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Article

China's Rise and a New Perspective on Hegemonic Stability Theory

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Abstract

A new discourse on the balance of power and global order has been made possible by China's emergence as a rising global power amid the drastic changes occurring in the international system. By providing a fresh theoretical viewpoint that reexamines the idea of hegemonic stability and creates an alternative theory that keeps up with contemporary developments and complexities, this study seeks to investigate and analyze the phenomenon of China's rise. The outcome is a variety of balancing models and a wider range of roles for international powers. Using a qualitative analytical method, the study drew on recent case studies about the COVID-19 pandemic, the Belt and Road Initiative, and US-China ties. The suggested model's capacity to explain the intricacies of the multipolar international system was evaluated using framework and theoretical analytical methods. The findings showed that, in comparison to traditional theory, the "Distributed Hegemonic Stability Theory" (DHST) model offers a more adaptable and suitable framework for comprehending contemporary international relations. The results demonstrate how stability is improved, and the development of power monopolies is avoided when roles and responsibilities are distributed fairly across several authorities. Lastly, the study highlights the significance of implementing a new paradigm that is based on the interaction of numerous spheres of influence and goes beyond the conventional dichotomy between hegemony and chaos.

Keywords: *The rise of China, multipolar international system, hegemonic stability theory, international balance, DHST*

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Introduction

The international system has undergone significant changes in recent decades, resulting in significant shifts in power distribution [1]. Traditional theories guiding our understanding of the stability of the international system must be reevaluated, considering China's ascent to prominence as a global power with growing economic and political clout [2]. The notion that the system aims to attain stability through the dominance of a single power (unipolarity) or the balance of several powers has long been the foundation of dominant perspectives in international relations. Nonetheless, a more complicated reality is reflected in the contemporary diversity of locations and influence [3].

The idea that only one model of hegemony or chaos may govern the world system is in danger due to the drastic change brought about by China's development [4]. Instead, it points to the possibility of dynamic and adaptable models that go beyond conventional dualities, in which areas of influence overlap and power dynamics become more varied. To overcome the difficulties brought on by these changes, the current study evaluates these phenomena by investigating novel models that help us comprehend the system's stability, considering multipolar interactions [5].

The complex international dynamics we see cannot be explained well by old theories like hegemony theory or balance of power theory, particularly considering the development of new models of multi-regional and multi-role interaction [6]. The modern reality is marked by interconnection and various spheres of influence, which calls for constructing a theoretical framework that considers this complexity. These theories frequently handle a bipolar or multipolar system in an oversimplified manner [7].

Based on the aforementioned, this study aims to investigate the phenomena of China's ascent and introduce a novel theoretical framework called the Distributed Hegemonic Stability Theory (DHST), which considers the various roles of powers and the interactions of many regions. By considering the growing interplay of many domains of influence, this framework helps to clarify how to attain stability in a multipolar global system. In addition to offering a more adaptable and realistic theoretical framework for the future of international relations, this seeks to enhance scholarly literature.

Methodology

Given the nature of the study, which depends on theoretical analysis and debate based on existing literature and theoretical notions, this research uses descriptive and

analytical techniques. By reexamining and evaluating theories and concepts associated with China's ascent and reevaluating models of stability in the international system, this method seeks to provide a thorough understanding of the event. It offers a methodological framework for interpreting and studying the phenomena and their dynamics and making inferences about what to expect in the future [8].

This method uses various analytical techniques, including theoretical analysis, a study and comparison of pertinent ancient and modern theories, and an illustration of the difficulties and applicability of each in interpreting China's growth and the continuous changes in the world system [9]. Comparative analysis: This entails contrasting conceptions of stability and balance, looking at how they have changed over time, and analyzing how the international system has reacted to shifts in the balance of power, particularly as China has become a significant power. To track and evaluate how researchers and theorists perceive the phenomenon, ascertain the degree of agreement and disagreement, and pinpoint knowledge gaps that require development or attention, research trends are also examined.

A thorough literature study was conducted to properly arrange, categorize, and evaluate the information. It makes it easier to develop a solid theoretical framework grounded in research and science, which improves the precision of the study's conclusions and suggestions [10].

The organization employed techniques like literary criticism and the discovery of theoretical differences to guarantee the precision and dependability of the analysis. The effectiveness of theoretical tools and their capacity to explain present and future developments were also evaluated using content assessment instruments and contemporary scientific standards [11].

Methodological tools and techniques, such as literature classification, were used to organize and review the literature systematically. Studies were categorized by type of analysis (theoretical, analytical, applied), geographic scope (global, regional), and theory type (traditional, modern). Research projects were examined by following the evolution of this field's research, noting topics that garnered interest, and following conversations on stability and balancing models [12]. Tracking the evolution of important ideas like power, hegemony, stability, and balance across time, emphasizing patterns of rise and decline, and how these are mirrored in the theory, was another way to build conceptual ideas [13].

Literature Review

Conventional Views and Theories Regarding Hegemonic Stability

Understanding the stability of the international system is based on conventional conceptions of hegemonic stability. They explain how particular powers regulate the game's rules and strive to stabilize the system. Among these theories, the most well-known are:

- According to the hegemonic stability theory, sustained international stability is ensured by a hegemonic power with greater capacity to establish order and standardize laws [14]. In the present period, this power, typically the United States, manages worldwide security, controls trade, and backs international financial institutions. It is said that when no hegemon exists, there will be anarchy as rival forces vie for dominance and tensions cause instability [15].
- Polycentric/Multipolar Theory: This theory highlights the presence of several power centers that counterbalance one another, preventing one party from dominating the other. Although this model is thought to be more adaptable, it has trouble understanding intricate power dynamics, particularly when there is asymmetric conflict [16]. Because the theory mostly depends on the equilibrium's stability, it is not very good at forecasting abrupt changes or the swift emergence of new powers.
- The most common criticisms of classical theories are that they frequently treat the international system as static and cannot adapt to situations that change quickly, particularly as new powers and spheres of influence come into play. Because of this, they are unable to adequately explain dynamic events that occur in the modern world [17].

Current Research on China's Ascent and Shifting Views of Power

As China's influence has grown, new research has surfaced that looks at and evaluates the phenomenon from several angles. This phenomenon has altered traditional ideas of power and international order:

- Analysis of China's political and economic development: Research indicates that the country's rapid economic expansion, technical advancements, and foreign investment instruments, like agreements made through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), are important components in solidifying China's standing as a significant world power [18]. Interactions between major countries have become more complex because China has expanded its political and economic clout.
- New Power Concepts: Scholars have started to focus on *"soft power,"* which China has cultivated through worldwide investments, cultural and

educational interactions, and its technological, cyber, and geographic sway [19]. These instruments support an unseen equilibrium that improves China's capacity to transfer power sustainably.

- According to studies, China largely follows the *"peaceful transition"* model of power transition by maintaining diplomatic and economic balances and refraining from needless military escalation. This shows how the global system has become more diverse and balanced and reflects a shift in how competition and conflict are handled [20].

Remarks and Inadequacies in Current Literature

There are glaring gaps in the body of literature that require attention despite the theoretical and practical advancements centered on China's progress, chief among them being:

- Absence of pluralistic and flexible explanatory theories: Most classical theories do not include models that can consider and adjust to how overlap and multipolarity interact in many domains of influence. Their emphasis on unipolar models or interactions between two poles restricts our comprehension of the dynamics of the contemporary multipolar system [21].
- Inadequate predictive models: With the emergence of new powers like China, traditional theories cannot adequately forecast abrupt or quick changes in the balance of power [22]. Many current theories lack the instruments necessary to adequately describe how abrupt changes take place and how they affect the stability of the global system. This emphasizes the necessity of creating theoretical models that are more adaptive and flexible so that scholars and decision-makers can deal with unforeseen difficulties in a world that is changing all the time [23].

Results & Discussion

The results of case studies examining the model, particularly in the context of the US-China relationship, showed that the DHST model is broadly consistent with real-world observations. Its ability to explain processes of equilibrium and peaceful competition between major powers, and its reliance on a flexible distribution of roles, accurately reflect the interactions taking place, particularly in the economic, technological, and geopolitical spheres. These results confirm that shifting from the traditional dualistic model (hegemony versus chaos) to a focused role distribution model provides a more realistic and flexible framework, addressing multipolar dynamics and recognizing the existence of diverse spheres of influence that interact

continuously without adopting a strictly binary perspective. It reflects convergence with recent studies indicating that the international system has become more diverse and interconnected, requiring models that better account for flexibility and rapid change [24].

The results also demonstrated that an equitable distribution of roles among major powers, including China, contributes significantly to creating a more sustainable and stable environment and reduces the likelihood of crises or conflicts. Distributing influence reduces traditional tensions and creates flexible interaction mechanisms that respond more flexibly to changes than a unipolar model. This finding supports the view that a balancing approach based on strong and diverse participation creates a continuous dynamic of interaction, gives central powers space to operate, and reduces the likelihood of conflict. Therefore, applying the concept of *"distributed influence,"* coupled with China's growing capabilities, can prevent scenarios of systemic collapse and establish more sustainable models of stability. It represents an important theoretical development from previous thinking based on the concentration of power in a single pole [25].

On the other hand, the results demonstrate that traditional theories based on the concept of absolute hegemony (such as liberalism and realism) are unable to explain the rapid rise of new powers, balancing disputes, and multipolar interaction that have become the core features of the current international system. It is particularly true since these theories often address systemic stability through the presence of a clear dominant pole, which does not adequately reflect current dynamics. It points to the need to revisit traditional analytical tools and adopt more flexible and realistic models, considering the ongoing overlap of areas and influence and the interactive flexibility between powers. It emphasizes *"flexibility"* and adaptability in place of unipolar stability. It reinforces the need to develop a theory that addresses the multiplicity of roles, transcending the prevailing dualities and addressing the dynamic characteristics of a multipolar system [26].

In addition, the study results revealed that changes in technology, particularly in artificial intelligence, communications, and industrial innovation, have reshaped the power landscape. China has adopted strategies focused on technology and innovation, significantly strengthening its influence and making economic and military power more intertwined and interconnected. It reflects that soft and hard power have become essential for building influence. The DHST model supports the idea that balance and stability in the international system are not solely dependent on the dominance of a single power or a traditional military balance, but also require a balance of technological, economic, and geopolitical capabilities that each party is keen to maintain and continuously develop.

The results showed that China, through its advanced technological and manufacturing strategies, has been able to adjust the balance of power in a way that contributes to systemic stability by distributing roles more evenly and flexibly. It reinforces the view presented by the DHST model that stability is achieved through a

distribution of influence that leads to flexible and balanced interactions between major powers, prevents the escalation of conflicts, and enhances international cooperation [27].

Conclusion

The results of this research contribute significantly to developing a deeper understanding of the nature of stability in the contemporary international system, especially considering the rise of China and the growing interactions between international powers. The proposed model, "Distributed Hegemonic Stability Theory" (DHST), has been shown to provide a flexible and practical framework for analyzing the dynamic changes taking place in the global system. It provides a more consistent view of multipolar interactions. It emphasizes the importance of balancing roles and functions among powers rather than relying on the dominance of a single pole or dual interpretations.

The study's findings represent a qualitative step forward in the theory's approach to contemporary challenges, highlighting that achieving stability does not depend on the monopoly of power, but rather on a balanced distribution of roles that enhances the interaction of different regions and reduces the likelihood of collision and conflict. By clarifying these points, the research highlights the importance of building flexible theoretical models compatible with current complexities, enhancing its academic contributions, and incentivizing political institutions to analyze international politics based on new concepts that keep pace with the reality of transformation. Ultimately, this research calls for a reconsideration of classical analytical systems and pushes for the adoption of a theoretical framework that provides more precise and flexible tools for understanding the stability of the international system in an era of profound change and China's rise, adding significant scientific and cognitive value to the field of international relations studies.

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