is a fair amount of interview evidence that a critical concern for China's leaders is that the PRC not be seen as obstructing high profile, highly legitimate international institutions. Or put another way, when they weigh the costs and benefits from participation, status and image concerns will on occasion tilt the balance in favor of participation even when there may be some concrete costs to material power or sovereign autonomy. The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (1996) and the landmine protocols to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (1996) are cases in point.³⁶ In both cases, international image or status were critical in China's decision to cooperate, even though in both cases the agreements restrict military programs and subject China to rather intrusive verification procedures. I think the leadership sees these status markers as important, again, for confirming to key domestic audiences that diplomacy under their direction is creating an international image for China that is consistent with this emerging identity.

Now, one should immediately object and ask how this identity as a responsible major power -- an identity that 'requires' participation in international institutions -- fits with identity arguments presented earlier that appear to undergird unilateralist, realpolitik, 'Westphalian' practices. I fully agree that this explanation for the character of much of China's involvement in

³⁶ My argument here is based on extensive interviewing of Chinese arms control specialists in the nuclear weapons program, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the People's Liberation Army from 1994-1999.

and cooperation with international institutions is problematic. I think there is a tension, but one that reflects more fundamentally a tension between two national identity discourses both of which are promoted by the regime -- one is the Westphalian, 'China as victim in competitive world of sovereign states' where relative power and autonomy matters. The other is the 'China as a responsible power' in a world where international institutions increasingly regulate and constrain sovereignty.³⁷ As legitimacy maximizers, it stands to reason the regime would try to use both discourses to cue domestic identification with the regime, even though they are associated with very different, even contradictory standards of appropriate behavior in international relations.³⁸

I think the responsible major power discourse also fits with the Westphalian one in another, perhaps more fragile or indirect way: the 'satisfaction' that the ruled derive from seeing China act as a responsible major power comes from the 'major power' part of the practices AND from the status backpatting from the international audience, NOT from the specific content of

³⁷ On this feature of major power identity in contemporary IR, see Abram Chayes and Antonia Handler Chayes, The New Sovereignty: Compliance with International Regulatory Agreements (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1996). I should note that while the top leadership has used the multilateralist themes instrumentally to promote China's diffuse image through joining treaties such as the CTBT, there is an growing community of proto-multilateralists situated primarily in those institutions (including the Foreign Ministry) which deal with Asia-Pacific regional security dialogues. Through their exposure to multilateralist ideologies these individuals have brought into the dialogue process from other countries and 'track II' actors, have begun to develop sophisticated, and internalized, arguments in favor of common or cooperative security, and have challenged, albeit carefully, some of the harder realpolitik themes in Chinese foreign policy. For perhaps the most sophisticated of these statements see Zhang Yunling, "Zonghe anquan guan ji dui wo guo anquan de sikao" [Comprehensive security and reflections on China's security] Dandai YaTai [Contemporary Asia-Pacific studies] No.1 (2000) pp.4-17.

³⁸ Carlson argues that the post 1989 sovereignty discourse is not designed solely to respond to domestic legitimacy needs. Rather it is also a response to the upsurge in the international, particularly American and European discourses about human rights, transparency, and governance that, nominally at least, challenge the absolutist doctrine of territorial and authority sovereignty pushed by the Chinese regime. In other words, it is part of a defense of sovereignty in the face of perceived external discursive challenges. My thanks to Allen Carlson for making this point. While the Chinese government has taken on this challenge through argumentation, it has tried to delegitimize the alternative visions by claiming that, at base, these are tools of power politics designed to weaken and divide China. There is, then, a feedback, or perhaps symbiotic, relationship between domestic targets and international targets of the official sovereignty discourse in that domestic audiences are also meant to observe how power politics and hegemonism is using the 'limited sovereignty' arguments to challenge China's unity and progress. This feeds into construction of 'danger' embodied in the domestically directed sovereignty discourse.

‘responsibleness’ (e.g. multilateral cooperation, cooperative security), since the content may not find any resonance with a population socialized in realpolitik and identity/difference values.³⁹

Caveats

It is always good to be aware of how flimsy one’s arguments might turn out to be. Thus I have two caveats I want to raise, the first relatively minor, the second less so. First, the effectiveness of legitimation strategies depends on the communication and observation of legitimating practices. If key constituencies don’t know about foreign policy successes, then it is hard for these practices to have a legitimating effect. Thus, when we talk about legitimation strategies, we also need to think about the ‘technologies’ of legitimation -- the ways in which elites communicate legitimation strategies such that their effects can be observed by the ruled. One strategy elites may use is to build and control communications systems that both inform and constrain the terms of debate. In the Chinese case, this is done for example through the publication of policy White Papers issued by the State Council (the Chinese cabinet) that are then re-published in the Communist Party newspaper, Renmin Ribao. Inordinate attention in the news media to the daily stream of foreign dignitaries coming to Beijing is also part of this process, a practice that hasn’t changed from the Maoist period. All of these practices should increase when the legitimacy of regime is threatened. They not only have practical diplomatic purposes (e.g. breaking out from post-June 4th diplomatic isolation, for instance) but also seem to be designed to increase the frequency and volume of signals to domestic audiences about the international legitimacy of the regime. The efficacy of these technologies has to be measured independently, but I am not aware of any especially good survey, content analysis or ‘participant observation’

³⁹ Indeed not. A 1998 randomly sampled survey of around 750 Beijing residents found that when asked about the relative importance of different traits in defining a state’s international influence, many fewer respondents believed that things such as economic assistance to poorer states or leadership roles in international institutions were important than believed that economic and military power were important. In addition, 57% of respondents disagreed while only 33% agreed with a statement that in order to solve certain global problems states might have to sacrifice some sovereignty.

protocols that help measure the effects of foreign policy successes on popular attitudes towards the legitimacy of a regime. Developing such procedures would be a useful methodological task for constructivists, however.

As for the second caveat, the strongest challenge to my argument doesn't come from a neorealist or classical realist perspective, but from a domestic politics perspective. Specifically, from a 'thick rationalist' perspective⁴⁰ (meaning that actor preferences are strictly to maximize individual material perks and privileges, and that these preferences are given and fixed) the concept of legitimacy makes no sense. No action is done for reasons of obligation or appropriateness. March and Olsen's differentiation between the 'logic of consequences' (instrumental) and the 'logic of appropriateness' (normative) doesn't work, in this view. Every conscious action is instrumental in an immediate material sense. Every conscious action proceeds from an estimation of the consequences for the individual's self-interest. Therefore no regime has legitimacy, as it is usually defined. The phenomenon just doesn't exist. What appears to be ingroup members' sense of 'obligation' to accept the status quo institutions and arrangements is, in fact, based on material self-interest.

The syllogism is straightforward: Elites want to stay in power; they therefore cater to the material interests of the most powerful groups. In China's case this is the military, the senior members of the Communist Party, and the internal security apparatus. There will be no stickiness of support for the regime if these interests aren't taken care of in an immediate sense. Regimes don't have stored up capital called legitimacy that ensures support from powerful constituencies even when their interests are being neglected (e.g. when they are or appear to be losing). Legitimacy disappears as quickly as when budgets fall too far or don't rise fast enough, or when perks and privileges disappear.

⁴⁰ John Ferejohn, "Rationality and Interpretation: Parliamentary Elections in Early Stuart England" in Kristen Renwick Monroe ed., The Economic Approach to Politics: A Critical Reassessment of the Theory of Rational Action (New York, Harper Collins, 1991).

In the thick rationalist view, then, discursive strategies like the critique of ‘peaceful evolution’ after 1989 were nothing more than threats to borderline members of ingroup (dissidents and cosmopolitans) that they would be materially/physically punished for challenging the power of the state. The crisis was not one of legitimacy but of personal power and privilege as students and then workers aired a wide variety of grievances against communist party rule at all levels of society. Thus the regime’s discursive strategy was not designed to cue social obligation or to enhance ingroup solidarity by invoking external threats. Rather the strategy was to cue a fear of retribution among dissidents. There were concrete costs to challenging the victimization/anti-hegemonism discourse in Chinese foreign policy -- losses of jobs, publishing opportunities, career opportunities, or in the case of dissidents, prison

Choosing “strategies” involves a conscious choice between different sequences of action designed to optimize some outcome, given how others chose strategically. Therefore strategizing involves a conscious weighing of alternatives in terms of their optimizing effect. If the action is not consciously chosen, then it isn’t a strategy, but an instinct or a hardwired response to an external stimuli. But if so, then ‘legitimation strategy’ implies that leaders are conscious of their legitimacy such that they have some metric or sense of its waxing and waning. What evidence is there that leaders are aware of this thing called legitimacy, that they have some metric, that they calculated “we have suffered a loss of legitimacy therefore lets chose strategic x, y, or z to increase it”. I could see how in a democracy elites might be more aware of or sensitive to their legitimacy; if there is no legitimacy political losers could take to extraparliamentary and violent means, leading to social violence that would require their suppression using non-democratic means. Normatively this might be problematic for democratic leaders. But in dictatorships where violence is more central to ensuring power presumably legitimacy is less central.

What evidence is there that China’s top leader, Jiang Zemin, cares about this vague sense of legitimacy more than he cares whether key constituencies will back him if they are provided certain kinds of material rewards? Promises of material rewards and/or threats of material

punishments directed at key constituencies that could threaten the perks and power of elites are what undergird the discursive foreign policy practices of elites. If so, then these practices that at first glance might appear irrelevant to this material rewarding/punishing (e.g. the victimization, peaceful evolution, and sovereignty discourses in Chinese foreign policy) should in fact be read as signals -- not strategies for cueing legitimation. These signals provide information to key constituencies about how they will be rewarded. Discourses of danger, the language about victimization, and absolutist notions of sovereignty, for example, all signal to military and security constituencies the improved possibilities of an increase in budgets and resources. At the same time these discourses signal to those who think democracy and human rights are not alien nor an intervention in internal affairs that they are likely to meet increased repression.

When nationalist discourses about ingroup uniqueness are invoked by elites, these too are signals to those who benefit from the status quo that it is threatened. That is, these discourses are not meant to cue latent, internalized, socialized pro-group conformist values among potential dissidents, defectors and marginals. Rather they are used to mobilize supporters and true beneficiaries to participate in the suppression of these potential 'out-groupers'. That is, the expectations that elites have when they invoke these discourses is not that these will cue some pro-group identity impulse in dissidents, that they will 'come around' normatively. The rock concerts, patriotic TV program etc that Milosevic used during the NATO bombing in the spring of 1999 were not designed primarily to elicit nationalist sentiments among potential dissidents. Rather they were designed to mobilize pro-Milosevic forces. The most effective signal Milosovic sent to dissidents about their prospects in a Greater Serbia was the very public assassination of an opposition publisher.

Despite having just made what I think is a reasonably strong case for a parsimonious, thick rationalist argument, I personally don't think an approach that does away with the concepts of legitimacy and legitimation works all that well. There is clearly a stickiness to the authority of failed or failing leaders that cannot be explained by material rewards to supporters and material

punishments for opponents. There are also, presumably, more efficient ways of signalling supporters and opponents of imminent rewards and punishments than by using foreign policy discourses. There are direct references from elites, as I have noted, to the value of cueing nationalist sentiments. But I raise this argument for two reasons. First, it does suggest that we not overlook the simple material contracts that also exist to keep polities ordered and that may be obscured by an analytical focus on legitimacy/legitimation as a source of realpolitik practice. In other words, contrary to social identity theory, realpolitik ideology (and practice) may sometimes be required as a signalling device for political elites to preserve their hold over the key tools of power -- the internal and external coercive apparatuses. Second, there does seem to be some tension between the concept of legitimacy on the one hand, and the notion that elites 'choose strategies' to enhance it on the other. I am not sure how to resolve it without arguing that elites are completely autonomous from the identities they try to construct for the ruled, and that elites act instrumentally while the ruled act normatively on the basis of internalized rules of appropriateness. I don't think this sharp distinction is sustainable ontologically or empirically. At the very least we need to do some very detailed 'process tracing' of decisions to strategize about legitimacy and the concrete policies that are then enacted in the media, education and in foreign policy. Here, in the Chinese case, the role of the State Council Information Office may need careful examination, for instance, because, among other things, pronouncements from the Office establish the parameters for public discourse. Policy White Papers issued by the Office can have highly constraining effects on debate as these are the definitive words on a range of issues -- Tibet, Taiwan, Human Rights, Arms Control, and Defense -- that all embody assumptions about what Chinese national identity ought to be.

Conclusion

I have tried to argue here that realpolitik discourses are not simply functions of material structures. They are not epiphenomenal, but vary, in part, as the requirements for domestic

political legitimacy vary. They contribute to, rather than merely reflect, competitive anarchical structures. This is, in a sense, consistent with Wendt, Campbell and others. What makes the China case theoretically useful is that the hardening of the discourse, at least through the mid 1990s, was not causally a function of change in polarity and the emergence of the US as the unipolar hegemon. That is, in the China case we can be pretty certain that realpolitik discourses, exclusionary identity language etc, are not epiphenomena of structurally induced threats to relative power and status.

At first glance the notion that domestic legitimacy is a source of realpolitik practice is not an especially profound insight, particularly from the perspective of research on 'diversionary conflicts' in international relations. But, in fact, it does cause a lot of problems for mainstream IR theory because it suggests that realpolitik practice doesn't correlate with changes in the distribution of power. As I noted, a mainstream realist theory suggests that a state will adopt harder realpolitik strategies when changes in the balance of power are unfavorable to it. A legitimation perspective suggests that harder realpolitik practices are associated with variations in elite perceptions of their own domestic legitimacy, and thus are causally disconnected with the nature of international material power structures. The implications for IR theory are actually quite far reaching, because they suggest that realpolitik practice is not rooted in international anarchy or in human nature as structural and classical realists respectively claim. Rather it is rooted in the requirements for the construction of ingroup identity: the effects of anarchy are a function of the creation and perpetuation of realpolitik ideology, not the other way around.