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 INTRODUCTION BY WILLIAM C. WOHLFORTH, DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

“Is China Rising”? When Sheena Chestnut Greitens and Iain Johnston posed this question in 2009, it seemed beside the point.¹ Everyone *knew* China was rising. But when Chestnut Greitens and Johnston parsed the discourse to see what analysts meant by “rising,” they discovered a baffling array of meanings. Translating these different definitions into indicators, they found 14 in total, of which only six actually indicated that China was rising. To take but one example, even if we translate “rising” into “catching up to the dominant state in material capability,” the answer is not always clear. Does rising mean that the capabilities of one state are increasing as a percentage of those of the dominant state? Or does it mean that absolute difference between the leading state and the rising state is shrinking? The former definition seems to capture the idea of “rising,” for it shows that the weaker state growing faster than the dominant one. But the latter measure captures the size of the pool of material resources each government can draw upon to compete in international politics. Back in 2009, by most measures of material capability including GDP, science and technology, and military spending, China was rising according to the former measure, but the United States was rising according to the latter measure. That is, as the world was incessantly talking about China's rise in the early 2000s, with each passing year the pool of material resources the United States government could draw on was getting larger than what China could bring to bear

The insight here is that observers often assume that a state is rising, and then assemble various indicators and definitions that make sense of that assumption. People then get the impression that the various indicators are actually unambiguous causes of rise. This important insight lay dormant in the field for many years –until now. In the very first sentence of *Why Nations Rise: Narratives and the Path to Great Power*, Manjari Chatterjee Miller foregrounds the key question “What are rising powers?” She argues that they come in different types. Some are active, seeking to join the ranks of the existing great powers by mimicking their practices. Some are activist, seeking to overthrow a given great power order. And some, importantly, are reticent, eschewing the choice to try to act as great powers. She shows that a very important part of the explanation for how countries end up in these categories is ideas, the ideas that inform the narrative a state's elite tells itself about its place in the world. Unpacking that process is a key part of the story of rising powers.

Given the centrality of the question of rise and decline to the study of international politics, the book's compelling argument, the learning on display, and Miller's deft, engaging writing style, this is a must-read volume. In this exchange, the reviewers praise the work, endorse its core insights, and yet stress important questions that are left unaddressed. Miller agrees, arguing that the book sets the stage for important new discoveries about this time-honored issue.

Manjeet S. Pardesi raises a question that flows from the Chestnut Greitens and Johnston paper: if there is no consensus on what might constitute a “baseline” measure of material rise, how can we identify a reticent rising power? Reticence implies the material capacity to rise but not the ideational, narrative story. That posits a classic mismatch between material capacity and behavior, but if we have no consensus agreement on what constitutes the proper measure of material capacity, then whether there is a mismatch will always remain disputed, as Pardesi demonstrates in the case of contemporary India.

Michelle Murray highlights a question that all reviewers touch upon: “where do these narratives [of rise] come from, and why do particular narratives become dominant in domestic society?” As Todd Hall puts it, “*Why Nations Rise* does not seek to explain in any great depth why certain states adopt great power narratives and others do not.” All the reviewers understand that Miller deliberately did not undertake to examine this question. Nonetheless, Hall stresses that given the large and important theoretical approaches that are geared precisely towards questions like the origin of national narratives, this might have been a missed opportunity. For her part, Murray stresses the potential importance of external recognition and socialization in “selecting” certain narratives over others, something that has also garnered a large body of research. Given that at issue is whether narratives will be adopted that increase or decrease the likelihood of a state taking a path that

¹ Sheena Chestnut (Greitens) and Alastair Iain Johnston, “Is China Rising?” in Eva Paus, Penelope Prime, and Jon Western, eds. *Global Giant: Is China Changing the Rules of the Game?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

might bring it into militarized competition or even war with existing major powers, Hall emphasizes the enormous stakes in this question.

Nicola Nymalm hones in on the often taken-for-granted notion of “disruptive” or “revisionist powers. She suggests that scholars step back from a potentially western centric notion of what might constitute problem-causing rising states. While recognizing the important contribution Miller makes in undermining some common assumptions surrounding the concept of rising powers, she draws attention to the fact that Miller nonetheless accepts many potentially problematic notions built into power transition theory [PTT]. She asks another, potentially deeper, question that Miller admittedly did not attempt to answer in the book: why does “‘international society’ . . . perceive rising powers as threatening in the first place?” That is, she argues that Miller “does not problematize PTT’s broader role in perpetuating and understanding of the world that remains wedded to a deeply western/Eurocentric perspective.”

The spirit of these reviews is nicely captured by Hall’s observation that “to be left wanting more is not necessarily a bad thing, quite the opposite.” I could not agree more. With this book Miller has taken scholarship an important stride forward. She has supplied the field with well researched and extremely well presented case studies of the role of narratives in the rise of the United States, the Netherlands, Japan China and India. And she has provided a conceptual language with which to understand the discovered variation. And, as our reviewers point out, Miller’s book also raises questions that might have remain unasked had she not taken up this important research project, and that many researchers will be eager to pursue.

Participants:

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Michelle Murray is associate professor of Politics at Bard College. She is author of *The Struggle for Recognition in International Relations: Status, Revisionism and Rising Powers* (Oxford University Press, 2019), which argues that the struggle for recognition and status is an important determinant of the outcomes of power transitions.

Nicola Nymalm is Assistant Professor in War Studies at the Swedish Defence University in Stockholm. Previously she was a postdoctoral research fellow at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs (UI) and an associate research fellow at the German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA). Her research interests include relations between ‘established’ and ‘emerging’ powers drawing from critical approaches to IR, IPE, security, and military studies. She is the author of *From ‘Japan Problem’ to ‘China Threat’? Rising Powers in US Economic Discourse* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), and her work has appeared in journals such as *International Political Sociology*, *International Studies Review*, *Review of International Studies*, and *Journal of International Relations and Development*.

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William C. Wohlforth is the Daniel Webster Professor of Government and Director of the Dartmouth Initiative for Global Security at Dartmouth College.

What does it mean to say a state is rising? On the surface, this appears to be an easy question to answer. States rise as they accumulate more wealth and military power. So says the prevailing wisdom, at least. But it is quite interesting that we so unthinkingly use the metaphor of “rising” and not, say, swelling, bulking up, or putting on weight.¹ Some form of inverse gravity is presupposed by the prevailing wisdom, as if growing material heft propels states to float up above their peers. Economic and military capabilities here endow their owner with a wonderful buoyancy.

In *Why Nations Rise*, Manjari Chatterjee Miller makes a convincing case that this prevailing wisdom is, if not outright wrong, at the very least missing a key element that gives rise to rising. She tells us that there are examples of states—Japan during much of the Cold War, for instance—that had growing material power and yet were not seen as rising states. Something else was at play. She argues that we need to also look to their narratives, the stories they tell themselves (or do not tell themselves) about what “great power currently looks like, what the norms of the international order are, and the rising power’s responsibilities in the context of that international order to eventually be recognised as a great power” (14). Rising is a process, and states not actively pursuing that process do not rise. This is what separates what Miller calls the “reticent states” (24) she examines—nineteenth-century Netherlands, Cold War Japan, or contemporary India—from what she calls “active states” or the states historically described as rising powers—Imperial Japan, the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, or the People’s Republic of China (PRC) today.

Miller’s approach thus brings ideas and beliefs into the story as a key variable. These ideas and beliefs are not simply a function of changing material conditions but are shaped by what Miller labels “idea advocacy... the generation of new ideas and recombination of existing ideas by the elites in a rising power to form new narratives about the country’s appropriate behavior as a power to be” (11). These ideas emerge out of discussions and debates within the state in question—often at the elite level—and shape how it chooses to use its capabilities and to behave on the world stage. Situated within the topography of “-isms” in the field, Miller’s account thus lies somewhere between a neo-classical realist approach that sees the domestic as the filter through which material variables are translated into foreign policy² and a constructivist approach that sees state identities and interests as constituted primarily by ideas.³

The idea that ideas matter is not particularly new, but what matters here is where they matter. Miller takes this observation about ideas—backed with clear empirical examples—to an area of the field that has been dominated by traditional realist approaches and uses it to challenge one of mainstream realism’s most basic tenets concerning the exclusive centrality of material factors. Certainly, that position has long been under fire.⁴ But recent times have seen its resurgence in the form of a seemingly broad acceptance of—or at least acquiescence to—realist framings of Sino-American relations as those of a rising

¹ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

² Gideon Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,” *World Politics* 51:1 (1998): 146.

³ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Jutta Weldes, *Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

⁴ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

power confronting an established one due to a changing material balance.⁵ Miller counters this with a persuasive argument that while material conditions enable states to rise, it is ideas that separate the reticent from the rising.

Miller also goes one step further to offer the observation that in many cases rising states first try to conform to what they perceive to be international standards for great-power conduct, even if subsequently they then choose to challenge them. Be it Meiji-era Japan, the United States, or more recently the People's Republic of China, she argues that at the outset of their rise these states acted in ways that adhered to the norms of great-power behaviour in their time, whether by becoming colonising powers in the examples of former or joining international organisations, regimes, and multilateral initiatives in the latter. In Miller's words, they rose "to become great powers by accommodating, not revising, those norms" (146). The intuition behind this argument is that rising requires both international recognition and increasing authority, and both necessitate first playing by the existing norms (9-10).

While the book's contributions as outlined above are greatly important and very laudable, *Why Nations Rise* does not seek to explain in any great depth why certain states adopt great power narratives and others do not. There have to be reasons why certain narratives resonate, take hold, and thrive—even in the face of fierce opposition—while others fail to gain traction. Miller states that there is a "marketplace of narratives" (11) but leaves it to future research to determine from whence the wares in the marketplace come and why some sell better than others.

This does seem to be something of a missed opportunity, for there exists a plethora of relevant theoretical approaches whose explanatory purchase could have been compared and contrasted with the empirical material Miller examines, be it work that emphasizes the role of rhetoric⁶; the importance of international socialisation⁷; the influence of international society more broadly, whether from the perspective of the English School⁸ or the Meyer School⁹; the shape of the domestic political landscape and the interests different narratives serve¹⁰; or the motivational power of psychological factors, like the desire for esteem.¹¹ Given how crucial this marketplace is, it receives quite a minimal theoretical treatment. Why, indeed, is it called a marketplace at all? If recent events are any guide, we know that marketplaces suffer from all forms of distortions and inefficiencies, and both regulated and unregulated marketplaces can be subject to problems. And what of international reactions to, interjections in, and criticism of domestic narratives? Are the participants in the marketplace by necessity only

⁵ John J. Mearsheimer, "The Gathering Storm: China's Challenge to US Power in Asia." *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3:4 (2010): 381-396; Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017).

⁶ Stacie E. Goddard and Ronald R. Krebs, "Rhetoric, Legitimation, and Grand Strategy," *Security Studies* 24:1 (2015): 5-36.

⁷ Alastair Iain Johnston, *Social States: China in International Institutions, 1980-2000* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

⁸ Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977).

⁹ John W. Meyer, John Boli, George M. Thomas, and Francisco O. Ramirez, "World Society and the Nation-State," *American Journal of Sociology* 103:1 (1997): 144-181.

¹⁰ Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013); Etel Solingen, *Regional Orders at Century's Dawn: Global and Domestic Influences on Grand Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

¹¹ Anne L. Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence: Aspirations, Identity, and Security Interests* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

domestic elites, or are foreign merchants also active? In the end, it is not clear if this is a story of the second image, the second image reversed, or even the second image reflected back and forth in a hall of mirrors.

The stakes here are very high, for as Miller notes narratives can shift and active states also can go on to become activist states, that is, states that are seeking to challenge the international order. This as arguably was the case for Imperial Japan and now many are claiming it holds true for the PRC as well. So one is left wondering if more could not have been done to explain the who, what, when, where, and why of narratives and their trajectories. Then again, to be left wanting more is not necessarily a bad thing, quite the opposite. While it is a common avoidance tactic to say that one is leaving certain things to future research—I admit to being guilty of having used this upon occasion myself—in this case, I truly do hope that future research follows.

On a slightly different note, it is conceivable some country experts will take issue with how Miller categorises the states she examines in her book and presents their stories. This, however, is in some ways unavoidable. Miller covers a tremendous amount of territory in her survey, compressing into digestible, chapter-sized portions decades of debates and foreign policy behaviour belonging to very different state actors from very different periods. To accomplish this requires editorial choices; some facts, developments, and nuances will by necessity be left on the cutting room floor. That being, a more explicit discussion of the methodology behind how certain conclusions were reached, why the statements of certain actors are treated as representative and others not, and how one could replicate this study would have been useful to pre-empt such criticism.

And granted, making broad claims while accommodating subtleties is also a very difficult task. The book does for the most part balance this well, speaking to the diversity of domestic debates occurring within states. At times, however, it does also slip into more simplifying language that treats them as relatively unitary actors, particularly when it presents its conclusions at the end of each of its empirical chapters.

That said, nothing takes away from the fact this is an extraordinarily important contribution at just the right time. It should be required reading for anyone looking at the topic of rising powers, all the more so since it offers an essential corrective to purely materialist accounts. Miller has done the field a service; we will have to revise the prevailing wisdom.

REVIEW BY MICHELLE MURRAY, BARD COLLEGE

Manjari Chatterjee Miller's *Why Nations Rise: Narratives and the Path to Great Power* tackles a simple, but often neglected, question: Why do some countries become rising powers, but not others? The conventional wisdom in International Relations (IR) is that some uncertain mix of increasing military and economic might along with a state's intention to use this newfound power to upend the existing international order determines its status as a rising power. That is, rising powers are principally a material phenomenon and source of conflict in the international system. Miller highlights the limits of this approach to rising powers. A state's status as a rising power is not just the product of its material power, but rather depends on the social recognition of these capabilities by external actors. Likewise, not all rising powers are revisionist or expansionist, but are more likely embrace a variety of positions vis-à-vis the international status quo. To explain this range of behavior Miller focuses on the *process* of becoming a great power and specifically the narratives that a rising power tells about its rise. While a rising power may possess the material capabilities to be a great power, it also must "display awareness that its position in international politics is changing, and...has to set itself a historical task" (11). These ideas shape a rising power's behavior by giving it a sense of purpose in foreign policy to take up the role of great power. And what is more, by focusing on narratives as the centerpiece of rising power, Miller is able to shed light on the different paths so-called "rising powers"—the United States, Netherlands, Japan, China and India—have taken historically.

Why Nations Rise makes a number of important contributions to the scholarship on rising powers, power transitions and revisionism. First, too often these literatures take the category of rising power to be a self-evident expression of growing material power and in doing so elude some central puzzles in the study of rising and declining powers.¹ We know a rising power when we see it and do not adequately theorize the conditions that enable rising powers to enact that role on the world stage. For example, a state with the capability to be a great power may shun the role, therefore never adopting the behavior that is characteristic of a great power. We can only understand these cases by unpacking the concept of rising power itself. Second, *Why Nations Rise* calls attention to the agency of rising powers to define their emergence as great powers. Power transitions are not structurally predetermined by changes in a state's relative material power. Rather, the rising power itself has the ability to tell the story of its rise, which in turn shapes how the international community perceives its growing power and whether the established powers will move to contain its rise to great power status. Indeed, it is precisely how a rising power presents itself and its aspirations that determine the trajectory of a power transition. These theoretical and conceptual contributions are complemented with a wide range of case studies that span place and time and show the empirical reach of the argument.

Miller's argument, however, also leaves some important questions unanswered about under what conditions rising powers emerge. First, the focus on the domestic politics of narrative making in rising powers raises important questions about where these narratives come from and how particular narratives become dominant in a domestic society. Rising powers end up becoming great powers because they put forward great power narratives that link their growing power to a recognizable (or accommodational) role in the international order and over time transform into activist great powers that seek to revise the international status quo. Elite actors, either as part of a collective or as an influential individual, articulate the narratives that lay out the rationale for a state's position as a great power. To be brought to fruition these narratives presumably need to be accepted by some audience in the domestic space and over time made into a kind of commonsense narrative about a state's place in the world. Are there particular kinds of narratives or narrative structures that are likely to gather widespread support in domestic politics? What kind of political work does a successful narrative need to do in order to shape policy? The answers to these questions are important because in order for a rising power to have a narrative about great power behavior in the first place, those ideas need to be legitimated in the public sphere. Ronald Krebs, for example, shows in his book on narrative and U.S. foreign policy that narratives are more likely to take hold depending on the particularities of the

¹ See, for example, Robert Powell, *In the Shadow of Power: States and Strategies in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); A.F.K. Organiski, *World Politics* (New York: Knopf Books, 1958); Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

moment, the institutional authority of the speaker and their rhetorical mode (e.g. storytelling).² I wonder if a similar set of conditions shapes which states are able to put forward great power narratives and which ones do not? To be fair, no book can answer every question, but pursuing these lines of inquiry may be a fruitful focus of future research and provide a more robust explanation for the why some powers rise and others do not.

Second, Miller argues that active powers have narratives that contain three specific beliefs about how to become a great power: ideas that reconcile material power with the constraints of the international order; ideas that accept current norms of great power, including their relationship to the existing powers; and ideas that explain the purpose of the rising power's increasing international involvement. These ideas are importantly "accommodational" in that they accept the contours of the existing international order and carve out a place for the rising power to operate within it. Moreover, a characteristic of these narratives seems to be their orientation toward the established great powers, in part to secure their recognition (15). This process is an important part of Miller's analysis because it is this relational aspect of a state's social status that makes power transitions not just a material phenomenon. What makes these exchanges social, however, is that recognition from the established powers is necessary for a rising power, but it is not given. In this way, all rising powers want and need recognition. Whether the established powers are willing to recognize them is another matter that depends on the nature of their social relationship. Under what conditions will an established power recognize a rising power's growing capabilities? Does such recognition depend simply on the nature of the rising power's narrative?

Consider, for example, the concomitant rise of the United States and Imperial Germany at the turn of the twentieth century. Miller charts the American rise and how it crafted an accommodationalist narrative that legitimized its role as a great power. At nearly the same time, however, Imperial Germany was also a rising power that articulated a similar narrative about why it deserved "its place in the sun" among the established powers.³ Both the United States and Imperial Germany aimed to act like the reigning great powers of the day: acquiring colonial empires, building powerful blue-water navies and taking up roles in great power management of the system.⁴ These were the actions that defined great power behavior at the time. Yet, the same behavior was interpreted in different ways by the United Kingdom: the United States was recognized and its rise to world power status was accommodated; Imperial Germany was branded as revisionist and its power contained, ultimately contributing to the outbreak of the First World War. What this example suggests is that the ability of a state to be a rising power depends importantly on how the established powers *interpret* its narrative. State behavior, and even the elements of an active great power narrative, does not speak for itself. Rather, narratives only exist in rather thick social and interpretive environments that determine their meaning.⁵ Put simply, like material power, narrative also may not be a sufficient condition to explain why some nations rise and others do not.

Taken together, these two critiques suggest that to fully leverage the explanatory power of narrative, we need to understand the relationship of narrative to state identity. In the domestic sphere, why some narratives emerge in some places and not others probably depends on how consonant that narrative is with the state's identity and how well it is able to resonate across society. This was certainly part of the discursive work that elites did in the United States during the latter half of the nineteenth century. In other contexts, for reasons of national identity, certain narratives may empower particular actors in

² Ronald R. Krebs, *Narrative and the Making of US National Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

³ Michelle Murray, *The Struggle for Recognition in International Relations: Status, Revisionism and Rising Powers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

⁴ Murray, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 54-65.

⁵ Stacie E. Goddard, *When Might Makes Right: Rising Powers and World Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

the domestic sphere, enabling great power narratives to take hold.⁶ Likewise, the struggle for recognition is a social process that is ultimately about establishing identities in the international realm.⁷ There are many reasons why the United Kingdom could recognize the United States and not Imperial Germany. One important aspect was the ability of statesmen in the United States to frame America's rise in terms of a shared identity, which is something the Germans did not do. Great power narrative, and whether or not it is viewed as accommodationalist, is a social construction.

Why Nations Rise is an important contribution to debates about rising powers and has equally powerful policy implications for contemporary debates about U.S. foreign policy. If rising power is not simply a reflection of a state's material capabilities, then policy-makers need to take seriously the narratives that underpin potential peer competitors. What is more, *Why Nations Rise* highlights the importance of thinking about the nuance of foreign policy and the kinds of claims that rising powers make about their ambitions.

⁶ Ronald R. Krebs and Jennifer K. Lobasz, "Fixing the Meaning of 9/11: Hegemony, Coercion and the Road to War in Iraq," *Security Studies* 16:3 (2007): 409-451.

⁷ Murray, *The Struggle for Recognition*; Erik Ringmar, "The Recognition Game: Soviet Russia Against the West," *Cooperation and Conflict* 37:2 (2002): 115-136; Thomas Lindemann, *Causes of War: The Struggle for Recognition* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2010).

REVIEW BY NICOLA NYMALM, SWEDISH DEFENCE UNIVERSITY

In her new book, *Why Nations Rise. Narratives and the Path to Great Power*, Manjari Chatterjee Miller challenges many of the taken-for-granted assumptions and conventional wisdoms about so-called ‘rising powers’ that are prevalent in the main International Relations (IR) literature. According to the latter, ‘rising powers’, which are commonly understood as ‘rising’ first and foremost because of their growing economy and military power, are intent on revising the international order as they seek political influence and status in accordance with their increasing material capabilities.¹ This brings with it a challenge to the leading power(s) in the international order and is expected to lead to a power shift and/or transition.² Conventional wisdom in IR according to power transition theory (PTT) also holds that in most cases power transitions are unpeaceful, i.e. do not happen without great power war. Unsurprisingly, many of the most recent and current literature on the rise of China and the potential of conflict between the US and China framed around the so-called Thucydides trap is based on these assumptions.³ This only adds to the timeliness of Miller’s book.

Miller starts by taking a step back and asking a few basic questions on issues that the main IR theories on rising powers seem to be taking for granted: Do rising powers actually challenge the international order? Why do some countries but not others become rising powers? And perhaps most importantly, given that the label is used for a quite diverse range of countries, *what* precisely are rising powers in the first place? Based on her case studies encompassing the historical cases of the United States, the Netherlands, Meiji and post-Cold War Japan, and the more recent and contemporary cases of China and India, Miller argues that in addition to growing material capabilities, rising powers are constituted by pursuing global, rather than only regional interests, by their quests for recognition by other states as *great power*, and most importantly, by particular *narratives* about how to become a *great power*. Not all countries which are commonly labelled as ‘rising’ because their material capabilities are growing, develop(ed) these kinds of narratives. Those that do not remain what Miller calls *reticent powers*. Contrary to the common assumption of rising powers as revisionist by default, Miller shows to the contrary that *active rising powers*, i.e. those that develop narratives, accept and comply with the prevalent norms of the international order so as to become great powers. Having achieved this, they may subsequently turn into *activist powers* that seek to modify the existing order.

In addition to its intervention into and challenging of conventional (IR) wisdoms around PTT, the main strengths of the book are its timeliness both in terms of academic and policy-focused topics, as well as its diversity in case selection and empirical richness. The rise and fall of great powers, power transitions, and what they mean for war and peace and the international order have been and continue to be some of the most prevalent themes among IR scholars. At the same time, these questions are also hotly debated in policy-making circles around the globe, not least in terms of the prospects for current and future relations between the United States and China, and China’s role in the international system and in global politics. Miller tackles these issues through an accessible and compelling writing style that makes her book and especially the diverse and empirically rich case studies (chapters two to six) a pleasure to read.

¹ See, for example, Charles A. Kupchan, “The Normative Foundations of Hegemony and the Coming Challenge to Pax Americana,” *Security Studies* 23:2 (2014): 219-257.

² For a critical take on these assumptions, see for example Steve Chan, “So What About a Power Shift? Caveat Emptor,” *Asian Perspective* 38:3 (2014): 363-385.

³ See, for example, Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap?* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017); Steve Chan, Weixing Hu, and Kai He, “Discerning States’ Revisionist and Status-Quo Orientations: Comparing China and the US,” *European Journal of International Relations* 25:2 (2019): 613–40; Serafettin Yilmaz and Xiangyu Wang, “Power Transition Theory Revisited: When Rising China Meets Dissatisfied United States.” *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* 5:3 (2019): 317-341.

Regrettably, the potency of the book's overall argument and the empirical work is not completely matched by the discussion of the main terminology and concepts used. Ideas, beliefs, and, most importantly, *narratives* are only superficially addressed in the first chapter. Additionally, especially the final chapter, *On Power Transitions Past and Future*, remains rather vague about the implications of the book's findings in terms of what the future might bring when it comes to *activist powers*, especially in terms of U.S.-China relations. While the differentiation between *active* and *activist* powers does bring some much needed analytical and empirical precision into the debate, one is left wondering whether the threat or danger associated with (some) rising powers and power transitions is thus just postponed into the future. This question connects to a broader debate that the book stops short of addressing: why does "international society" or "society", or "the world" (e.g. 13; 142), perceive rising powers as threatening in the first place? And who or what precisely does 'international society' include or consist of in this context? In other words, while Miller does critically engage with the main assumptions *within* power transition theory, she does not problematize PTT's broader role in perpetuating an understanding of the world that remains wedded to a deeply Western/Euro centric perspective.⁴

Narratives, Ideas, Beliefs

The subtitle of the book suggests the central role of narratives. It also raises the ultimately unfulfilled expectation of the book connecting to at least some of the recent contributions and debates on narratives in domestic and foreign policy,⁵ not least when it comes to the debates on powershifts and rising powers in IR the book addresses.⁶ What Miller instead tells us about narratives in chapter one is that in addition to their material power, *active powers* develop "'idea advocacy' or narratives about *how* to become a great power" (11, emphasis in original). 'Idea advocacy' in turn is understood as "the generation of new ideas and recombination of existing ideas by the elites in a rising power to form new narratives about the country's appropriate behavior as a great power-to-be" (11). Miller traces idea advocacy as a concept to scholarship on ideas and idea entrepreneurship in IR, as well as the debates on ideas versus interests.⁷ She aligns her understandings with scholarship assuming that the latter two cannot be separated,⁸ and that "ideas can change and can be affected not just by the political and economic conditions in which they operate, but even by the strategies and goals of the actors [...]. In fact, it is the very dynamic nature of ideas that can enable actors to conceptualize and reconceptualize the world" (12).

Miller also notes that she uses the terms ideas and beliefs interchangeably (11), thus adding another concept, while leaving both essentially undefined. Narratives, in turn seem to be understood as expression of the particular ideas/beliefs about how to become a great power by a country's elites: "idea advocacy (or the advocacy of beliefs) is a *marketplace of narratives* about great power behavior, rather than one single narrative about how to be a great power..." (14, emphasis in original). Both beliefs and narratives appear to be understood in an actor-centric way as something the elites within the *active powers*

⁴ Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, "Why Is There No Non-Western International Relations Theory? An Introduction," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 7:3 (2007): 287–312; John M. Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics: Western International Theory, 1760–2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁵ See, for example, Ronald R. Krebs, *Narrative and the Making of US National Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁶ *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 32:4 (2019), Special Issue on Narrative Power in International Relations.

⁷ Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Jeffrey T. Checkel, *Ideas and International Political Change: Soviet/Russian Behavior and the End of the Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Adam D. Sheingate, "Political Entrepreneurship, Institutional Change, and American Political Development," *Studies in American Political Development* 17:2 (2003): 185-203.

⁸ Miller here refers to Vivien Schmidt, "Reconciling Ideas and Interests through Discursive Institutionalism" in *Ideas and Politics in Social Science Research*, eds. Daniel Béland and Robert Henry Cox (New York: Oxford University Press), 54-58.

actively, rationally and at times strategically shape, mould and employ (for example, 13/14/15) as “a rising power manages its own rise through its beliefs about its changing status” (13). In other words, Miller’s book focuses on what previous scholarship has called the enabling effects of narratives, while neglecting the potentially constraining ones,⁹ even though the latter might cause challenges to the rising power (see below).

Emphasizing, and showing the existence of different and even contradictory ideas/narratives about how to become a great power in the empirical chapters is again one of the book’s strengths. Leaving such a supposedly central concept as narrative, but also other related ones, under-defined, however, muddies the waters in the opening chapter. It also leaves unclear the exact elite narratives in the empirical chapters, as Miller often seems to describe ongoing debates rather than particular stories that, according to basic common definitions of narratives, entail a sequence of events, characters, drama, plot, explanation etc. This does not make the empirics less interesting, but it is somewhat imprecise. Moreover, the questions Miller poses about narratives in the final chapter – why some narratives win out while others decline, but also, where they come from (153) – would seem rather difficult to answer without digging into previous research on and thorough conceptualizations of narratives.¹⁰

‘Stories about Stories’

The first chapter contains a section titled *Rising to Become a Great Power: Stories about Stories* (14-24) and explains that the book tells “a story about the stories these countries tell, or fail to tell, about themselves” (15). However, the book does not address the ‘bigger picture story’ told about rising powers, i.e. the question as to why they are perceived as threatening by ‘international society’ in the first place, or why the latter “feels the need to manage a rising power and assess its satisfaction/dissatisfaction” (13). Miller seems to be aware of this issue, as she writes that rising powers “are by definition in a precarious position [...] often seen as revisionist and potential threats” so that they have to “manage external and internal perceptions about them” (13). She also discusses the fact that rising India and rising China are perceived in different ways and explains this discrepancy by pointing to India’s active role as a moral force during the Cold War, but first and foremost with it being a democracy (123). In other words, this is not just about China and India.

As pointed out in previous research, ‘international society’s’ different perceptions of China and India are rooted as much in its own self-perceptions and understandings as they are in ‘facts’ about China and India themselves.¹¹ In this understanding, we as scholars and decision makers need to scrutinize both, the origins of and our own narratives about rising powers. Some introspection seems warranted, especially as the term ‘rising power’ in contemporary usage mostly refers to non-Western states, who are seen as potentially destabilizing or even overthrowing the so-called liberal international order (LIO). The latter in turn is most commonly (albeit inaccurately) understood as an exclusively Western creation and achievement.¹² As noted aptly by Ayşe Zarakol (2019) in her article ‘Rise of the Rest’: As Hype and Reality about Western narratives on ‘rising powers’:

⁹ Jelena Subotić, “Narrative, Ontological Security, and Foreign Policy Change,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 12:4 (2016): 610–627.

¹⁰ See, for example, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 32:4 (2019), Special Issue on Narrative Power in International Relations.

¹¹ Jarrod Hayes, *Constructing National Security: U.S. Relations with India and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Oliver Turner, “China, India and the US Rebalance to the Asia Pacific: The Geopolitics of Rising Identities.” *Geopolitics* 21:4 (2016): 922-944.

¹² Oliver Stuenkel, *Post-Western World: How Emerging Powers Are Remaking Global Order* (Cambridge, Malden: Polity, 2016); John M. Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

“An essential feature of the modern international order since its inception in the nineteenth century has been the hierarchy between ‘the West’ and ‘the non-West’, and one of the primary components of that hierarchy has been the luxury it has offered Western actors to imagine ‘the non-West’ in ways that suited ‘the West’, in ways not entirely detached from the ‘reality’ on the ground but not very much restrained by it either.”¹³

PTT has been broadly criticized for its historical inaccuracy/misuse of analogies, empirical invalidity, problematic case selection, potential for becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy, and, last but not least, its overall western centeredness.¹⁴ Miller does not engage with these criticisms. While she compellingly challenges PPT’s core materialist assumptions when it comes to conceptualizing and identifying rising powers, and also shows that ‘idea advocacy’ is not “the inevitable consequence of a country’s rising military and economic power” (15), the book does not problematize or at least point to the broader repercussions of the framework’s problematic features and its application as such. It seems that our fears about at least some rising powers get merely transferred into the future, as we apparently still need to worry about active powers turning activist (149). Miller writes that scholars and decision makers need to understand that China’s behavior today is part of a process that began in the 1990s, and that they thus missed ‘strategizing’ about how to ‘manage’ China as a rising power much earlier on. But it remains unclear, what the consequences of the major powers’ belated reaction to activist behavior are, in terms of how those powers should still try ‘to impact China’s narratives’ about, for example, the Belt and Road Initiative (150). The final pages about countries with great power narratives but without material capabilities do not really address these questions (but seem to open up yet different ones).

Who’s Afraid of ‘Activist Powers’?

Obviously, it is impossible to do everything and please everyone in one book. Similarly, the choices and presentation of concepts and frameworks also depend on the audience one is writing for. Since Miller’s book is not intended to question the more fundamental assumptions and applications of PTT in the first place, it might seem a bit misplaced to criticize it for not doing so. Given the theory’s dominance in academia and the popularity of the story it tells within policy making circles, however, it seems necessary to advocate taking the bigger picture into account. In this reading, PTT itself can be understood as part and parcel of deeply rooted, autobiographical narratives of a traditionally Western-dominated discipline. According to these narratives, the *activism* (commonly understood as revisionism) associated with rising powers is typically conceived not merely as disruption, but as disruption from the non-West amidst a fundamentally moral Western order that represents civilizational progress. In this context, narratives of rising powers as revisionist have long worked to construct and legitimize understandings of a (principally Western-led) global status quo and the universal advances it brings, in the face of challenges from global peripheries.¹⁵

Leaving the PTT narratives on rising powers as potential (future) troublemakers essentially unchallenged, even while substantially refining our understandings of its ‘ideational components’, risks a subtle but continuous promotion of divisions between the contemporary West and non-West, which may ultimately aggravate tensions and suspicions in the international realm. The hardening of U.S. policies towards China under President Trump, which have essentially been continued by his successor Joe Biden and now seem to centre around an ‘us democracies’ versus ‘them autocracies’ (e.g.

¹³ Ayşe Zarakol, “‘Rise of the Rest’: As Hype and Reality,” *International Relations* 33:2 (2019): 213-228.

¹⁴ Richard Ned Lebow and Benjamin Valentino, “Lost in Transition: A Critical Analysis of Power Transition Theory,” *International Relations* 23:3 (October 2009): 389-410; Renée Jeffery, “Evaluating the ‘China Threat’: Power Transition Theory, the Successor-State Image and the Dangers of Historical Analogies,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 63 (June 2009): 309-324; Chan, Hu, and He, “Discerning States’ Revisionist and Status-Quo Orientations,”; Peter Gries and Yiming Jing, “Are the US and China Fated to Fight? How Narratives of ‘Power Transition’ Shape Great Power War or Peace,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 32:4 (2019): 456-482; Oliver Turner and Nicola Nymalm, “Morality and Progress: IR Narratives on International Revisionism and the Status Quo,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 32:4 (2019): 407-428.

¹⁵ Turner and Nymalm.

White House 2021), are currently the most prominent example.¹⁶ *Why Nations Rise* examines historical and more recent cases of two Western and four non-Western rising powers. The cases of post-Cold War Japan and India, in particular, show that non-Western rising powers are not always necessarily activist, even though they were partly viewed with negative expectations and suspicion, especially in the case of post-Cold War Japan. However, the book does not explicitly use these insights to problematize the bigger picture of ‘international society’s’ suspicions, fears and the dichotomous narratives they rest on. Despite of the noted strengths of the book, this seems like a missed opportunity.

¹⁶ The White House, “Remarks by President Biden at the 2021 Virtual Munich Security Conference,” 19 February 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/02/19/remarks-by-president-biden-at-the-2021-virtual-munich-security-conference/>.

REVIEW BY MANJEET S. PARDESI, VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

While there is a large body of scholarship on “great powers” in the International Relations literature,¹ the concept of “rising powers” remains relatively under-theorized. Manjari Chatterjee Miller works to correct this deficit in the literature and provides us with a novel way of approaching rising and great powers. She argues that “rising to become a great power is a *process*” (11, emphasis original), and that there are different types of rising powers. She explains this process by a threefold category: *reticent* powers, *active* powers, and *activist* powers.

An *active* power is one that has not only acquired requisite material capabilities (economic and military power), but it also shapes the global environment by contributing to the extant great power norms. It is therefore, an “accommodationist” power and is “a great power-to-be” (10). An active power may eventually become revisionist or *activist* while a rising power “is *not* revisionist (at least initially)” (9-10, *emphasis original*). By contrast, *reticent* rising powers acquire the material capabilities to play larger roles “but they do not globalize their authority or try to shape recognition of the material change in their status” (15). In other words, reticent powers lack narratives about great power, and Miller’s goal is to explain why some powers “tell, or fail to tell,” stories “about themselves” (15).

This is a succinctly written and clearly argued book. Miller analyzes the behavior of three *active* rising powers (the United States in the nineteenth century, Meiji Japan, and post-Cold War China) and three *reticent* powers (the Netherlands in the nineteenth century-----, Cold War Japan, and post-Cold War India) to show that the *active* powers engage(d) in idea advocacy while the *reticent* powers lack(ed) narratives about themselves. While Miller provides us with detailed case studies, she concludes by noting that her book “is not intended to be a crystal ball and definitively predict that if countries do not develop narratives about becoming a great power they will certainly not become great powers, and that if they do, they will” (153).

Consequently, I read her threefold categories as a heuristic to understand the pathways of rising powers instead of thinking in terms of a trajectory from reticent to active and activist rising powers *en route* to full-fledged great power status. Miller’s excellent book raises three questions for me.

The first one involves the relationship between material power and narratives. Miller argues that India remains a reticent rising power despite its impressive material rise because of the absence of idea advocacy or a narrative about India as a great power. But has India risen in a material sense? This question is not easy to answer. In terms of its absolute power, it is true that India has risen in a material sense since the end of the Cold War. At the beginning of the post-Cold War period in 1991, India’s GDP stood at \$270.1 billion, whereas it had risen by almost ten times to \$2.62 trillion by 2020.² Similarly, India’s defense expenditure in 2020 (\$72.9 billion) was more than eight times the country’s defense spending in 1991 (\$8.62 billion).³

But should material power – in international politics – be understood in an absolute or a relative sense? According to Gilpin, “the distribution of capabilities and the ways in which this distribution of capabilities changes over time are perhaps

¹ For example, see Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989); and John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2014).

² The figures for GDP are from the World Development Indicators database of the World Bank (<https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>), accessed: 5 September 2021.

³ The figures for military expenditure are from the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database (<https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>), accessed: 5 September 2021.

the most significant factors underlying the process of international political change.”⁴ One wonders how, then, India’s absolute rise compare with China’s over time? China’s GDP rose from \$383.4 billion in 1991 to \$14.72 trillion in 2020. In other words, China’s economy was roughly as large as India’s at the end of the Cold War but is currently almost six times larger than India’s. The story is similar when it comes to defense expenditures. China’s defense spending increased from \$9.8 billion in 1991 to \$252.3 billion.⁵ While China and India’s defense expenditures were more or less equal at the end of the Cold War, China now outspends India by a factor of four.

In other words, India has declined relative to China over the past three decades, a period when India was rising in an absolute sense. Given that China is India’s principal rival as well as the leading rising power – and one that is *actively* rising according to Miller – does the absence of an Indian narrative on great power have to do with the perception of relative pusillanimity vis-à-vis China?⁶

I am not arguing that narratives do not matter. Miller is absolutely correct that narratives are important. I am simply questioning where narratives of great power come from.⁷ Miller tells us that the narratives of the rising – *active* – United States in the late nineteenth-century “focused attention” among other things on “its relationship with the superpower of the day, Great Britain” (47). Britain was also America’s principal rival at this time,⁸ and the United States had not only taken over from Britain as the world’s largest economy by then, but it had also bested Britain for regional influence in the Americas as demonstrated during the 1895 Venezuelan crisis.

In other words, America’s narrative of great power came from a self-perception of relative strength (not weakness). And as Miller tells us, “internal perceptions matter because rising powers need to satisfy domestic audiences” (13). While narratives of great power do matter (as argued by Miller), and may even have an independent causal role in international politics, their origins may be linked to self-perceptions of power (especially vis-à-vis the most important rival), and this factor thus deserves further attention.

Second, Miller tells us that India’s reticence is demonstrated by India’s suspicious attitude towards multilateralism. This is important because multilateralism is central to the idea of great power in the post-Cold War period in Miller’s book (just as having colonies was central to the idea of great power in the nineteenth century according to her argument). India is reticent because despite its material rise, India has not tried “to control, direct, and impact the process of globalization, particularly through multilateralism and international institutions” (126).

However, as argued by Amrita Narlikar, India’s “rise” in the World Trade Organization (WTO) “is a product of [its] negotiating behaviour learnt by engaging with the institution,” and that India has managed to acquire influence in the

⁴ Robert Gilpin, *War & Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 86.

⁵ The figures for GDP are from the World Development Indicators of the World Bank, while the figures for military expenditure are from SIPRI. See footnotes 2 and 3 above.

⁶ On the Sino-Indian rivalry, see Manjeet S. Pardesi, “Explaining the Asymmetry in the Sino-Indian Strategic Rivalry,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 75:3 (2021): 341-365.

⁷ Miller is clearly aware of this issue of where narratives come from but only briefly discusses them in her concluding chapter.

⁸ In fact, the Anglo-American rivalry was terminated around this time as well. William R. Thompson, “The Evolution of a Great Power Rivalry: The Anglo-American Case,” in William R. Thompson, ed., *Great Power Rivalries* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999): 201-221.

organization.⁹ In other words, India's rise has in fact begun to impact the process of globalization via multilateralism. Nevertheless, the distance between Miller and Narlikar's positions may in fact be bridgeable. After all, as Narlikar notes: "India now finds itself in a position where it has credibly established itself as a major player in the WTO; even the most powerful members of the organization recognize that, without India on board, no agreement will be possible."¹⁰ Narlikar further tells us that even as India now has the power to say "no," India has not yet acquired the power to achieve its preferred outcomes in the WTO.

In Miller's terminology, India is *actively* being *reticent* at the WTO. Whatever the actual reasons behind India's *active reticence* at the WTO, the larger point is that India matters (at least in some multilateral institutions). In terms of Miller's theory, while *reticence*, *active* behavior, and *activist* behavior may be parts of a rising power's *process* to manage its rise, we cannot assume a sequential behavior here. To again go back to the example of late nineteenth-century America, even as the United States was engaging in "accommodationist" behavior vis-à-vis Britain by emerging as a colonial power in its own right (Miller argues that colonialism was central to the idea of a great power at that time), the United States was also being *activist* (as in revisionist) simultaneously. As Marc-William Palen has demonstrated, "the US sought to establish a rival regional imperial trade bloc [in the Americas] through imperialism of economic nationalism, in contrast to Britain's imperialism of free trade" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹¹

As such, the categories of *reticence*, *active*, and *activist* behaviors morph into each other in practice. Rising powers may in fact show different degrees of accommodation (or different degrees of rejection/revision) in different issue areas. After all, the *reticent* India also engaged in *active/activist* behavior by defying the global nuclear norms in 1998, claiming that it had adhered to these principles while openly going nuclear.

Third, in addition to different degrees of *reticence*, *active* behavior, and *activism* along different issue areas, do rising powers also exhibit different degrees of accommodation in different world regions and at the global level? Miller focuses on great power narratives that rising powers have of themselves. While this is a noteworthy contribution, we need to understand such narratives relationally. After all, in the words of Barry Buzan, "what others say about an actor is more important than what it says about itself" when it comes to potential great power candidates.¹²

In the case of India, Miller tells us that the United States – the current superpower – has been "eager to welcome it [India] as a partner" (125). However, Xiaoyu Pu has argued that the other rising superpower, China, "has reservations regarding India's Great Power status," even as "the Chinese embrace enthusiastically India's signals of developing country status."¹³ In 2007, Singapore's Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew argued that "India can project its power across its borders farther and

⁹ Amrita Narlikar, "India and the World Trade Organization," in Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, and Tim Dunne, eds., *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases* 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 373.

¹⁰ Narlikar, "India and the World Trade Organization," 374.

¹¹ Marc-William Palen, "Empire by Invitation? US Economic Imperialism within a British World System," in Martin Thomas and Andrew S. Thompson, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198713197.013.12>.

¹² Barry Buzan, *The United States and the Great Powers: World Politics in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), 67.

¹³ Xiaoyu Pu, "Ambivalent Accommodation: Status Signalling of a Rising India and China's Response," *International Affairs* 93:1 (2017): 154.

better than China can, yet there is no fear that India has aggressive intentions,” because India was rising peacefully.¹⁴ On the other hand, Pakistan, India’s subcontinental rival, is clearly perturbed by India’s rise.¹⁵

What do the different narratives of these other powers – a superpower (the United States), an *actively* rising power (China), a regional power in India’s home region (Pakistan), and a regional power beyond India’s home region (Singapore) – tell us about India’s rise and its ability to actively shape the international environment, both at the global level and in different world regions? While further research is warranted, it is possible that rising powers will not show the same degree of *reticence*, *active* behavior, or *activism* in all world regions (or in all issue areas as noted above) as the power of these other narratives will differentially enable or constrain them.

Miller has clearly written a very thought-provoking and engaging book while widening our theoretical agenda. Her work will contribute positively to scholarly debates as well as classroom discussions on rising and great powers.

¹⁴ Lee Kuan Yew, “India’s Peaceful Rise,” *Forbes* 7 December 2007, <https://www.forbes.com/forbes/2007/1224/033.html?sh=20ad2bef3f34> (accessed: 5 September 2021).

¹⁵ Nasreen Akhtar and Inamullah Jan, “The Rise of India and Pakistan’s Perspective,” *Asian Survey* 59:6 (2019): 1094-1115.

RESPONSE BY MANJARI CHATTERJEE MILLER, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN
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What are rising powers? Why do some countries become rising powers while others, despite material power and opportunity, fail to do so? In *Why Nations Rise*, I argue that to answer these questions we need to think about rising powers as not simply a monolithic category of actors but as one within which there is variation. There are different kinds of rising powers. Some rising powers behave as we expect – that is, these countries rise to become great powers – and are *active* rising powers. But others do not – they remain *reticent*. Why is this the case? *Why Nations Rise* finds that rising is a process, and that this process involves not just material power but also ideas expressed as narratives about how to become a great power. Once we understand rising as a process, we see that some countries acquire both material power *and* narratives about becoming a great power. These active powers begin behaving as future great powers. Other countries may acquire material power or have opportunities to do so but may not possess such narratives – these countries are stymied in their rise. Interestingly, active powers are initially not what International Relations (IR) theorists call ‘revisionist’ – they are ‘accommodational’ because they accommodate the current norms of great power in the era in which they are rising in order to gain recognition as a great power to be. Reticent powers, on the other hand, can be revisionist or even indifferent to such norms. *Why Nations Rise* looks at cases across time, culture, and regime type to find cases of active and reticent powers – it finds that the late nineteenth-century United States, Meiji Japan, and 1990s China were active powers; on the other hand, the late-nineteenth century Netherlands, Cold War Japan, and 1990s India were reticent powers.

Thank you to Andrew Szarejko for convening this Roundtable. I am both honored and grateful that Todd Hall, Michelle Murray, Nicola Nymalm, and Manjeet Pardesi took time to read and review this book, especially in the middle of a raging pandemic. I very much appreciate their many kind words, as well as the interesting questions they raise. I also want to thank Bill Wohlforth for writing the introduction, and Diane Labrosse for her careful edits. I hope that the reviewers’ insights and my response will provoke more research on rising powers – a subject that is much talked about but surprisingly little-studied in the IR literature.

Hall raises an important question that I touch on in the conclusion of *Why Nations Rise*. It is this – if active powers develop narratives about becoming a great power, where do these narratives come from? Hall asks why it is that some countries acquire narratives about becoming a great power while others do not. He suggests that the answer could range from psychological factors to international socialization to the shape of the domestic political landscape. Murray asks a different variation on this question – she wonders if it is actually external conditions that give rise to these narratives. She suggests that narratives of becoming a great power may need to be legitimated in the public sphere, and perhaps it is the great powers’ perceptions of and willingness to recognize these narratives that determine the trajectory of a power transition. Pardesi, on the other hand, suggests that perhaps narratives come from the internal self-perceptions of the rising powers themselves. He wonders if the nineteenth-century United States had narratives of becoming a great power because it had a self-perception of relative strength vis-à-vis Great Britain.

The varying answers given by these three scholars to the question of where narratives come from demonstrate the complexity of tracing narratives because they speak to two interrelated concepts. The first is why narratives arise at all, and the second is why some narratives succeed. For the first, we can look to the classic literature on ideas and idea entrepreneurship that suggests that agents, ideas, and institutions interact to produce discourse and ultimately policy. For the second, we can look at the literature on framing as well as domestic political mobilization. The first body of work tells us that discourse or the “exchange of ideas” is fostered by entrepreneurial agents who are either attempting to reform entrenched interests or trying to provide the public with information.⁵¹ As to why entrepreneurial agents and discourse are

⁵¹ Vivien Schmidt, “Putting the Political Back into Political Economy by Bringing the State Back in Yet Again,” *World Politics* 61:3 (2009): 516-546.

produced, some look to domestic factors such as the structure of government,⁵² while others look to external factors such as exogenous shocks.⁵³ The second body of work tells us that different ideas are selected by framers during different stages of the policy process for different purposes. Daniel Béland, for example, talks of four stages of the policy cycle: 1) The agenda-setting stage when framers who can be part of an epistemic community define issue areas and advocate for or against them. 2) The policy-formulation stage when many actors, from academics and consultants to think tanks and organizations, articulate competing narratives. 3) The decision-making stage when government officials compete to enact more concrete ideas. 4) The implementation stage when bureaucrats can shape and reshape ideas as they implement them.⁵⁴ In each of these stages choices by different agents result in the ascendance of some narratives and the demise of others.

These two literatures suggest that to deconstruct why some countries develop these narratives, and others do not, the narratives themselves would need to be studied as the dependent variable. This would certainly provide a fertile area of research, since the work thus far that has looked at narratives in the context of rising powers (either explicitly or implicitly), including *Why Nations Rise*, has done so with an eye to studying their role in behavior – rising powers use “legitimation” rhetoric to shape how great powers see them,⁵⁵ great powers socially construct perceptions of rising powers’ legitimacy or illegitimacy,⁵⁶ and rising powers engage in contestations for recognition by outlining normative agendas.⁵⁷ But Japan, particularly as discussed in *Why Nations Rise*, could prove a useful test case to empirically understand where narratives come from – *Why Nations Rise* shows that while Meiji Japan had narratives of great power, Cold War Japan did not, and that this difference led to active behavior in the former, and reticent behavior in the latter. Why did narratives about becoming a great power arise in Meiji Japan but not in Cold War Japan? It would be difficult to argue that self-perceptions of strength, as Paredesi suggests, made a difference – Meiji Japan’s narratives were about *acquiring* strength vis-à-vis the Western powers precisely because its forced opening and subjection to humiliating treaties had shown Japan its weaknesses; Cold War Japan had narratives of economic strength, visions of itself as a “trading state” (24) but balked at any idea of conversion of that strength into active diplomacy or enhancement of security. Murray’s suggestion that the willingness of great powers to recognize or not these narratives leads to legitimation and determines the trajectory of rising would also be difficult to show in Japan’s case. In the Cold War era, the United States was deeply frustrated at Japan’s reticence to either become a participatory ally in East Asia or to step up to the plate as a full-fledged US ally. As the American ambassador to Tokyo, U. Alexis Johnson put it in 1966, Japan took “benefits” from the United States while shunning “responsibility” (91). But US frustration did not fundamentally transform Japanese narratives. Perhaps the difference between Japanese narratives in the two time periods lies in the change in government structures or policy processes outlined in the theoretical literatures on narratives that are described above.

⁵² Jeffrey Checkel, *Ideas and International Political Change: Soviet/Russian Behavior and the End of the Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

⁵³ Mark Blyth, *Great Transformations: Economic Ideas and Institutional Change in the 20th Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁵⁴ Daniel Béland, “Ideas and Institutions and Social Policy Research,” *Social Policy and Administration* 50:6 (2016): 734-750, here 738-740.

⁵⁵ Stacie Goddard, *When Right Makes Might: Rising Powers and World Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

⁵⁶ Michelle Murray, *The Struggle for Recognition in International Relations: Status, Revisionism and Rising Powers* (New York: Oxford University Press 2018).

⁵⁷ Emilian Kavalski, “The Struggle for Recognition of Normative Powers: Normative Power Europe and Normative Power China in Context,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 48:2 (2013): 247-267.

Nymalm raises a fascinating angle and question. In sharp contrast to Murray's point about the need to account for great power perceptions in determining the trajectory of a rising power, she suggests that the concept of rising powers itself has been problematically subverted by the Western great powers, and those who write about them. She states that while *Why Nations Rise* "compellingly challenges power transition theory's core materialist assumptions when it comes to conceptualizing and identifying rising powers" it needs to be taken to task for not challenging power transition theorists more. That is, since most power transition theorists who write about Western great powers are from the West, why not challenge their very assumption that rising powers are revisionist, and that there is a need to manage them at all? She argues that rising powers in their contemporary usage refers to non-Western powers who are "over-throwing the so-called liberal international order...commonly (albeit inaccurately) understood as an exclusively Western creation and achievement," leading therefore to rhetoric that suggests that rising powers are a problem. To this point, I have little defense, and I applaud her for bringing up a rare perspective.

Andrew Hurrell made a similar point in his writing about the Global South where he suggested that Western liberal accounts centered and understood emerging economies as "joining" the Western-established world.⁵⁸ To give power transition theory its due, however, we must recall that it gives IR a foundation to understand war and peace that cuts across variation in time, culture, and regime type. Challenging a Western-centric construct of rising powers suggests also that there is an oppositional monolithic view. But what would that be? Clumping variation across the globe into the category of a non-Western view risks a similarly reductive construction. Further parsing those into Chinese, Indian, South African, and Brazilian views of rising powers would seem to lose utility of theory.

In sum, the questions and points raised by the reviewers are thoughtful, interesting, and raise fruitful directions for further research. And ultimately that was my goal in writing this book – to generate discussions about rising powers, their self-perceptions, and their trajectories.

⁵⁸ Andrew Hurrell, "Narratives of Emergence: Rising Powers and the End of the Third World?," *Brazilian Journal of Political Economy* 33:2 (June 2013): 208.