

REVIEW ARTICLE

# Twenty-First Century Global Hegemons: Some Empirical Estimates

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## Abstract

Against the backdrop of a robust great-power rivalry between an economically rising communist China and a democratic United States (U.S) and drawing on the International Relations literature, this paper develops a multifaceted concept of a ‘hegemon’, provides five different empirical measures of hegemony for 16 countries spread around the world, which together account for approximately three-fourth of global GDP. Except for democratic rule, China closely follows the U.S. in most other measures of a global hegemon, while India’s rank ranges between 8 and 11 depending on the measure of hegemon chosen. Based on these empirical measures of hegemons and considering the emerging global trends, the key conclusion of the paper is that China may not become a democratic country anytime soon, but the democratic countries could and should become more democratic by closing their democracy deficits. That, in turn, could help the world to better manage a rising communist China and at the same promoting a democratic world order in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Keywords:** Democracy Deficit, Economic Size, Great-Power-Rivalry, Hegemon, Military Power, Twenty-First Century, World Order.

## 1. Introduction

The word hegemony originated from the Greek word ‘hegemonia’, which basically means leadership and rule. In international relations, hegemony refers to the ability of an actor with capabilities to shape the international system through both coercive and non-coercive ways. Thus, the three main components of a hegemon in the international relations literature are power, dominance, and leadership (Yimlas, 2010, December).

The U.S President Biden was reported to have remarked that China would not surpass the U.S. as a global leader on his watch. He defined the fundamental conflict of our time as the struggle between democracy and authoritarianism, and underlined his determination

that democracies will prevail (Reuters 2023, August 10). Meanwhile, the China’s President, Xi Jinping, has been pushing the idea that commensurate with the growing size of China’s economy, the country should be considered on par with a global great powers or a hegemon in the emerging world order. He now tries to provide the cultural and ethical soul for his concept of the ‘Chinese Dream’ and a ‘rejuvenation of the Chinese nation’ (Stein 2022, September, p.1615).

The U.S President Biden defined the fundamental conflict of our time as the struggle between democracy and authoritarianism, and underlined his determination that democracies will prevail; he was also reported to have remarked that China would not surpass the U.S. as a global leader on his watch (Reuters 2023, August 10). Indeed, at the 2021 Democracy Summit,

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President Biden also emphasized that democracy doesn't happen by accident and thus we need to defend it, fight for it, and strengthen it, renew it (<https://www.state.gov/summit-for-democracy-2021/>).

“China’s President Xi Jinping now tries to use both Maoism and Confucianism to provide the cultural and ethical soul for his concept of the ‘Chinese Dream’ and his attempt to achieve a ‘rejuvenation of the Chinese nation’ (Stein, p.1615). Indeed, China trumpets that its state-controlled development model has a distinct advantage of not being a democracy; the model’s wider success in fostering strong economic growth in the past few decades is then used to argue that there is no link between economic growth and political liberalism (Ibrahim 2022). Moreover, President Xi has expanded the draconian restrictions on the use of iPhones in governments at both the central and local levels, including prefectures, cities, and State-owned companies (Nikkei Asia 2023, September 8)

“There is no historical parallel to the current dynamics between China and the United States” (Hass, 2023, June 28). On the one hand, the world is witnessing rising tensions between these nuclear-armed, heavily militarized powers who share deep economic, environmental, and social interdependencies. On the other, the two countries share diametrically opposite ideological views of the world.

Against this backdrop of these contrasting perceptions of hegemony and the emerging global scenario, this paper first briefly discusses multidimensional concept of hegemony or hegemonies (Section 2), then presents five empirical measures of global hegemonies for 16 countries, mostly using data for 2021 (Section 3), takes a near term look at how the existing rankings between the U.S and China are likely to evolve (Section 4), and finally presents the key conclusions of the paper (Section 5).

## 2. Hegemon: A Multidimensional Concept

Who is a hegemon? Put simply, a hegemon is someone who is an unequal among equals, who takes the lead in maintaining a stable world order. The phrase ‘world order’ implies a degree of predictability, or patterned regularity, in inter-state relations (Patrick 2023, September 12). It is also possible to think of who are ‘more or less equals among equals’ – some rough and ready measures of ‘relative hegemonality’.

From the Chinese perspective, it has posted unprecedented economic growth in the past 40 years. That has enabled the country to become the

second largest economy in the world, ahead of Japan, Germany and other European countries. “Farm reform, industrialization, and rising incomes lifted nearly 800 million people out of extreme poverty. Having produced just a tenth as much as America in 1980, China’s economy is now about three-quarters the size of the American economy (The Economist 2023, 21 August ). Although the remarkable growth feat of the Chinese economy has taken the country closer to be a global hegemon, it is not yet there.

A successful hegemon represents a persuasive model of a way of life that “others want to adopt, share, and participate in” (Leino 2021, October). Therefore, material power may be a necessary condition for compliance from other nations, but is not a sufficient condition to be a global hegemon. However, so far few other nations have been eager to accept the global leadership of a country run by a communist party (Ness 2016). However, “in order to gain hegemony, a state further needs intellectual and moral leadership” (Acharya, 2022, 21 June). Therefore, the concept of hegemony brings coercion and consent together (Demir, 2023, p.10).

Similar perspectives are put forth by other experts too “...hegemony entails ‘cooperation ensured by force’, combining social and political supervision, force and consent” (Yimlas, 2020, p 194). “It was not until after the Cold War, perhaps, and the collapse of the Soviet Union that hegemony began to feature in central debates within international affairs. In light of the reality that the USA emerged as the only remaining superpower in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse, conservative readings within IR began to look at the concept seriously” (Worth, 2015, p. 8). “...hegemonic orders depend on a legitimating ideology that must be consistent with the distribution of identity at the level of both elites and masses. We map the distribution of identity across nine great powers and assess how this distribution supports the current Western neoliberal democratic hegemony. We conclude that China is unlikely to become the hegemon in the near term” (Allan, Bentley B. & Vucetic, Srdjan & Hopf, Ted 2018).

Moreover, “In the 21st century, the conditions of being a global or regional power have changed and strategic and political factors such as controlling global money circulation, determining the international agenda, deployment of military power in key regions, and being the center of attraction have become absolutely necessary (Yimlas 2010, December, p.192). It thus

becomes clear that hegemony is a multidimensional phenomenon.

The alternative to a hegemon is a ‘balance of power system’ – a ‘shared hegemonic system’, something similar to what was formed in Europe in 1815 as the ‘Concert of Europe’ among Britain, France, Russia, Prussia, and Austria’ – that helped to preserve global peace for about half a century in the absence of dominant power and amid ideological diversity (Hass and Kupchan 2021, March 23).

### 3. Empirical Measures of Hegemons

Based on the broad premise that hegemony is a multidimensional concept, this Section provides a few empirical estimates of hegemony for 16 countries. The choice of these countries was not based on any methods of random choice of countries around the world. Neither was it done completely arbitrarily. The 16 countries were chosen to represent countries in North America, South America and Asia and account for about three-fourths of the global GDP. Based on data for mostly 2021, five measures of hegemony are presented in the Table, all normalized by setting the index value to 100 for the United States.

The first measure of hegemon incorporates six components: human development index: human development index (developed by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), a measure of military power, innovation, environment friendliness, and passport ranking, and the democracy index. The rationale behind the inclusion of first and two components of the hegemon index are fairly obvious – to represent the economic-cum-health-cum-education status of the country and the military capability of the country concerned.

The other four components of the index refers mostly to the soft power of a country that it can exercise through its innovation capabilities, environmental friendliness, while the last component represents how democratic a country is. The fifth component – passport index captures the ease with a country’s people can travel in and out of the other countries. The last, perhaps the most important component – an index of democracy reflects a country’s political system and its quality.

The second hegemon index contains all the components of index 1 but excluding the degree of democracy. It helps to measure the difference between democratic and authoritarian regimes. The third and the fourth measures of hegemony are the narrowest

-- one representing a country’s economic size relative to that of the U.S. and the other reflecting only the military capabilities relative to that of the U.S.

Key assessments that could culled out from the Table seem to be:

- (i) Except for the democracy measure, the United States emerges as the most powerful and global hegemon up until the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- (ii) China comes out as the second global hegemon. That said, China’s overall position relative to that of the United States varies quite a bit depending on the hegemon index one uses. As per the first index that includes quite a few hard as well as soft components, China’s figure is about one-half of that of the U.S. That figure rises up to about 60, once democracy is dropped out of the hegemon computation.
- (iii) Going by the single-variable measures, or the hard components of the hegemon, China’s figure catches up with that of the United States’. For example, if one goes by only the economic size of the economies, China’s GDP at current prices accounts for about three-fourth of the GDP of United States.
- (iv) The gap between the United States and China closes up hugely if one considers the third and the fourth measures of hegemon – economic size and military power. The military power of China as well as Russia is only a shade below that of the U.S. These three countries are now neck-to neck on this important hard measure of hegemony.

The ability to open or close a country’s domestic market to international trade and capital flows without causing unbearable hardship on its people is a reasonable measure of a country’s power on international affairs (Madhur, 2012). The more a country depends on export markets for its growth, the lower will be that bargaining power. Not surprisingly thus, U.S remains on top of four of the five measures of the hegemony list.

Except for military power, Japan, Germany, UK, and France’s ranking out of the 16 countries falls in the narrow range of 3 to 6, followed by Italy. India’s rankings vary widely depending upon the hegemony index chosen. In terms of military power, India ranks 4 out of the countries, just behind the U.S, Russia, and China. In economic size, India ranks 5, behind the U.S. China, Japan, and Germany. Once the softer aspects of a hegemon are included, India ranks 7 out

of the 16 countries behind, the U.S, China, Japan, Germany, France, and Italy.

Purely in terms of democracy, however, China hits the bottom of the table, while Japan, most European countries in the sample, and U.S moves up the top positions. No wonder, "... the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is more authoritarian and less open than it has been at any point since Mao Zedong was in charge. People close to power are more fearful, and access to information is less widespread, even within the higher echelons of the regime (West 2023, June 13).

In a collection of papers on India in a recent issue of Project Syndicate, experts held hugely diverging views on the country becoming a major power on the global scene (Project Syndicate 2023, September 8). At the cost of suppressing details, the key message emerging

from those papers is: while India’s technological prowess is to be reckoned with, especially with the landing of a lunar rover on the Moon’s south pole in 2023, the country’s democracy has perhaps taken a beating with the government’s intensification of pressures on the ‘independence of academics, media, and the judiciary.. Similar views were expressed earlier by another expert too (Ganguly, 2019, January).

Moreover, India needs to respect the independence of its neighboring states and work with them to achieve its global aspirations (Singh 2023, April). As Prime Minister Modi was quoted as saying recently: “If the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is to be the Asian century, it cannot be without greater integration among the countries of South Asia and Indian Ocean” (Madhur 2023, April). There is huge merit in putting his mindset into action.

**Table1.** Selected Global Hegemons: Indexed to 100 for the U.S

Countries	With Democracy (HG1)	Without Democracy (HG2)	By Economic Size Only (HG3)	By Military Power Only (HG4)	By Democracy Index only HG5
U.S.A	100.00 (1)	100.00(1)	100.00 (1)	100.00 (1)	100.00 (9)
China	50.10 (2)	59.74 (2)	76.14 (2)	98.60 (3)	28.16 (16)
Japan	19.50 (3)	14.47 (4)	21.20 (3)	41.60 (6)	103.83 (5)
Germany	16.62 (4)	16.10 (3)	18.30(4)	18.30 (10)	110.45 (3)
U.K	13.61(5)	13.48 (5)	13.40 (6)	50.00 (5)	103.12 (6)
France	11.74 (6)	10.63 (6)	12.70 (7)	38.50(9)	101.79 (7)
Italy	7.94 (7)	7.75 (7)	9.10 (9)	36.10 (8)	97.84 (10)
India	7.91 (8)	7.08 (8)	13.70 (5)	69.5(4)	88.03 (11)
Canada	7.31 (9)	6.84 (9)	8.56 (10)	18.0 (16)	113.00 (2)
S. Korea	6.96 (10)	6.77 (10)	7.70 (11)	47.30 (8)	103.96 (4)
Australia	5.99 (11)	4.93 (13)	6.69 (13)	27.70 (11)	113.39 (1)
Spain	5.25 (12)	5.03 (12)	6.23 (14)	20.10 (15)	101.15 (8)
Russia	5.12 (13)	5.70 (11)	7.60 (12)	99.60 (2)	41.28 (15)
Brazil	5.00 (14)	4.81(14)	6.91(8)	33.10 (10)	87.40 (12)
Indonesia	2.86 (15)	2.56 (15)	5.10 (15)	32.10 (14)	85.49 (13)
Turkey	2.06 (16)	2.05 (16)	3.50 (16)	35.40 (9)	55.42 (14)

Notes on the Table: The first index (HG1) is made up of 6 indexes (Human Development); Military Power; Innovation; Environmental; Passport index; and democracy); The second index (HG2) removes democracy from its computation. The third index (HG3 ) is just relative sizes of the economies and the fourth index (HG4) is about the relative measures of the military power of the countries. The fifth index is just representing 2021democracy indexes of countries but normalized to 100 for the U.S. By itself, the democracy index consists of 4 sub-indexes on electoral process, functioning of government, political

participation, and civil liberties . The first two indexes, being composite indexes have been weighted by the ratio of each country’s 2021 dollar income at current prices and most indicators too refer to 2020/2021. The indexes use dollar income at current prices as weights, not dollar income at purchasing power parity, as the former is a better indicator for comparing a country’s importance in the global economy, while the latter is a better indicator for representing a country’s domestic standard of living (Brookings Institution (2022, February 16).



## 4. Looking Ahead

### 4.1 China's Perspectives

Given the hegemonic ranking of the 16 countries, a key question would be one of futuristic – how would the great power rivalry evolve in the years to come. In a September 2022 paper, Stein builds a matrix of nine possible scenarios of the relationship between China and the United States over the next 20 years. In only one out of these nine scenarios China becomes the undisputed hegemon; in three, the United States retains its leading role. In four other scenarios the relationship between the two powers is one of ‘Coopetition’ -- competition in certain areas but collaboration in other areas (Stein 2022, p 1619).

Other experts reach similar conclusions: “...hegemonic orders depend on a legitimating ideology that must be consistent with the distribution of identity at the level of both elites and masses (Allan, et. al 2018, p.839). After a careful examination of the identity across nine great powers, Allan et. al. conclude that “China is unlikely to become the hegemon in the near term”(Allan et.al 2018, p.839).

More recently, there is an assessment of “peak China” that argues that the country’s economic trajectory has already or will soon reach its apex and may never significantly overtake that of the United States in the foreseeable future (Branstetter, et.al 2022, December; Johnson 2023, August 23; The Economist 2023, 24 August; Pesek 2023, September 6; Gross, Daniel 2023, September 11). As an expert put it: “It is difficult to miss the signs of a national stasis, or what people call *neijuan*. Often translates as ‘involution’ it refers to life twisting inward without real progress. The government has created its own universe of mobile phone apps and software, an impressive feat but one that is aimed at insulating Chinese people from the outside world rather than connecting them to it” (Johnson, 2023, 22 August).

There is also the view that China needs to rejuvenate its political system since the country under President Xi has now fallen into the trap that is familiar among autocratic regimes. : “They tend to start out on a ‘no politics, no problem’ compact that promises business as usual for those who keep their heads down. But by their second or, more commonly, third term in office, rulers increasingly disregard commercial concerns and pursue interventionist policies whenever it suits their short-term goals. Over time, the threat of state control in day-to-day commerce extends wider swaths

of the population” (Posen 2023, August 2).

Apparently, China’s domestic political unity does not seem to be as good as President Xi portrays. Recent media reports have revealed that, President Xi Jinping has come under sharp criticism from retired party elders during a secret meeting preceding the upcoming G20 summit in India.

“The core message delivered by the party elders was a stark warning. They emphasized that if the ongoing political, economic, and social turmoil persists without effective countermeasures, it could erode public support for the Communist Party, posing a threat to its rule” (Singh 2023, September 6).

It is true that China’s with its \$17 trillion economy has explicit and implicit alliances with Russia, North Korea, and Iran. Other nations such as Brazil, Nigeria, Cambodia, Pakistan, and South Africa are not yet in China’s Orbit (Brown, et. al. 2023, August 28). It is also important to note that China itself is surrounded by independent nations that see themselves as equally sovereign, despite their relative economic and military inferiority to China. In particular, India and Japan are likely to contest a modern-day Chinese claim to hegemon. The successful completion of the 2023 G20 Summit in India, despite the absence of China is an appropriate example. Not only did the G20 Summit find a consensus on Russia’s war on Ukraine but also elevated the African Union as a full G20 member (Pulipaka 2023, September 12).

A newly-signed Australia-Philippines Pact that takes hard new aim at China is another pointer to how China’s hegemony is contested by its neighbors (Heydarian 2023, September 6). Overwhelming material power may thus be sufficient to force temporary compliance from others, but hegemony requires something more: a moral beacon that attracts the support of others, not just compels them to comply (Ness 2016). As Jeffrey Sachs aptly put it: “Although Chinese leaders do not trust the United States or Europe, especially since China’s suffering at the hands of outside imperial powers during the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *there may be little persuasive evidence that China wants to replace the United States as hegemon or could do even if it so desired* (Sachs 2023, June 30)

In a similar vein, after careful examination of identity across nine great powers, Allan et. al conclude that China is unlikely to become the hegemon in the near future, because “... hegemonic orders depend on a legitimating ideology that must be consistent with

the distribution at the level of both elites and masses” (Allan et. al. 2018).. Ironically, “an essential element in China’s search for its alleged ‘hegemony’ is its attention to the present alleged ‘hegemon (according to Beijing), the US. Then perhaps the troubling issue is how to become a hegemon like America without all the tricky and unfathomable American trapping (democracy, the rule of law, independent judiciary, free press, etc.) that contrast with one-party rule” (Sisci, 2023, September 11).

That said, in terms of technology, China is moving up the production network from being an imitator to an innovator. In late August 2023, Huawei launched a fully domestic-made smartphone that can tap into a 5g networks. It is exactly this type of technology that the U.S has been trying to stop Chinese companies from getting their hands on (The Economist, 2023, September 14 ). Moreover, in 2023, China ranked first in terms of research articles published in the Nature index of high-quality natural-science journals, overtaking the U.S. (Walsh 2023, September 18)

#### 4.2 U.S Perspectives

Perhaps recognizing China’s technological prowess, President Biden signed an Executive Order in August 2023 imposing severe restrictions on U.S investments in China, Hong Kong, and Macau in sectors deemed to be critical to U.S. national security: advanced computing chips and microelectronics, quantum technology, and artificial intelligence. U.S. officials call this strategy ‘de-risking’ rather than ‘de-linking from China (Berman 2023, August 29). President Biden vowed to invest heavily to ensure that the country prevails in the race between the world’s two largest economies (Reuters 2023, August 10). In response, the Chinese foreign ministry has been “gravely concerned” about the Order (People’s Republic of China (2023, August).

Recent media reports indicate that Japan and the Netherlands have already agreed to a US request to tighten their export controls of chip manufacturing equipment and technologies to China. The U.S., Japan and the Netherlands dominate those fields, and the Chinese government has been working to build homegrown alternatives (Reuters 2023, August 10). The Chinese tech industry, once a magnet for U.S. venture capital, has already seen a drastic decline in U.S. investment amid intensifying geopolitical tension. In 2022, total U.S.-based venture-capital investment (USVC) in China plummeted to \$9.7

billion from \$32.9 billion in 2021; the declining trend persisted in 2023 (Reuters 2023, August 10).

Winning the technology race with China would not be easy , since the US still depends on China for several intermediate components for a variety of its domestic industries (Godman 2023, September 16). Indeed, for the U.S to enhance its ability to fight the tech war, it must take along its closest allies - Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and, of course, the European union (EU). Such a strategy would help the U.S to take a strong lead in global technologies such as semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and advanced materials, and biotechnology (Stein 2022). The United States could thus consolidate its considerable advantages through its ‘network power’.

In addition, U.S will have to be vigilant in preventing China from secretly using U.S technology through stolen IP, cybertheft, industrial espionage, and mercantilist trading relationships (Bron et.al. 2023, August 28).). In a similar vein, the arrest of a parliamentary researcher in United Kingdom on suspicion of spying for China has fueled calls for tougher action against China by the U.K Government. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak reportedly ticked off his Chinese counterpart Premier Li Qiang on the sidelines of the recently held G20 Summit in India (Morgan 2023, September 14). A year earlier, Germany had already blocked its Chip Deal with China, after Germany’s Scholz Visited China (Pao 2022, November 11). More recently, the European Union announced that it will soon initiate a 13-montht investigation into whether large government subsidies helped Chinese electric vehicle makers to win market share in Europe (Pao 2023, September 13, 2023 16).

Indeed, “China’s efforts in recent years to be treated as a great have been remarkably unproductive. Rather than generating admiration or obedience from countries that once wished it well, resentment and wariness have soared not only in the West but also in Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam, pushing some of these important neighbors further into the arms of the United States” ( Mueller 2023, September 21)

Over a somewhat medium term, the U.S. will need to take the lead in reducing the growing democracy deficit across the world. “Analysts across the world have been warning for years that democracy is in decline, both in quality and quantity” (Foreign Policy 2022, October 9).The growing democracy deficit even among otherwise democratic countries and at the same

a rising communist power-- China -- is causing more tensions about the prevailing global power imbalance. “Both sides are thus becoming increasingly paranoid about the other’s intentions, confrontation has mostly supplanted healthy competition and cooperation” (Roubini 2023, 23 August).

Indeed, some look at the China-U.S rivalry as a clash between two different and competing World Views (Levine 2023, August 30). “There are simply no other options left, at least until a time when the United States, China, or both are willing to adjust their worldviews and find a way to share the same world” (Levine 2023, August 30). Meanwhile, American democratic leadership too seems to face a crisis. “Around the World, polls and interviews show that publics and elites in countries that consider themselves U.S. allies harbor doubts about the state and direction of American democracy” (Stokes 2022, October 17).

In other parts of the world too, democratic regimes are coming under pressure. “In the region stretching from central Europe to central Asia there has been an accelerated assaults on judiciaries’ independence, threats against civil society and the media, the manipulation of electoral frameworks, and the hollowing out of parliaments which no longer fulfil their roles as center of political debate and oversight of the executive” (Csaky 2020, p.1). Many a type of contemporary dictatorship is what is often called ‘electoral autocracy’, in which elections are held regularly but the party that wins the elections then runs the country like an autocrat by severely restricting the freedom of expression, a free press, an independent judiciary, and inadequate checks and balances on the executive branch of the government (Berman 2022 November 1).

There has been much handwringing about the retreat of democracy and the rise of authoritarianism in recent year – and for good reason (Stiglitz 2023, August 31). “Seventy-five years ago, many wondered whether democracies could grow as fast as authoritarian regimes. Now, many are asking the same questions about which system “delivers’ greater fairness”. In a country like the United States, which has virtually no constraints on campaign contributions, “one person, one vote” has morphed into “one dollar, one vote.” (Stiglitz 2023, August 1). As one expert put it bluntly: “Democracies die more often die through ballot box than at the gunpoint” (Richardson, 2023, p. xi). On many occasions, political leaders in democratic countries do not make enough efforts to find real

solutions to problems but instead strengthen “their followers’ fantasy self-image and organize them into a mass movement” (Richardson, 2023, p. xii).

That said, “with the right political reforms, democracies can become more inclusive, more responsive to citizens, and less responsive to the corporations and rich individuals who currently hold the purse strings” (Stiglitz 2023 August 31). If the US wants to spread liberal values abroad, in a sustainable manner, it has to begin that process at home (Ibrahim, 2022). Encouragingly, President Biden seems to have taken the first step towards that objective by holding a virtual summit in December 2021 for leaders from government, civil society, and the private sector to discuss the renewal of democracy. Issues discussed at the summit included: the threat of foreign agents interfering in elections, online disinformation, political polarization, and the temptation of populist and authoritarian alternatives (Foreign Policy 2021, December 7). Other countries should do such soul searching. Indeed, it would be great help for the cause of democracy if all the democratic countries now form an informal club for information sharing, problem identification, and solution-finding exercise to strengthen genuine democracies around the world.

## 5. Conclusion

The empirical estimates presented in the paper show that U.S continues to be the global hegemon, but followed closely by a rising communist power – China. The results of this study is similar to a recent study on the subject (Acharya, et.al, 2023). To quote from that study on the subject: “...while the United States remains a central actor in global treaty-based cooperation, the structure and the pattern of global cooperation is changing, in a way that has begun to make the world order more multi-centered and pluralistic, or what we call multiplex” (Acharya, et. al, 2023, P. 2339).

Historical experience shows that in such situations, the probability of global or regional conflicts, even wars between countries rises: “periods when a new power emerges are often challenging and we have plenty of examples, such as Europe 1880–1910, of how crises can compound to the point where war occurs more or less by accident” (Ibrahim, 2022, p.276). “Of the more than two dozen great-power rivalries over the past 200 years, none ended with the sides talking their way out of trouble” (Beckly, 2023, August 2022). The recent war between the Hamas and Israel, or even the increasing conflict between China and the



Philippines on the whole gamut of issues surrounding the South China Sea, are pointing towards increased, not decreased, conflicts across the world.

If the world wants to somehow avoid this ‘history trap’, U.S and China needs to work together. For the U.S – the current hegemon - a rather attractive way to do that would involve three ‘C’ dos and a don’t. The three dos are :cooperate wherever possible, compete where appropriate, and confront when necessary. The fourth ‘C’ is to avoid direct conflict until or unless it is thrust upon the U. S. (Cossa 2023, August 18).

It is also an imperative for the U.S and its allies to “acknowledge that in areas such as climate change we can make no progress without China. Chinese domestic problems may bring down Xi, but again this would see replacement from within the current elite. Some things would change, but China would still be a major competitor with a powerful military” (Ibrahim, 2022, p.276). At the same time, ‘the U. S. will have to work closely with take the European Union (EU)’ to sustain a democratic world order.

“The EU is a bloc of comparable population and wealth to the US. and its entire basis rests on a broadly liberal, social, economic and political structure... It takes many of the essential democratic principles (Ibrahim 2022, P.275). A partnership between the U.S, U.K and the EU should help lead a formidable ‘global democratic coalition. At the same, there is huge merit in strengthening the recently started annual Democracy Summits that could help in maintaining a predominantly democratic world order while at the same time effectively managing the power ambitions of a rising global power – China. China may not become a democratic country anytime soon, but the democratic countries could become more democratic by closing their democracy deficits. That, in turn, could help the democratic countries to manage a rising communist power. Put together, these efforts could help promote a stable democratic world order in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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