No. 54

**Revisiting Responses To Power Preponderance:
Going Beyond The
Balancing-Bandwagoning
Dichotomy**

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NOVEMBER 2003

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1990s, there has been a growing body of literature in international relations that looks at the unipolar world order that emerged from the ashes of the Cold War. Most of these works, however, tend to focus on describing the characteristics of this unipolar world or predicting its longevity. This working paper contends that such approaches do not pay adequate attention to how non-leading states in the international system are attempting to respond to American primacy of power in this age of unipolarity. The author argues that conventional conceptions of international politics that frame state reactions to superior power within the bounds of balancing and bandwagoning are inadequate to understand how state actors are trying to advance and preserve interests in relation to preponderant American power.

As such, this paper tries to argue that states try to forward and defend interests in relation to the system leader based on power relative to the pre-eminent state and integration in the world system. Power, on one hand, defines the capability of second-tier states to act, while integration, on the other, helps determine the incentives and costs of different actions. On the basis of relative power and integration, the paper identifies four possible alternative conceptualisations of alternative strategies to balancing and bandwagoning—buffering, bonding, binding, and beleaguering. It goes on to suggest that the tendency of states to pursue these various approaches to advancing and defending interests may have an impact on the nature and even duration of the current unipolar order.

Although this paper takes seriously the structural perspective in considering responses to dealing with the problem created by highly asymmetric power realities that lie beyond the balancing-bandwagoning dichotomy, it does not rule out the possibility that other factors may also affect state action. It accepts that a states power and level of integration are highly dependent on prior decisions within the polity that may rest on ideational and contingent material realities. The argument of this paper also does not rule out the effects of path dependence from previous historical events specific to each state.

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REVISITING RESPONSES TO POWER PREPONDERANCE: GOING BEYOND THE BALANCING-BANDWAGONING DICHOTOMY

More than a decade into the era of American unipolarity, the question "why no balancing?" continues to dog the field of international politics. This fixation on balancing, and its counterpart, bandwagoning, appears to lie in the almost unquestioned assumption that these two strategies represent the two main, if not exclusive, approaches to state security in world politics. Central to this line of thinking is that state actors bandwagon with the powerful and balance against the threatening in order to preserve security and promote interests.[1] Discussions on the balance of power, for example, argue that states aim to reduce threats to security by attempting to affect the distribution of power through their alliance and domestic policy choices. When unable or unwilling to balance, actors tend to side—or bandwagon—with the powerful.

Balancing and bandwagoning, however, may not fully account for the range of strategies state actors adopt in order to preserve and promote their interests. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the contemporary unipolar system—hence the seemingly remarkable absence of balancing behaviour. Given widespread opposition to increasingly unilateral U.S. behaviour, states also appear to be unwilling to bandwagon. Instead, I hope to show that depending on the levels of power disparity with the leading state and integration in the world system, the strategies of second-tier states display four broad patterns: Buffering, Bonding, Binding, and Beleaguering.

Essentially, I aim to illustrate that more powerful states in the unipolar framework will likely prefer beleaguering and buffering; while the weaker, bonding and binding. At the same time, states more integrated within the world system may tend to bind and buffer, and the less integrated, bond and beleaguer. The fact second-tier states seek neither to balance nor bandwagon, may help explain the difficulty of using these two approaches to understand contemporary world politics.[2]

[1] See Stephen M. Walt, *The Origin of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987); Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1979); Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1959); Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, 5th Edition, Revised* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973).

[2] Annette Baker Fox, *The Power of Small States: Diplomacy in World War II* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), 2-4, 180-188; Charles L. Glaser, "Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as Self-Help", *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Winter 1994/1995): 50-90; Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1968), 1-3; and, Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2002). As Karl Mueller argues, even balancing-type strategies such as deterrence and bandwagoning-type strategies such as accommodation display high degrees of variation.

Historically, balancing and bandwagoning do not have as strong a track record for explaining state behaviour as international relations scholarship sometimes like to claim. Weaker states, for instance, appear to display much greater diversity in their strategies vis-à-vis the powerful than either balancing or bandwagoning captures. In considering European history, Paul Schroeder illustrates that states have a propensity to engage alternative approaches to self-preservation that he terms "hiding", "transcendence", and "specialisation".[3] John Ikenberry, Joseph Joffe, Robert Kagan, and others identify options such as institutional co-binding to blocking, baiting, and legitimating as alternative security strategies for states.[4] Still others like Karl Deutsch and Thomas Risse look to socialisation and the creation of security communities as possible alternative paths to security.[5] Likewise, Richard Rosecrance's work on virtual and trading states implies that functional value-creation may be another strategy available to states.[6]

Taking the current unipolar system, I will attempt to argue that states respond to preponderant power with behaviour that falls between balancing on one end, and bandwagoning on the other. This balancing is largely the preserve of Great Powers whose capabilities do not differ too greatly from that of the leading state.[7] States that do not lag far behind the system leader may engage in balancing, since they can affect the distribution of power and bring about systemic outcomes. Bandwagoning, on the other hand, is most prevalent among those that fall behind the pre-eminent state to such an extent that they can do virtually nothing to influence power distributions or bring about

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See Karl P. Mueller, *Strategy, Asymmetric Deterrence, and Accommodation: Middle Powers and Security in Modern Europe*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Politics, Princeton University, 1991.

[3] "Hiding" involves actions taken by a state to ignore difficult issues, essentially drawing into isolation. "Transcendence", on the other hand, aims to resolve disputes through the creation of issue-specific institutional arrangements. See Paul Schroeder, "Historical Reality versus Neo-Realist Theory", *International Security*, Vol. 19 No. 1 (Summer 1994): 108-148. For more on the autonomy action on the part of second-tier states even during wartime, see Fox, *The Power of Small States* and Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*, 25-28.

[4] G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Joseph Joffe, "Defying History and Theory: The United States as the 'Last Remaining Superpower'", in G. John Ikenberry, *America Unrivalled: The Future of the Balance of Power* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002); and Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America versus Europe in the New World Order* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 2003).

[5] Thomas Risse, "U.S. Power in a Liberal Security Community", in Ikenberry, *America Unrivalled* and Karl W. Deutsch *et al*, *Political Community in the North Atlantic Area* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957).

[6] Richard Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Virtual State: Wealth and Power in the Coming Century* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1999) and Richard Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Trading State: Commerce and Conquest in the Modern World* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1986).

[7] William C. Wohlforth, "Stability of a Unipolar World", *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Summer 1999): 10-12; Paul W. Schroeder, *Transformation of European Politics* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1994); Paul W. Schroeder, *Austria, Britain, and the Crimean War: The Destruction of the European Concert* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972); and, Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society* (London, England: Routledge, 1992).

significant independent effects, especially on a systemic level.[8] It may take a great number of Lesothos to balance the United States, for example.   Hence, it is unlikely that very weak states can much other than "suffer what they must".

Contrary to most contemporary arguments about the nature of the unipolar world, which claim that balancing is on the immediate horizon or power asymmetry under unipolarity forces all second-tier states to bandwagon, I hope to illustrate that the empirical record of state behaviour displays neither tendencies.   This is largely due to the fact that power disparities between most second-tier states and the United States fall between the two extremes necessary for widespread balancing or bandwagoning.[9]   As such, depending on power differentials vis-à-vis the preponderant state and the degree of integration with the world system, strategies that fall between balancing and bandwagoning may best capture the range of state strategies in this era of unipolarity.[10]

Attempts to understand how the rest of the world may respond to preponderant power may provide critical insight into both contemporary world politics as well as the persistence of American unipolarity.   Although individually weak in relation the United States, Charles Kupchan suggests that smaller actors may, for example, have cumulative or even collective effects vis-à-vis the hegemon.[11]   Most of the world's population and natural resources also do not reside within the borders of the United States.   A systematic study of the range of possible state responses to preponderant power is therefore conspicuously absent from the field of world politics.

In looking at the variation in state strategies when dealing with superior power, this paper aims to develop an initial framework from which to better understand how state actors respond to, and interact with, those who are much more powerful.   In doing so, this paper hopes to help improve explanations about the variation in state action.   Such an approach to the study of world politics can help fill a gap in the literature; it may also assist in bringing some perspective on responses to current U.S. unipolar predominance.   As such, the project hopes to provide the foundation for further theoretical research and empirical elaboration on state strategies in world politics.

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[8] Walt, *Origin of Alliances*, 28-32, 173-178 and Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 126.
[9] I take "second-tier states" here to simply denote states that are not in the pre-eminent position within a unipolar system, but are able to behave independently in world politics.   This differs from entities such as "failed" or "failing" states that are unable to behave with effective autonomy.   In this definition, I also differ from the more clearly hierarchical and power-oriented model of the world system developed by A.F.K. Organski and others.   See for example, Jacek Kugler and A.F.K. Organski, "The Power Transition: A Retrospective and Prospective Evaluation", in Manus I. Midlarsky [ed.], *Handbook of War Studies* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1996).
[10] Robert Rothstein in fact argues that over time, the ability of small states to achieve intended effects over time is increasing.   See Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*, 3-5 and 12-21.
[11] Charles A. Kupchan, *End of the American Era: US Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-First Century* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 2002).

Balancing, Bandwagoning, and the Problem of Unipolar Power Preponderance

Most approaches to security issues in world politics that attempt to apply balancing and bandwagoning as their central analytical frameworks take inadequate account of the extent of gaps in power. Whether discussing balancing in multipolar or in bipolar systems, the underlying assumption is that differences in power are small enough such that states acting independently or in unison, can counter the capabilities and influence of others.[12] On the other hand, smaller states that cannot compete with the great powers simply have to accept their lot and bandwagon with whom they can. Most states, however, neither resemble the Concert of Europe Great Powers nor the Cold War Superpowers that have informed traditional international relations, and they are certainly not helpless either. As such, the historical record for state behaviour within the world system is likely to be problematic for bandwagoning- and balancing-based approaches, especially during this era of unipolarity.

Assuming they can get over the collective action problem, second-tier states under unipolarity may be lagging so far behind the system leader that balancing is presently not a viable strategy option. Bandwagoning on the other hand, may not appear as the necessary strategic alternative either. For many second-tier states today, bandwagoning may spell the unnecessary compromising of interests. Despite significant disparities in power, it is unlikely that the United States can readily run roughshod over second-tier states like China and Russia or even the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Australia. As I show later in this section, the historical and contemporary record bear out these problems for approaches that adopt bandwagoning and balancing as their overarching analytical frameworks.

Before embarking on a further discussion of balancing and bandwagoning, however, I wish to make clear what I mean with these two terms. Too often, it seems, the use of terminology in the field occurs without the realisation that different scholars are using similar terms to describe overlapping, but ultimately distinct concepts. The term "normative behaviour" in common usage within the field, for example, can mean anything from an established regularity in action to the assigning of moral value to an act. Likewise, the term "hedging" in world politics literature, which originally refers to pre-emptive acts taken in preparation for possible changes in circumstances, now appears to include everything from balancing to potential encirclement.[13] The blurring of

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[12] See E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (London, England: Papermac, 1995); Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*; Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*; and, Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.

[13] See Colin Elman, "Introduction", in John A. Vasquez and Colin Elman [eds.], *Realism and the Balancing of Power: A New Debate* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Publishers, Inc., 2002), 7-17;

concepts in recent scholarship is also apparent in the conceptual application of balancing and bandwagoning. An example is Randall Schweller's extension of bandwagoning, which usually means siding with stronger and even more threatening powers for protection, to "bandwagoning for profit".[14] Such developments suggest the limitations of balancing and bandwagoning as analytical frameworks, and the loosening of definitions may blur meanings and cause some confusion. In order to avoid such problems here, let me first begin by defining balancing, and bandwagoning.

By balancing, I am referring to a strategy taken by a state to actively preserve security and advance interests by increasing its own power vis-à-vis the most powerful and threatening actors in order to challenge and offset the dangers that the latter potentially pose.[15] This may be in terms of internal balancing where a state increases its own power domestically, or external balancing where resources are pooled with other states for a specific purpose.[16] In short, balancing entails shifting the status quo distribution of power away from a situation that favours the leading state. All this presupposes the ability to affect the present or future distribution of power within a system. It may be possible to observe acts of balancing by looking at the extent to which states build military alliances as well as increase domestic military and political capabilities in light of the emergence of a threat or potential threat. Increasing tensions between the different camps usually accompany balancing; this is when one side increasingly challenges the position of the other, and when the other responds in kind.

Bandwagoning, on the other hand, is a strategy to preserve basic security concerns by seeking protection from a stronger and even threatening, power.[17] It often entails acquiescing to the will or ambitions of the more powerful state, such as Latin America's acceptance of American hegemony over the Western Hemisphere under the Monroe Doctrine. Such actions may be observable by the creation of alliances with stronger powers by weaker powers, especially in the absence of other threats. Another possible

Patricia Weitsman, "Intimate Enemies: The Politics of Peacetime Allies", *Security Studies*, Vol. 7 No. 1 (autumn 1997): 156-192; and, Deborah Welch Larson, "Bandwagon Images in American Foreign Policy: Myth or Reality?", in Robert Jervis and Jack L. Snyder [eds.], *Dominoes and Bandwagons: Strategic Beliefs and Great Power Competition in the Eurasian Rimland* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1991), 85.

[14] Randall Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In", *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (summer 1994): 72-107.

[15] See Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 126; Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, 198-210; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*; Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*; Walt, *The Origin of Alliances*, 21-22; and, John J. Mearshiemer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 2001), 139 and 156-157.

[16] Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 168 and Mearshiemer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 156-157.

[17] See Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 126; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*; Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*; Walt, *The Origin of Alliances*, 21-22; Mearshiemer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 139, 162-163; and Larson, "Bandwagon Images in American Foreign Policy", in Jervis and Snyder, *Dominoes and Bandwagons*, 85.

measure of bandwagoning is to look at support for, or lack of opposition to, the policies of the predominant state by weaker states despite the potential of these actions to threaten the interests of the latter. Ultimately in bandwagoning, the lesser actors give up a substantial degree of autonomy for action internationally in exchange for protection by the powerful.

Despite their popularity as paradigms in international relations scholarship, the historical occurrence of balancing and bandwagoning are not as dominant as their academic reputations may suggest. Paul Schroeder points out that the three centuries from the creation of the Westphalian state system until the end of World War Two was a period which many scholars use as historical evidence for balancing and bandwagoning. He adds that:

> I cannot construct a history of the European states system from 1648 to 1945 based on the generalisation that most unit actors within that system responded to crucial threats to their security and independence by resorting to self-help, as defined [in terms of different means of balancing] above. In each major period in these centuries, most unit actors tried if they possibly could to protect their vital interests in other ways. (This includes great powers as well as smaller ones, undermining the neo-realist argument that weaker states are more inclined to bandwagon than stronger ones…)[18]

Schroeder identifies "hiding", "transcendence", and "specialisation" as regular alternatives to balancing and bandwagoning. Here, "hiding" refers to ignoring a threat, declaring neutrality, or simply drawing into isolation, while "transcendence" refers to solving a problem and preventing its recurrence by seeking international agreement on norms and rules to regulate specific matters.[19] "Specialisation", on the other hand, represents the provision of some indispensable function to give others a stake in a particular state's security, survival, and perhaps even development.[20]

Furthermore, in studying the relationship between second-tier powers in the American sphere of influence and the United States, Annette Baker Fox finds empirical evidence to conclude that on "the great issues of world politics that transcend specific problems in their bilateral relations with the United States, the four middle powers have consistently put autonomy above a united front".[21] Yet, for the period from the Inter-War Years through most of the Cold War, the four states in Baker's study, Canada, Australia, Mexico, and Brazil have been firmly within the American sphere of influence. Hence, according to balancing and bandwagoning thinking, these countries should be

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[18] Paul Schroeder, "Historical Reality vs. Neo-Realist Theory", *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer 1994): 116. See pages 129-147 for Schroeder's empirical study.
[19] Schroeder, "Historical Reality vs. Neo-Realist Theory", *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer 1994): 117-124.
[20] Schroeder, "Historical Realist vs. Neo-Realist Theory", *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer 1994): 124-129.
[21] Fox, *The Politics of Attraction*, 191.

unreservedly bandwagoning with Washington.[22]

Unipolarity presents circumstances that make the inadequacies of the balancing and bandwagoning approach particularly apparent. This is in contrast to the common view that the vast power asymmetries under unipolarity will necessarily lead to balancing and bandwagoning. In fact, the continuing unipolar political environment in the past decade-and-a-half is likely to account for the seemingly surprising absence of balancing since the end of the Cold War. Nonetheless, persistent affronts to U.S. aims and interests on the world stage by states ranging from France and Germany to Russia, China, and India during this time indicates that bandwagoning may not capture responses to unipolarity either.

In fact, even the staunchest supporters of seeing the world purely through balancing appear to be at a loss as to how to understand state behaviour under unipolarity. Even one of the great proselytisers of the balancing paradigm, Kenneth Waltz, concedes that, at least in the case of balancing:

> [Realism p]redicts that balances disrupted will one day be restored. A limitation of the theory, a limitation common to social science theories, it that it cannot say when. William Wohlforth argues that though restoration will take place, it will be a long time coming. Of necessity, [Waltz's version of the] realist theory is better at saying what will happen than in saying when it will happen. Theory cannot say when "tomorrow" will come because international political theory deals with the pressures of structure on states and not how states will respond to the pressures.[23]

This claim seems like merely a leap of faith. For all the claims about the limitations of social science theories in general, and political science theories in particular, such theories can at least specify conditions that allow an event to occur. It appears from Waltz's argument, that limiting state strategies to balancing and perhaps bandwagoning does not even allow a proper appreciation for the factors that can give rise to such behaviour. Balancing and perhaps bandwagoning thus appear almost as ontological givens.

Buck-passing, a variant of the balancing argument that considers the collective action problem may be similarly problematic under unipolarity. According to Thomas Christensen and Jack Snyder, buck-passing is a situation where states avoid balancing by "counting on third parties to bear the costs of stopping a rising hegemon".[24] Stephen Walt similarly defines buck-passing as the situation where the great powers believe that readily available allies promote buck-passing; since "states that are threatened strive to

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[22] Fox, *The Politics of Attraction.* See in particular Chapters Eight and Ten.
[23] Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War", *International Security*, Vol. 25 No. 1 (Summer 2000): 27.
[24] Thomas J. Christensen and Jack L. Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity", *International Organisation*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Spring 1990): 138

pass to others the burdens of standing up to the aggressor".[25]

Here, the very title of Christensen and Snyder's article "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks" reveals the problem with buck-passing in a system with a clearly predominant state, namely that buck-passing is a strategy that works best under multipolarity. Buck-passing occurs when states can identify actors other than themselves who may successfully challenge the influence of the pre-eminent or potentially most threatening state. Under unipolarity, however, states may not be able to find others who are willing or able to bear the brunt of balancing against the system leader and are aware that individual actions are unlikely to make any major impact. Even if a large number of states find it in their interest to work against the system leader, there are the usual problems of collective action and free riding to overcome.

Approaches to understanding international bandwagoning behaviour are similarly limiting. One of the reasons William Wohlforth claims to be behind the stability of the current unipolar world is the fact that:

> Because the current leading state is by far the world's most formidable military power, the chances of leadership conflict are more remote than at any time over the last two centuries. Unlike past international systems, efforts by any second-tier state to enhance its relative position can be managed in a unipolar system without raising the spectre of a power transition and a struggle for primacy. And because the major powers face incentives to shape their policies with a view toward the power and preferences of the system leader, the likelihood of security competition among them is lower than in previous systems.[26]

Although the quasi-bandwagoning behaviour Wohlforth describes may accurately capture the general conditions behind the current unipolar persistence, it ignores the possible range of responses non-leading states may take to address questions of preserving security and promoting interests, especially if they conflict with the desires of the system leader.

In recent years, there have been some attempts to look beyond the balancing and bandwagoning paradigm in world politics scholarship, especially in response to the absence of balancing under unipolarity. Like Wohlforth's work, however, much of this recent scholarship on the current unipolar system provides less than complete pictures of state responses to preponderant power. For instance, John Ikenberry's study on institutions and strategic restraint under American unipolarity focuses almost exclusively on advanced industrial nations already entrenched within the U.S.-dominated Western orbit.[27]

[25] Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 30-31.
[26] Wohlforth, "Stability of a Unipolar World", *International Security*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (Summer 1999): 13.
[27] Ikenberry, *After Victory*.

Other arguments like those put forward by Robert Kagan, Richard Rosecrance in *Rise of the Virtual State*, and Charles Kupchan in *The End of the American Era*, are equally guilty of this shortcoming.[28]   Still others working on the issue of world politics under unipolarity, for example Joseph Joffe, Michael Mastanduno, John Owen, Thomas Risse, and Christopher Layne largely concentrate on the maintenance of the unipolar order on the part of the United States, rather than on responses to American dominance by the rest of the world.[29]

Another shortcoming of current work on power preponderance in world politics is the shortage of explanations for alternative strategies.   In his examination of the accuracy of realist explanations against the empirical historical record, Paul Schroeder does excellent work in identifying the presence of non-balancing, non-bandwagoning behaviour which he terms "hiding", "transcending", and "specialisation".[30]   However, he does not provide much in-depth explanation about the conditions that may lead states to adopt the various different approaches in their external relations with others.   There is also little on how these strategies may apply under unipolarity and how they may perhaps help answer the question, "why no balancing?"

The limitations of the balancing-bandwagoning paradigm leave the question on responses to preponderant power under unipolarity wide open.   The rest of this paper will try to narrow this gap by proposing buffering, binding, bonding, and beleaguering as possible alternatives that may provide a more accurate picture of state strategies under unipolarity.   These understandings of state strategy may additionally provide a better general understanding of responses to power preponderance.

Buffering, Bonding, Binding, and Beleaguering as Alternative Strategies

I argue that second-tier states that are unable to change the distribution of power within a unipolar system, but are strong enough to assert some degree of independence from leading state are likely to adopt strategies that go beyond balancing and bandwagoning.   This should account for a large number of states in the contemporary

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[28] Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power*; Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Virtual State*; and, Kupchan, *The End of the American Era*.

[29] Joseph Joffe, "Defying History and Theory: The United States as the "Last Remaining Superpower", in Ikenberry, *America Unrivalled*, 155-180; Michael Mastanduno, "Incomplete Hegemony and Security Order in the Asia-Pacific", in Ikenberry, *America Unrivalled*, 181-212; John M. Owen IV, "Transnational Liberalism and American Primacy; or, Benignity is in the Eye of the Beholder", in Ikenberry, *America Unrivalled*, 239-259; and, Thomas Risse, "U.S. Power in a Liberal Security Community", in Ikenberry, *America Unrivalled*, 260-283.

[30] Schroeder, "Historical Reality versus Neo-Realist Theory", *International Security*, Vol. 19 No. 1 (Summer 1994): 108-148.

world system.   The pattern of their strategic choices, however, may depend on the level of power disparity with the leading state and level of integration in the world system. However, I also suspect that the effects of historical path dependence particular to each individual situation may influence the effects of power and integration on state strategy.

I want to make the argument that states with less of a power disparity with the system leader tend toward buffering and beleaguering.   Those who experience a larger power gap may prefer bonding or binding.   Simultaneously, states that enjoy more integration in the world system may lean toward buffering and binding, while those that have less linkage may adopt bonding or beleaguering.   This, of course, assumes an ideal world where unique historical path dependence does not have an effect.   Diagram One illustrates this argument:

Relative Power under Unipolarity

	Lesser	*Greater*
Lesser	Bonding	Beleaguering
Greater	Binding	Buffering

(Left axis: **Level of Integration in the World System**)

Diagram 1: State responses to preponderant power where differences in power between the leading and other states are moderately large

To avoid confusion, I want to make clear that in this paper, strategy refers to purposive actions undertaken by states to achieve specific types of objectives, such as state survival or economic development.   The success of strategies depends on their ability to help states achieve these aims.   This paper, however, will choose to focus mainly on security goals.   The success or failure of particular security strategies may be assessable by looking at the degree to which they preserve autonomy of action, restrain the actions of the powerful, avert conflict, reduce tensions, or otherwise allow states to satisfactorily address concerns about security, survival, and other interests.   Possible ways to delineate strategies include exploring the behaviour and means through which states preserve or promote interests such as security and autonomy.   Now, let me turn to discussing each alternative strategy in more detail.

Bonding

Bonding is a strategy where states promote autonomy by providing a function or service others may find indispensable—i.e. states "bond" the interests of others with their own.   As such, other states as well as the preponderant power may have a stake in maintaining the security and autonomy of the state providing the service or function.

This may even encourage others to support the interests of the bonding state against the system leader under certain circumstances. Bonding, in effect, establishes and increases linkages with the world system and may not focus exclusively on the relationship with the pre-eminent state.

Second-tier states with lesser influence tend to prefer bonding, because these states realise that they can preserve their interests only by ingratiating themselves with the world, as well as with the leading state. These states, which fall in the upper left quadrant of Diagram 1, understand that there is not much that they can do on their own to change the distribution of power or level of integration in their favour, especially in the short- to medium-term. As such, the only way for them to protect their most fundamental interests is to give others a stake in their security and other such national priorities. To do so, such states may seek to provide some indispensable function to the preponderant state and the rest of the world in order to generate influence and give others cause to support them.

It may be possible to observe bonding by looking at the extent to which the world or a region depends on a state to provide particular services or functions. A further measure is the extent to which other states or the international system remains impartial to the actions of a state actor, in exchange for a particular service it provides. The trading and virtual state models put forward by Richard Rosecrance, as well as acts of "specialisation" proposed by Paul Schroeder may fall within this category of strategy.[31] Examples may include Switzerland providing a politically neutral space for political exchanges and financial services, the Scandinavian states supplying humanitarian and developmental assistance, or even Belgium's provision of a buffering function in the past.

Binding

Binding occurs when weaker states are able to restrain the actions of the powerful through the creation of institutional agreements and frameworks between states with different degrees of power, in exchange for support of the status quo under the leadership of the leading state. In other words, binding can occur between weaker states and the pre-eminent state in efforts to establish formal, institutionalised restraints on the exercise of power by the leading state in exchange for accepting its leadership. Binding, therefore, permits a degree of formal autonomy as well as influence over the powerful by weaker states that goes beyond what balancing and bandwagoning allow.

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[31] Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Virtual* State; Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Trading State*; and, Schroeder, "Historical Realist vs. Neo-Realist Theory", *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer 1994): 124-129. Also, see Michael I. Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (London, England: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1990), 148-152 and Fox, *The Power of Small States*, 144-146.

For states that fall within the lower left quadrant of Diagram 1, binding is preferable as it makes use of the institutional and network linkages already available to exert their influence. Since these states are also unable to do much about their power shortfalls, they may use existing institutional and network relationships with the preponderant state and the rest of the world to *preserve* and perhaps even *forward* their interests. This may be particularly true of states already in institutions and networks with accepted mechanisms of operation that allow at least some formal channels of influence on the leading state by even the weakest members. At the same time, the importance of worldwide linkages to these second-tier states makes it highly costly to disrupt the world system.

Binding may be measured by the ways that allow for formal restraints on the powerful in multiple issue areas. A tendency by the powerful to adhere to institutional restraints in its relations with weaker states may provide a further indication of binding. An example of binding may be the post-World War II US-led Western alliance system that enabled war-devastated European states to influence American decision-making in exchange for accepting Washington's leadership, as John Ikenberry argues in *After Victory*.[32] The strategy that Paul Schroeder calls transcendence and the concept of a North Atlantic "political community" between the United States and Western Europe developed by Karl Deutsch and his colleagues may fall within this category as well.[33]

Beleaguering

Beleaguering is a strategy where states aim to undermine the influence and authority of the more powerful as well as their ability to exercise power through disruption for the purposes of gaining specific concessions. This may include the sowing of discord

[32] Ikenberry, *After Victory*. See especially the definition of binding from page 40 to 43. Also see Handel, *Weak States in the International System*, 120-148; Emanuel Adler, "Seeds of Peaceful Change: The OSCE's Security Community-Building Model", in Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett [eds.], *Security Communities* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 120-123; Annette Baker Fox, *The Politics of Attraction: Four Middle Powers and the United States* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1977), 193-202; Joseph M. Greico, "Understanding the Problem of International Cooperation: The Limits of Neoliberal Institutionalism and the Future of Realist Theory", in David A. Baldwin [ed.], *Neoliberalism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1993); Joseph M. Greico, "The Maastricht Treaty, Economic and Monetary Union and the Neo-Realist Research Programme", *Review of International Studies*, No. 21 (1995): 21-40; Joseph M. Greico, "State Interests and Institutional Rule Trajectories", *Security Studies*, Vol. 5 No. 3 (Spring 1996): 261-306; Daniel H. Duedney, "The Philadephian System", *International Organisation*, Vol. 49 No. 2 (Spring 1995): 191-228; Daniel H. Duedney, "Binding Sovereigns", in Thomas J. Biersteker and Cynthia Weber [eds.], *State Sovereignty as Social Construct* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[33] Paul Schroeder, "Historical Reality versus Neo-Realist Theory", *International Security*, Vol. 19 No. 1 (Summer 1994): 108-148 and Karl W. Deutsch *et al*, *Political Community in the North Atlantic Area: International Organisation in the Light of Historical Experience* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957). Also, see Rothstein, *Alliances and Small States*, 47-48; Etel Solingen, *Regional Orders at Century's Dawn: Global and Domestic Influences on Grand Strategy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), Chapters Two and Three; and, George Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), especially Chapters Two and Three.

between the greater power and her allies, the instigation of domestic unrest within the territory of the greater power, or disturbing the smooth implementation of the policies by the powerful.[34]   An example is the constant tensions existing between the United States, Japan, and South Korea by North Korea in order to receive concessions or security guarantees.[35]   Some forms of state-sponsored terrorism or socio-economic disruption may also fall within the category of beleaguering, although not all such behaviour may be classifiable as beleaguering.

Second-tier states with low levels of integration and relatively more power may opt for beleaguering since they not only possess the ability to cause disruption, but also that the cost of such action may be low.   As states that fall within the upper right quadrant of Diagram 1 have limited linkages with the rest of the system.   Disrupting the policies of the leading state or others in the system may allow the beleaguering state get others to acquiesce to some of its demands.   At the same time, the relative power position of states in the upper right quadrant also means that their attempts to beleaguer others can have substantial impact on other actors.   In exchange for ending or not repeating destabilising actions, other states, including perhaps the leading state may pay the beleaguerer off by conceding to some of its demands.   Beleaguering, however, is a risky strategy; it may bring about retaliation from the leading state or a coalition of other second-tier states.

Evaluating beleaguering strategies can be carried out by observing the presence of conscious attempts to divide the opinions of the greater power and her allies through diplomatic, social, and economic activity.   Measurement of beleaguering may also be possible by assessing the existence of state-sponsored terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, attempts to create domestic social unrest within the greater power, or potential regionally destabilising moves.

Buffering

Buffering is the lessening of exposure to, and influence by, the more powerful by creating alternative spheres of influence or carving out neutral areas in terms of geography or function that can remove or at least significantly limit the immediate and active impact of the dominant power.   This can allow states to pursue their own interests more freely.   Unlike balancing, however, buffering is more passive.   It does not aim to alter the existing status quo or present an affront to the position of the pre-eminent state, but rather to maintain or exploit elements of prevailing circumstances that limit the

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[34] See Solingen, *Regional Orders at Century's Dawn*, 238-245.
[35] Susan L. Shirk, "Asia-Pacific Regional Security: Balance of Power of Concert of Powers", in Lake and Morgan, *Regional Orders*, 263-264.

exercise of power by the pre-eminent state.

States in the system that are both moderately powerful relative to the unipolar leader and highly integrated into the world system are likely to adopt buffering as they can make the best use of available capabilities to advance their interests. Buffering utilises institutional and other network linkages with like-minded states and the system leader to establish exclusive regional or functional areas, which in turn can reduce the active influence of the leading state on related matters. These moderately powerful states also have the capability to ensure some level of effective control over these issue areas to make buffering successful. This may allow for more autonomy from the preponderant state when pursing their interests. Beleaguering may not be a viable option for beleaguerers with high levels of and need for integration with the rest of the world.

Buffering behaviour may be measured by the presence of security communities, a series of overlapping institutions, or geographical areas that limit or even exclude the active participation of the powerful. It creates a political space where second-tier states can handle issues before the leading state intervenes. It also builds legitimacy for action independent of the pre-eminent actor. However, buffering de-emphasises the importance of formal military alliances that aim to directly challenge the position of the most powerful state. An example is the argument that the creation of a political and economic system in a region limits or reduces American influence, such as today's European Union. Certain aspects of Robert Kagan's claims about the relationship between the present day European Union and the United States *Of Paradise and Power* fall within this category of buffering.[36]

Hiding

Apart from the four main categories of strategy, I also note the existence of a fifth possible approach to power preponderance, which scholars sometimes refer to as "hiding". This is essentially avoidance of tension or disputes by states through withdrawal into isolation. It may appear when states voluntarily withdraw from disputes and potential disputes by reducing or cutting contact with potential or existing adversaries. Paul Schroeder discusses this approach at some length in the *International Security* article "Historical Reality versus Neo-Realist Theory".[37]

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[36] Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003). Also see David A. Lake and Patrick M. Morgan [eds.], *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997) and Solingen, *Regional Orders at Century's Dawn*, see especially Chapters One and Three.
[37] Schroeder, "Historical Reality vs. Neo-Realist Theory", *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer 1994): 117-124. Also, see Fox, *The Power of Small States*, 177-179; Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*, 28; and, Subrata Roy Chowdhury, *Military Alliances and Neutrality in War and Peace* (Bombay, Maharashtra: Orient Longmans, 1966), especially Chapters Three and Four.

Hiding, however, may not be a feasible strategy in a contemporary world system where a large number of institutional and other connections and networks linking states in areas such as security to economics and society affect even those seeking to avoid entanglement in world affairs. The pervasiveness of U.S. power and influence in the contemporary world may make hiding even more unfeasible as a strategy. In the event that states do try to hide in the current international context, they may end up relinquishing their ability to influence world politics, especially in the realm of security. Myanmar is perhaps one of the few remaining actors in the contemporary world that behaves in a way that may broadly resemble hiding. Given the increasing rarity of such behaviour, this paper will not delve into this last approach.

Collective and Cumulative Effects

Apart from being possible reactions to preponderant power, the adoption of strategies such as buffering, binding, bonding, and beleaguering by second-tier states may have broader implications for the future of a unipolar order. Although individual state strategies may have little individual impact on a unipolar system, the dominance of particular approaches toward power preponderance may work together and over time to reinforce, erode, or modify the status quo. After all, an international system, even a unipolar one, necessarily consists of a variety of actors that include both leading and second-tier states. Over time, changes to any part of this system can potentially alter the nature of the world order, even if disproportionately.

Of the four alternative strategies, binding and bonding may prove the most conducive to the persistence of unipolarity. By signing institutional agreements that acknowledge and legitimate the position of the leading power in exchange for some degree of influence, the binding of second-tier states is likely to strengthen the established unipolar order. Hence, if large numbers of states choose to bind with the unipolar power, this will in fact entrench the position of the current system leader even if there is some decline in its relative power.

Likewise, if many states adopt bonding, this is likely to enhance the longevity of a unipolar order. The choice by states to enhance their intrinsic value to the world by providing some essential function or service does not challenge the position of the leading state. Such a decision is also unlikely to erode the position of the system leader as the second-tier states often specialise in specific spheres. As states discover their unique areas of expertise and become more integrated with the world, they may move towards binding by establishing institutional arrangements with the leading state to "lock in" their positions and the advantages that come with such bargains.

In the case where a great number of states opt to bind or bond, a unipolar system may be highly stable and long-lived. This is as states are unlikely to challenge a prevailing order that provides them with substantial benefits. As Robert Gilpin argues in *War and Change in World Politics*, states are only likely to desire a change or overthrow of the system if it is no longer useful or even detrimental to their interests.[38] Systems where most states bind with the unipolar leader or bond with the world, however, tend to be more susceptible to disruption caused by beleaguering states.

If, on the other hand, the majority of states select strategies akin to buffering or beleaguering, a unipolar order is likely to be more short-lived. With buffering, there is an erosion of the relative influence of the leading state over time as second-tier states begin to reduce the ability of the system leader to act in certain areas. Left unchecked, buffer areas may evolve to the extent that a system leader may find significant constraints on its ability to wield its influence and impose its will. As such, buffering may create the political space for the development of potential rivals to the unipolar power.

A system where buffering is common can, however, be stable for a long time until challengers to the status quo power emerge. In fact, even power transitions in systems where there are well-established areas of influence can be stable, such as during the shift from British hegemony to American dominance during the mid-twentieth century. However, there remains the potential for instability at a non-systemic level as buffering states compete against each other as they become increasingly more powerful.[39] Nonetheless, by being conducive to the rise of potential challengers to the system leader, widespread buffering may have an adverse overall long-term impact on unipolar longevity.

The most potentially unstable scenario for unipolarity is when a large number of states choose to beleaguer. In this situation, there are likely to be constant attempts to disrupt the prevailing system. Not only will successful beleaguering create problems for other states in the system, the leading state may have to expend significant resources to address disruption. Writing about the British Empire in *The Weary Titan*, Aaron Friedberg points that this may wear down a unipolar power more quickly by placing greater strain on its limited, though substantial, resources.[40] By cracking down on beleaguerers and potential beleaguerers, the unipolar power may also become increasingly oppressive and hence encourage further beleaguering, as well as a growing

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[38] Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[39] Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World", *International Security*, Vol. 24 No. 1 (Summer 1999): 30-32.

[40] Aaron L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

desire to alter the prevailing system.

From the collective and cumulative effects of state strategies beyond balancing and bandwagoning, it seems then that a unipolar order is likely to be most stable when most secondary states enjoy high levels of integration within the system. This is because more integrated states tend to prefer binding, bonding, and buffering strategies, which do not immediately disrupt or challenge the prevailing system. Buffering, however, can make a system with a preponderant power less persistent over time as it may limit hegemonic influence and allow for the rise of future challengers. In contrast, binding and bonding may tend to support unipolar persistence as they entrench and reinforce the existing world order and the position of the leading state.

When a large number of secondary states are both powerful and lack substantial linkages with the world system, unipolarity is likely to be relatively unstable and short-lived. Since second-tier states that fall within this category are liable to select beleaguering as a course of action, the propensity for wide-spread disruption make a unipolar system relatively unstable and even war prone. This is likely to place significant strain on the resources, influence, and position of the leading state, possibly reducing the longevity of the existing system.

It seems that unipolar stability and persistence depends on much more than simply the power and actions of the leading state. The strategy choices, as well as the relative power and level of integration among second-tier states may have an important impact on the nature and persistence of preponderant power in a world system. As such, those seeking to understand the permanence of the current status quo from both the academic and policy standpoints may do well to comprehend the behaviour of second-tier states, as well as that of the system leader.

In the Asia-Pacific example, the pattern of binding, bonding, buffering, and beleaguering suggests that the current unipolar order is likely to be relatively stable, at least in that region. Most states in the area seem to be buying into the prevailing system, albeit to different degrees. Even China, the most likely serious challenger to U.S. pre-eminence appears to be opting to preserve the stability offered by the current system. By seeking to buffer, Beijing prefers to maintain the status quo and not challenge the U.S. position. With the exception of an increasingly isolated North Korea and perhaps Myanmar, other second-tier states seem to choose to bind or bond, strategies that support if not reinforce the prevailing system.

However, as the United States increasingly disregards the interests and opinions of others and with other states gradually becoming more integrated and powerful, buffering

may gain greater currency in the world.   Such a development may lead to rising attempts to limit the exercise of U.S. influence. This may spell a steady erosion of U.S. unipolar dominance in time.   Nonetheless, the actual cumulative and collective effects of state strategies beyond balancing and bandwagoning on regions and the world system are likely to present themselves as topics that demand further study.   Such a development may be particularly interesting as more data on the era of U.S. unipolarity becomes available.

Thoughts on Further Testing

To operationalise the study of alternative forms of state behaviour other than balancing and bandwagoning, it may be necessary to test the following hypotheses:

> H_1: Balancing and bandwagoning cannot explain significant variation in state responses to preponderant power.

> H_2: Relative differences in power and the level of integration help influence the type of strategy that states will adopt toward preponderant power such that:
> a. States that are weaker tend to bond or bind; states that are relatively stronger tend beleaguer or buffer.
> b. States more integrated in the world system tend to buffer or bind; less integrated states tend to bond or beleaguer.

Additionally, the project will attempt to disprove the following null hypothesis:

> H_0: Balancing and bandwagoning explain systematic variation in state strategy when reacting to preponderant power.

The argument that states act in ways that go beyond balancing and bandwagoning in their security behaviour should appear particularly plausible if the project is able bring evidence to support the two main hypotheses and reject the null hypothesis.   Note that I am trying to present a probable theory and that the different strategies are not necessarily mutually exclusive over time, especially as states shift along power and integration lines. As such, testing the above hypotheses will involve looking at the incidence of particular types of behaviour, rather than to assert that other strategies will not appear at all. Additionally, as states may adopt different strategies in different relationships, this paper will limit its scope to relations with the pre-eminent power.

To prove *Hypothesis One*, I will need to show that balancing and bandwagoning cannot account for much of the behaviour of second-tier states toward preponderant power.   In order to prove *Hypothesis Two*, this paper will also need to show that state responses to preponderant power vary in accordance with expectations about the relationships between power and integration in the international system that I lay out earlier in this section.   The inability to reject the first three hypotheses should help permit the rejection of the *Null Hypothesis*.

To further elucidate the case for state responses to power preponderance that fall outside of balancing and bandwagoning, I hope to make clear what I mean by the degree of disparities in power and level of integration. Since this paper aims to look at responses to preponderant power, it will assume that other states lags behind the pre-eminent state in terms of the capability to achieve state objectives as well as the ability to influence the behaviour of others in a clear and significant manner. This may take material form such as the capability of military forces and economic capacity or "softer" forms such as social strength, cultural effects, or ideational influences. The degree of difference in power looks at the extent to which the power capabilities of individual states vary in relation to the system leader.

The level of integration refers to the participation in international organisations or institutions, in addition to economic and social networks by a state. This includes both the number of institutions and networks that a state participates in, plus the extent to which institutions and networks can constrain or promote state behaviour and resist shocks over time. The extent of communication between those within a state and those outside may also help determine the extent of integration in the world system. The level of integration in this discussion includes the breadth of participation in institutions and networks that both involve and do not include the predominant state.

International organisations (IOs) and institutions here are formal establishments with some defined function and include some form of state membership. Examples range from political organisations such as the United Nations and European Union, economic institutions like the World Trade Organisation and International Monetary Fund, as well as functional establishments such as the World Health Organisation and International Labour Organisation.

International networks, on the other hand, are mutually dependent social and economic linkages between states that are not necessarily formalised through organisational structures or official state participation. They may involve economic ties in trade and finance as well as systems of relationships and exchange between societies in different states. The networks of concern here include linkages among the weaker states, as well as between them and the predominant power.

The measurement of economic networks can be assessed by looking at the volume of trade and financial transactions, including the level of foreign investment in a state. An indication of the breadth and depth of social networks is indicated by the extent of cross-border population exchanges, communication, and the degree of non-governmental cooperation on issues. It may be possible to gauge the level of non-governmental

exchanges by looking at the number of international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other transnational entities functioning within a state. Here, international NGOs include non-governmental civic organisations whose work may range from development assistance to human rights and health.

Conclusion

As this paper indicates, looking at responses to power preponderance through the lenses of bandwagoning and balancing can prove highly problematic. To stop an analysis at such a critique, however, presents an incomplete research project. A better understanding of alternative responses to power preponderance requires the testing of these approaches against empirical evidence. The almost decade-and-a-half of American unipolarity should offer the historical data necessary to engage in precisely this sort of examination. If the reactions of second-tier states to American power preponderance play out according to the theoretical expectations that I lay out in this paper, then it may be possible to reject that null hypothesis that states largely resort to balancing and bandwagoning to deal with overwhelming might. This may allow me to claim at least some support for argument of this project.

Rigorous testing of the model for state reactions to power preponderance needs to consider several key issues. Firstly, there must be variation along my two key independent variables, power and integration in the world system, as well an understanding of the effects of historical path dependence. Secondly, there ought to be a serious attempt to control for several important factors that may bias the results of testing. These elements include the impact of geography, culture, regional influences, as well as the historical baggage that often feeds into concepts of identity. Such an approach may enable me to better consider whether I can reject the null hypothesis and make a strong case for the two main alternative hypotheses that this paper tries to argue for.

If the empirical record supports to the theory that second-tier states do indeed respond to power preponderance along the lines of bonding, binding, buffering, and beleaguering, depending on their power, integration, and perhaps path dependence to a lesser extent, then the model here may actually offer an alternative way of understanding contemporary world politics. Even if the empirics do not support the model that this paper lays out, the question of responses to preponderant power would still require further study, given the problems with the current study about conventional bandwagoning-balancing dichotomy. Work in this area may help bring about a better appreciation of the dynamics of a unipolar world.

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