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BOOK REVIEW

American Hegemony and the Rise of Emerging Powers: Cooperation or Conflict, by Salvador Santino F. Regilme Jr. and James Parisot. New York: Routledge, 2018, pp. 227.

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This edited volume develops a multidisciplinary approach to address the debate on US hegemony and (re)-emerging powers in world politics that has been dominated by the “declinist perspective.” Responding to what they view as the analytical limits of “partial lenses” that blind us to the more complex processes at work in international politics, most of the authors follow Regilme and Parisot’s thesis in the opening chapter and show that scholars come to differing and at times opposite conclusions due to the use of various theoretical perspectives and geographical emphases. Thus, “particular perspectives that focus on American economic decline or continued military strength may view the question of potential decline differently” (p. 6). Similarly, scholars who are specialists in particular regions tend to generalize “based on events in their area”. With this as a point of departure, the subsequent chapters examine the purported decline of American hegemony from a variety of theoretical perspectives and empirical examination drawn from a wide range of geographical coverage.

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Regilme and Parisot's book is part of a growing literature attempting to assess the implications of the rise of new powers from the non-Western world for the U.S. strategic position globally and for the liberal order. Over the past two decades at least, international relations scholars have developed a variety of views about the emergence of a "post-American world," a "post-Western world" or a process of "Easternization" of world politics. Nonetheless, in reexamining this topic, the standard practice for most scholars and policymakers has been to portray the Sino-American relationships as "the central drama" of contemporary international politics. It is to the editors' credit, however, that they instead extend the focus of their book to other emerging powers such as Russia, India, Turkey and South Africa, as well as transnational actors, whose rise to international status challenges U.S. hegemony in many important regards. In addition, they do not seek to bolster a particular thesis or embrace alarming arguments often heard in the public discourse about the epic rivalry between the U.S. and emerging powers. Unlike the vast majority of international relations scholars who believe the relative decline of U.S. power means an inexorable transition from order to chaos, most of the authors included in this volume are far less pessimistic.

Most importantly, the debate on American hegemony and emerging powers, as presented in this book, provides us with several key insights. In particular, the book highlights the importance of the "perceptions of power" and "discourse" in trying to make sense of U.S. hegemony and the same holds for global cooperation and conflict. In addition, while emerging powers are portrayed as often "revisionist," and their ascension at times belligerent, the book successfully shows how, under the current Trump administration, the tendency of the US to withdraw from its global security and political commitments may create a cloud and uncertainty among long-standing allies in global politics (p. 217).

The book covers not only theoretical issues related to the topic of American decline and rising powers. It is divided into three main parts. Part I deals with the above-mentioned analytical and theoretical perspectives and issues pertaining to American hegemony vis-à-vis rising powers. Part II in turn focuses on the challenges and opportunities brought in by the emergence of rising powers in the non-Western world to American hegemony, particularly in the area of the transnational and global political economy. Part III adopts a more comprehensive, global scale approach to examining the status and future of American hegemony vis-à-vis emerging powers and security struggles in various world regions, particularly in East Asia.

Jeff Bridoux's analysis highlights the role of ideational factors in making sense of US hegemony, and his conclusion converges with the book multidisciplinary approach. Bridoux examines how various intersubjective conceptions of power are produced, focusing on two complementary variables that need to be combined. First, what is needed is an analysis of how US decision-makers perceive US power and the power status of its closest rivals such as China and Russia. Second, equally important is how the decision-makers of challengers to US hegemony perceive US power, as well as how their own country's power (p.35). Put differently, one may argue that what Bridoux observes is that US hegemony and the US-led world order is what both US decision-makers and their rivals across the emerging world make of it.

In line with Bridoux's approach, Michiel Foulon takes issue with both the substance and the theoretical basis of America's grand strategic response to the rise of China. True to the pedigree of neoclassical realism, his main idea is that both "unit-level" variables and "structural" factors can be deployed as part of an explanatory framework for international politics. In his analysis of "trade and security in US

grand strategy,” Foulon rejects the dichotomy between economic and security questions as it is often the case in most conventional treatments of great power relations. Foulon criticizes “traditionalist realists” such as Mearsheimer, whose materialist conception neglects perceptions in explaining state behaviour. By exploring in particular “the security and strategic losses from US trade with China,” Foulon arrives at the conclusion that the US is in decline and that the domestic pressures and systemic factors of American decline endure even amidst the seemingly transformative Trump administration (p. 10).

However, as other chapters in the book illustrate, the notion that the US “still holds the aces” in its poker game with emerging powers like China remains a crucial part of the Western approach to those countries, even despite the sustained economic growth of many emerging markets. For example, in his description of US hegemony, Sean Starrs begins by challenging the idea of the end of the “American century.” He suggests instead it “is only now being realized, after half a century of growing pains and challenges” (p.76). At a time when the Trump administration labels China as a “strategic competitor” and some analysts are warning that China and the US are “destined for war,” Starrs seems to have none of it. He insists instead on the prevalence of harmony and the prospects for cooperation between the US and the emerging powers. Among the many pieces of evidence that he offers are the fact that China and other emerging powers from the Global South have now renounced their “anti-capitalist position” and that the emerging institutions established by the emerging powers (the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the BRICS New Development Bank) are usually framed as complementary to existing institutions. Whereas the election of Donald Trump and the 2016 Brexit vote appear to have forced the assumptions of American decline, Starrs believes that the

integration to the global economy of emerging powers from the Global South only indicates the “end of the beginning of the American century.”

There is little doubt that this edited volume stands as a major contribution to IR and will become a significant point of reference in the field. Its interdisciplinary approach and many case studies surely provide the basis for fertile debate across the field. However, there are many aspects where one could take issue with *American Hegemony and the Rise of Emerging Powers*. For example, it would be interesting to know how emerging powers in the Global South position themselves as the U.S. is struggling to reassert its hegemony and mould the international agenda. This is one unexplored area that may leave some readers hungry.

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