

Undermining American Hegemony

Advancing a new approach to the study of international order, this book highlights the stakes disguised by traditional theoretical languages of power transitions and hegemonic wars. Rather than direct challenges to US military power, the most consequential undermining of hegemony is routine, bottom-up processes of *international goods substitution*: a slow hollowing out of the existing order through competition to seek or offer alternative sources for economic, military, or social goods. Studying how actors gain access to alternative suppliers of these public goods, this volume shows how states consequently move away from the liberal international order. Examining unfamiliar – but crucial – cases, it takes the reader on a journey from local Faroese politics, to Russian election observers in Central Asia, to South American drug lords. Broadening the debate about the role of public goods in international politics, this book offers a new perspective of one of the key issues of our time.

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Undermining American Hegemony

Goods Substitution in World Politics

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Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	page vii
<i>List of Contributors</i>	viii
<i>Preface</i>	ix
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xii
1 Goods Substitution and the Logics of International Order Transformation	1
DANIEL H. NEXON, ALEXANDER COOLEY, AND MORTEN SKUMSRUD ANDERSEN	
2 Goods Substitution and Counter-Hegemonic Strategies	29
ALEXANDER COOLEY AND DANIEL H. NEXON	
3 International Rankings As Normative Goods: Hegemony and the Quest for Social Status	62
BAHAR RUMELILI AND ANN TOWNS	
4 China and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank: Undermining Hegemony through Goods Substitution?	88
JULIA BADER	
5 The Silk Road to Goods Substitution: Central Asia and the Rise of New Post-Western International Orders	104
ALEXANDER COOLEY	
6 Goods Substitution in the USA's Back Yard: Colombia's Diversification Strategies under Conditions of Hierarchy	125
MORTEN SKUMSRUD ANDERSEN	
7 Goods Substitution at High Latitude: Undermining Hegemony from below in the North Atlantic	151
REBECCA ADLER-NISSEN, BENJAMIN DECARVALHO AND HALVARD LEIRA	

8 Reflections on the Volume	177
OLE JACOB SENDING AND IVER B. NEUMANN	
<i>Bibliography</i>	189
<i>Index</i>	218

Figures

1.1 Dimensions of international order	<i>page</i> 11
2.1 Revisionism, an alternative typology	37
2.2 Implications for power -political maneuvers on US-led order: The example of the BRICS	44
5.1 Central Asian trade with Russia and China, annual, 2001–15	114
5.2 Post–Soviet era debt to multilateral organizations as a share of overall external debt, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan	117

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Preface

We finalized this volume during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, not long after the United States and China engaged in a particularly fierce round of blaming one another for the initial spread of the virus. Many countries – in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and elsewhere – closed borders as they struggled to cope with both the economic and the public health effects of the crisis. Political analysts and pundits are currently talking about ‘deglobalization’ – reducing economic interdependence and enhancing economic self-sufficiency. American President Donald Trump announced he was suspending support for the World Health Organization (WHO), and then that he would withdraw the United States entirely from WHO.

While it currently remains unclear if Trump will actually follow through on this threat, numerous commentators note that the United States has conspicuously avoided playing the kind of global leadership role that it assumed during previous pandemics. Meanwhile, China and Russia have publicly offered emergency medical supplies and advisors, especially to hard-hit European countries like Italy, Spain, and Serbia – where friendly politicians, at least initially, positively contrasted these efforts with those of the European Union (EU).

This political posturing is only the latest in a growing trend of *goods substitution* in international relations. For over a decade, new patrons – usually emerging powers including China, Russia, and Gulf States – have been providing a range of international goods once primarily supplied by the United States, its Western allies, and Western-dominated institutions of global governance.

This volume is a companion to Alexander Cooley and Daniel Nexon’s monograph, *Exit from Hegemony: The Unraveling of American Global Order*, which looks at a number of different factors driving the erosion of US leadership. While that book numbers goods substitution among those factors, this volume provides a more

sustained – and much more theoretically developed – examination of its dynamics.

As the distinguished contributors in this volume show, the process of international goods substitution has been quietly undermining the American ‘patronage monopoly’ (really more of a cartel, and never truly complete) in the economic, security, and even normative domains. This monopoly served as the foundation of the American-led liberal international order. Its erosion therefore matters a great deal for the texture of world politics.

Some symptoms of rising goods substitution have been highly visible – including the establishment of new development institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Others, such as the rise of ‘bad faith’ international election observers, have operated in more obscure areas of global governance. The net effect of the rising salience of the politics of international goods substitution has been to hollow out aspects of American leadership, both in regions where Washington has traditionally dominated – such as Latin America and the North Atlantic – as well as in those already more susceptible to, say, Russian and Chinese influence, including Central Asia.

The current salience of goods substitution, we contend, stems from how power transitions affect more general dynamics associated with contestation over international order. But the analytical importance of international goods substitution extends beyond power transitions in general, and the current power transition in particular. We offer the concept as an integrative, synthetic approach that includes many traditional concerns in the study of power politics, including balancing and divide-and-rule strategies.

The funding for this project was provided by the Research Council of Norway under the project ‘Undermining Hegemony’ (project no. 240647). Beginning with a pilot in 2015, the full project, spearheaded by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), ran from 2016 to 2018 and featured intensive workshops and meetings in Italy, Spain, and Norway, as well as within sessions of the International Studies Association. We are extremely grateful to our NUPI colleagues Iver B. Neumann, Benjamin de Carvalho, and Halvard Leira for their leadership and flexibility with regard to the evolution of the project, as well as other NUPI researchers for their feedback and support.

Preface

xi

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Finally, the editors dedicate this volume to Iver B. Neumann – pioneering scholar, coauthor, mentor, and friend.

Abbreviations

ACD	Asian Cooperation Dialogue
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFRICOM	United States Africa Command
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
ALBA	Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America
AOA	Articles of Agreement
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
bcm	billion cubic meter
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
CA–CELAC	China–CELAC Forum
CASCF	China–Arab States Cooperation Forum
CDB	China Development Bank
CELAC	Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
CFR	Council on Foreign Relations
China–CEE	China–Central Eastern Europe (17+1)
CICA	Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CIS-EMO	CIS Election Monitoring Organization
CNPC	China National Petroleum Corporation
COMECON	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
CPAC	Conservative Political Action Conference
CPIs	country performance indices
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
CTBTO	Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DNC	Democratic National Committee

List of Abbreviations

xiii

EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EDBI	Ease of Doing Business Index
EEA	European Economic Area
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EIC	British East India Company
EODE	Eurasian Observatory for Democracy and Elections
EPA	EU Eastern Partnership Agreement
EU	European Union
EUI	Economic Intelligence Unit
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FOCAC	Forum on China–Africa Cooperation
FTA	free trade agreement
FVEY	Five Eyes
G7	Group of Seven
G-20	Group of Twenty
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GCI	Global Competitiveness Index
GDP	gross domestic product
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GONGO	government-organized non-governmental organizations
GOP	Grand Old Party, Republican Party
GPIs	global performance indices
GWOT	Global War on Terror
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICANN	Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers
ICC	International Criminal Court
IFI	international financial institution
IGO	intergovernmental organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRA	Internet Research Agency (Russia)
IRI	International Republican Institute

JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (the Iran nuclear deal – the nonproliferation deal concluded with Iran in 2015)
K2	Karshi-Khanabad
Komsomol	All-Union Leninist Young Communist League
LGBTQ	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer
LMC	Lancang-Mekon Cooperation Forum
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MDB	multilateral development bank
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MIST	Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey
MoU	memorandum of understanding
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDB	New Development Bank
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	nongovernmental organization
non-DAC	non-Development Assistance Committee member lenders
NRA	National Rifle Association
NUPI	Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PESCO	Permanent Structured Cooperation
PRC	People’s Republic of China
QCCM	Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
RATS	Regional Anti-Terror Structure
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
RMB	renminbi
RRO	ranking and rating organization
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty

List of Abbreviations

xv

SWIFT	Society of Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications
TAN	transnational activist network
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNGAR	United Nations Global Assessment Report
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WCF	World Congress of Families
WTO	World Trade Organization