

Kristen P. Williams, Steven E. Lobell, Neal G. Jesse, eds.. *Beyond Great Powers and Hegemons: Why Secondary States Support, Follow, or Challenge*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012. 272 pp. \$25.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-8047-7164-1.



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Beyond Great Powers and Hegemons, an edited volume by Kristen P. Williams, Steven E. Lobell, and Neal G. Jesse, aggregates chapters on the behavioral repertoires of weaker states in responding to the demands of global and regional hegemons (defined by the editors as states that are significantly stronger in economic and military terms than others in their respective systems, aware of their preponderance, and willing and actively taking advantage of it). The range of possible behaviors are arrayed on a continuum that stretches from hard balancing to bandwagoning. Thus weaker states can oppose (hard and soft balancing); resist (balking, blackmailing, or slipping their leashes); claim neutrality; or accommodate (binding, bonding, and bandwagoning). They can also follow the lead of the hegemon but it is assumed that weaker states will not always go down this path of least resistance. Hence the questions: what, when, and why can we expect ostensible followers to do something else other than to follow the hegemon's lead?

The next step is to provide some clues about the when and why of response. The editors propose three general answers to questions about non-following behavior. The first one borrows from classical realism. States will bandwagon with the hegemon if sufficiently threatened by others and balance against the hegemon if it is their primary source of threat. Borrowing from a type of liberalism, the second general explanation predicts that states will attempt to bind hegemons within international institutions and the more obliging the hegemon, the more cooperative non-hegemonic states are likely to be in this particular context. A third explanation borrows from another strand of liberalism and suggests that state responses will be contingent on domestic political pressures. That is, strategies will hinge on what works best for domestic consumption and/or critical subnational actors. At one point, the editors hint that another type of explanation based on normative considerations will also be contemplated but this constructivist path is dropped inexplicably rather early on.

One theoretical problem emerges rather quickly. While nine specific behaviors are identified (the hard balancing to bandwagoning continuum), only three or four (balancing, bandwagoning, and binding) show up in concrete form in the explanatory framework. What should we make of the missing five or six behaviors? A second problem emerges with the nature of the undertaking. As an edited volume, it falls on the multiple authors to follow the lead proclaimed by the hegemonic editors. But authors in edited volumes often resist (and invariably slip their leashes) as well. By and large, the fourteen other chapter authors identify which of the three explanations they prefer in their specific contexts but usually only loosely. One has to be sympathetic both with the editorial cat-herding problem and the authors' need to respond to a limited framework. But it would definitely have helped to have a concluding chapter that evaluated what the multiple chapters had achieved vis-à-vis the explanatory framework. Instead, the concluding chapter, written by a non-editor Christopher Layne, politely suggests that the editors and chapter authors have missed the temporal boat in the sense that ongoing structural changes in world politics have rendered their questions moot.

This conclusion is probably unfair in some respects. Layne correctly identifies the motivation for the edited volume as emerging during a period of proclaimed post-Cold War unipolarity. If the system is unipolar, why is it that states often seem to be dragging their feet in doing what the polar power (hegemon) wants them to do? Layne's point is that the unipolar phase has now ended, the United States is no longer a global hegemon, and we should be more concerned about behaviors associated with hegemonic decline. Whether Layne is right or not is something about which we can argue. My own position is that we exaggerated the extent to which the two post-Cold War decades were unipolar in the first place. But even so, the general problem of hierarchical stratification in world politics and how states deal with the

most powerful actors remains an appropriate theoretical question to pursue no matter what the contemporary distribution of power might be. Layne's position presumably is more focused on policy questions and their optimal timing. One hastens to note, however, that Layne does find the question of reactions to regional (as opposed to global) hegemony more timely and interesting since he thinks regional hegemons are becoming more prominent. About half of the chapters, depending on how you count (or whether you classify the Soviet Union as a global or regional hegemon), are about reactions to regional hegemony.

The variety of actors and settings sampled by the chapter authors is rich and diverse. Western Europe, Eastern Europe, South America, southern Africa, the Middle East, East Asia, and Ireland are examined. The actors that are identified as hegemons include the United States, the Soviet Union, Russia, South Africa, Brazil, and China. A number of reactions to hegemons are illustrated in the chapters. Yet the chapters vary considerably in terms of their theoretical payoffs. One chapter (Maria Sampanis's "Comply or Defy? Following the Hegemon to Market") touches on what might have been a very useful focus for the entire volume. She contends that followership hinges primarily on the strength of the hegemon. As the hegemon's relative position wanes, followership will fall off because the hegemon has less to offer and fewer resources with which to punish defection. At its peak position, the hegemon offers governance of the trading system in particular and most trading states are likely to benefit. Hegemonic decline means less hegemonic governance and less incentive to pay attention to a declining hegemon's preferences. This perspective would have made an excellent core generalization. Then the main question might have been to what extent does the generalization hold? In what circumstances do actors deviate from this central tendency?

Sampanis's chapter offers two useful theoretical considerations that are otherwise largely missing from this volume. One component is a longitudinal dynamic. The categories of "hegemons" and "followers" are overly static unless we qualify relationships in terms of the flux in relative strength. If a hegemon is simply a stronger state, how much stronger is it--and does this matter? Is the hegemon ascending, peaking, or declining? Rather than anticipating how followers might respond to a hegemon, it might be more profitable to expect differential behavior depending on the waxing and waning powers of the lead state (and the followers). Sampanis is probably right that followership is more likely for waxing hegemons than for waning ones. There may be much more to theorize but this is at least a good place to begin.

The other attractive component or implication of Sampanis's chapter is that global and regional hegemons are not identical statuses differentiated only by geographical scope. Global hegemons (without arguing about what constitutes hegemony) are states that can project power at some distance and across regions but not without losing some of their strength. The greater the distance, other things being equal, the more power is likely to be dissipated in the effort. Moreover, global hegemons, it can be argued, specialize in long-distance commerce and try to avoid territorial commitments and expansion. One of their missions is to structure and police the world economy. Given their motivation and location, it may be easier to resist because the ultimate penalties of military defeat and occupation are less probable than in the case of regional hegemons that are closer at hand; subject to less power dissipation; and, perhaps depending on the region and era, less prone to rule out military action in nearby arenas. It may be too simplistic to argue that global hegemons tend to penalize non-followership with economic sanctions while regional hegemons rely on more physical penalties, but it would be a worthwhile research question to pur-

sue. Less debatable is the assertion that the relative capabilities of regional hegemons, as in the case of global hegemons, vary over time and place. Regional hegemony in Western Europe (either pre-1945 or afterward) has not meant quite the same thing as regional hegemony in South America's Southern Cone or in South Asia. If that is true, we need to spend a great deal more time specifying why this is the case and what differences it might make in terms of leader-follower relationships. Perhaps global hegemons are more uniform (as long as the Soviet Union is categorized as a regional hegemon that flirted with global activity) in the nature of their capability foundations and behavioral repertoires than regional hegemons. If so, we should avoid mixing and matching the two types of hierarchical relationships as similar in provenance.

Ultimately, the main theoretical problem is relying on the "isms" of international relations theory for inspiration. We treat these "isms" as if they are theoretical but often they fall woefully short of generating concrete theory without a great deal of additional massaging. Realism, for the most part, is uncomfortable with hegemonic rise and decline questions. The commitment to the anarchy principle (as opposed to hierarchy) tends to preclude theorizing about shifting capability leads. Realism is much more comfortable with balancing and bandwagoning which is expected to nullify the development of hegemony--so much so, that the balancing term often becomes meaningless in its application. Liberalism is no more helpful. Yes, institutions can be used to constrain the behavior of the powerful in some situations, and, yes, domestic political contests sometimes trump the pursuit of "national interests." But these insights do not necessarily tell us much about how states might respond to rising and falling hegemons. They are simply alternative venues for activity. Does institutional binding become less significant as hegemons decline because declining hegemons require fewer constraints? Is binding more critical when hegemons are operating at

their peak? When should we expect domestic political games to trump unitary calculations of national strategy? All of the time? Some of the time? Rarely? And what might be the relationship between domestic political games and hegemonic ascent/decline? Galia Press-Barnathan in her chapter (“Western Europe, NATO, and the United States: Leash Slipping, Not Leash Cutting”) suggests that hegemonic decline increases the likelihood of domestic processes influencing perceptions of threat. Does that hold everywhere? If threats are manifested differentially, regardless of hegemonic decline, there might be considerable variance on this score. Yet why should we expect national behavior to owe more to domestic political contests when a hegemon is rising, falling, or peaking? Is it possible that hegemonic decline and declining external threats are correlated in Western Europe?

The bottom line is that there is much to learn about follower behavior. The editors and authors are right to raise questions about why the preferences of powerful actors are not always heeded. Whether or not global politics is characterized by unipolarity, the questions remain germane. This volume offers information, arguments, and a number of suggestive hints about these issues and certainly has value in that respect. What it all means theoretically will require some more work.

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