Power, shared ideas and order transition: China, the United States, and the creation of the Bretton Woods order

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Abstract
The claim that transitions in international order are not only products of transitions in power, but also products of transitions in shared ideas is now relatively uncontroversial in the International Relations literature. Yet persistent gaps remain in understanding how ideas are shared, and which states play a role in sharing an international order’s ideas. This paper demonstrates that ideas are shared through social, interactive processes, which involve both superordinate states and subordinate ones. Nevertheless, as a result of their unequal power, subordinate state agency is typically expressed when subordinate states operate in conjunction with superordinate ones, a finding that poses empirical challenges for studying subordinate states’ ideas and their order-shaping role. To resolve this challenge, the paper explores how a pair of superordinate and subordinate states – the United States and the Republic of China – operated in conjunction with one another to shape the transition to a post-WWII order at Bretton Woods. It examines cases of idea convergence and divergence between the United States and China; carefully disentangles the conscious and unconscious drivers of idea convergence; and highlights three distinct mechanisms – amplifying, grafting and resistance by appropriation – through which subordinate states shape a changing order’s shared ideas.

Keywords
International order, power, English School, constructivism, political economy, norms

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**Introduction**

Traditionally, International Relations (IR) has conceived of transitions in international order as the product of transitions in power. Rationalist scholars, particularly those working from the perspective of hegemonic stability theory, view international orders as reflective of the preferences of the most powerful state involved in shaping that order (Keohane, 1980; Krasner, 1976). Accordingly, the transition to an open, liberal economic order after World War II (WWII) – a case of order transition analysed frequently by IR scholars – occurred because material power was concentrated in a liberal United States. In a ‘constitutional’ variant of the rationalist argument, the post-WWII order not only reflected the liberal preferences of a hegemonic United States, but also US choices to limit its exercise of power through multilateral institutions (Ikenberry, 2001). Yet in leaning heavily on the power and preferences of the hegemon, rationalist accounts underplay both the ideational dynamics and the role of states other than the hegemon in order transition. The few rationalists who reflect on ideas view them through an instrumental lens, arguing that states only resort to ideas to negotiate the benefits that arise from an underlying material power distribution (e.g. Vabulas and Snidal, 2020). Consequently, they bracket off questions about how an order’s fundamental characteristics came to be.

I argue that transitions in international order are not only products of changes in material power but also of changes in shared ideas, and that subordinate states – as well as superordinate ones – play crucial roles in the process of idea sharing. In Part I, I draw on John G. Ruggie (1982) to demonstrate that without recognising its shared ideational basis, we cannot understand an order’s content, legitimacy, or its endurance. Yet while the shared ideational basis of international order and order transitions are now well established, the IR literature remains relatively silent on the critical questions of how ideas are shared, and which states play a role in sharing ideas at moments of international order change.

To explore these questions, Part II makes two analytical moves. First, it examines how ideas are shared, moving beyond the binary ‘top-down or bottom-up’ perspectives that have dominated the International Political Economy (IPE) and norm diffusion literatures, and instead drawing upon English School and constructivist approaches that emphasise the social and interactive ways in which the ideas comprising an order’s ‘primary’ and ‘secondary institutions’ are arrived at. Second, it considers how power, and particularly unequal power, affects the sharing of these ideas. Rationalists have focussed too much on power at the expense of ideas, but we would be mistaken in abandoning power altogether in our quest to understand how an order’s ideas are shared. I show that subordinate states do have agency in shaping ideas at moments of order transition, but only when they operate in conjunction with superordinate state(s). When their ideas diverge from those of the superordinate state(s), subordinate states can shape the creation of a new, shared idea by: (1) grafting their ideas onto those of the superordinate state(s), or (2) by appropriating superordinate state(s’) ideas and using those ideas to delegitimise, and thus resist, those of the superordinate state(s). When superordinate and subordinate states’ ideas converge, however, we must pay attention to how more ‘insidious’ kinds of hegemonic structural and productive power affects the sharing of ideas. Convergence may exist because the subordinate state has consciously chosen to amplify
or appropriate the superordinate state’s ideas for instrumental or normative reasons. Equally, however, convergence may arise because the subordinate state’s ideas have been unconsciously shaped by its position within the superordinate–subordinate state social structure or system of knowledge (Barnett and Duvall, 2005: 52–57; Cox, 1992: 169–173).

In Part III I illustrate these findings by examining how a pair of superordinate and subordinate states – the United States and the Republic of China – shaped the shared ideas that constituted the transition to a post-WWII economic order at Bretton Woods. I show how China used mechanisms of amplification, grafting, and resistance by appropriation to inject a focus on the economic needs and status of war-torn, post-colonial and underdeveloped countries into the Bretton Woods order transition. Chinese ideas shaped the order’s key secondary institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), and its deeper primary institutions. Yet I also demonstrate how China’s ideas were unconsciously shaped by US structural and productive power, highlighting the empirical challenge of isolating subordinate states’ ideas and their order-shaping role. The simultaneous operation of these two dynamics requires us to unpack the complex fusing of power and ideas, and how superordinate and subordinate states co-constitute an order’s shared ideas.

**Part I: power, shared ideas and order transition**

In his seminal article on international regime change, Ruggie (1982: 382) highlighted the importance of power and shared ideas – or what he referred to as ‘legitimate social purpose’ – in understanding the transition to the post-WWII order. Recasting international order as the product of power and shared ideas enabled Ruggie to illuminate three dimensions of order transition typically overlooked by rationalist accounts: an order’s content, its legitimacy and its endurance. First, in Ruggie’s view, the content of an international order did not merely stem from the preferences of its hegemon. Rationalist explanations had labelled the international economic orders led both by Britain in the late 19th century and by the United States since the end of WWII as ‘liberal’ because of the liberal preferences of these two hegemons. Yet inferring an order’s content in this way ignored the two orders’ starkly different characteristics. Unpacking the content of the ideas underpinning these two orders instead revealed considerable differences between the laissez-faire version of the 19th-century liberal order led by Britain, and what Ruggie (1982: 382) coined the ‘embedded liberalism’ of the post-WWII order led by the United States. Second, Ruggie argued that the legitimacy of an international order lay in the shared quality of its underpinning ideas (see also Clark, 2005: 4–6). ‘Embedded liberalism’ was not merely reflective of the values and preferences of a hegemonic United States. Instead it reflected a compromise – that is, the sharing of ideas – between the US preference for a multilateral international order, and wider ideas held within the industrialised world about the need for states to preserve domestic order by protecting their economies from the vagaries of international markets (Ruggie, 1982: 382, 397–398). Thus, ‘American power was a vital element, but only when fused with legitimate social purposes that had wider social purchase’ (Reus-Smit, 2013: 176). Third, Ruggie argued that an international order’s endurance stemmed from its participants’ ongoing adherence to these shared ideas,
rather than the enduring power of the hegemon originally involved in leading the order’s creation. In studying how the post-WWII economic order had evolved over three decades from the 1940s to the 1970s, Ruggie (1982: 412) observed that some of the most important shared ideas underpinning the post-WWII order – in particular, the norm against competitive currency depreciation – remained intact, despite the declining material capabilities of the United States relative to other rising powers. Ruggie’s (1982) focus on shared ideas led him to draw three important conclusions: first, that ‘power may predict the form of the international order, but not its content’ (p. 382); second, that to say anything sensible about the content of international economic orders and about the regimes that serve them, it is necessary to look at how power and legitimate social purpose become fused to project political authority into the international system. (Ruggie, 1982: 382) and third, that ‘ . . . the decline of hegemony would not necessarily lead to the collapse of regimes, provided that shared purposes are held constant’ (Ruggie, 1982: 404–405). Whereas the major rationalist accounts of regime survival had reached similar endpoints to Ruggie (see Keohane, 1984), it was Ruggie’s emphasis on shared ideas – rather than shared interests – that made his findings distinct.

Later constructivist and English School conceptions of international order accord with Ruggie’s emphasis on shared ideas, similarly homing in on order’s collective or shared basis (Adler and Haas, 1992: 368; Clark, 2011; Goh, 2013: 7; Hurrell, 2007: 17; Reus-Smit, 2013). Yet while the shared ideational basis of international orders is now well established, the IR literature has neglected how the ideas underpinning an international order are shared, and which states play a role in the sharing of ideas. To be sure, there has been substantial analysis on the movement and transmission of ideas globally, particularly within the close cognate sub-field of IPE, as well as the norm diffusion literature. Long interested in the global movement of economic ideas such as Keynesianism or neoliberalism (see, for example, Hall, 1989), IPE has particularly highlighted the role of ‘epistemic communities’, ‘money doctors’ and other experts in formulating and transmitting ideas within and between states (Flandreau, 2003; Haas, 1992: 2; Seabrooke and Wigan, 2016). By sharing their expert knowledge within journals, bureaucracies, multilateral organisations and via their porous, transnational identities, experts frame complex issue areas, set new technical standards, help states identify their interests and offer a ‘middle ground’ around which states can build international coalitions and establish common practices (Clavin, 2003: 221; Haas, 1992). This helps to create the ‘collective meaning’ or ‘consensual understanding’ upon which an international order is based (Adler and Haas, 1992: 368, 373, 388–389; Ikenberry, 1992: 189–321). However, while the IPE literature has illuminated the global movement of ideas and their order-shaping role, it remains overwhelmingly focussed on the top-down movement of ideas from (Western) superordinate states to subordinate ones, a problem of Eurocentrism that afflicts the IPE literature more generally (see criticisms in Helleiner, 2014; Hobson, 2013).3

In a corrective to IPE’s preoccupation with superordinate state ideas, the norm diffusion literature, and particularly its third wave, re-oriented attention to the ideas and order-shaping role of subordinate states (Acharya, 2004, 2009, 2011). Acharya’s (2011) ‘norm
subsidiarity’ framework demonstrates how Third World states influenced the creation of regional orders by rejecting certain global norms, or by exporting locally-constructed norms. However, while crucial in highlighting the agency of subordinate states, the norm diffusion literature suffers from a second limitation: it depicts ideas as being passed on in a linear, uni-directional fashion from global to local or local to global levels, thereby treating ideas as ‘finished products’ that emerge relatively fully formed at either the global or local levels (Krook and True, 2010: 107–108; Prantl and Nakano, 2011: 210, 2018: 105–106). In so doing, it obscures the interactive dynamics at work as ideas move fluidly between blurred, rather than ‘mutually separate’, global and local levels (Lu, 2021: 8). As Jochen Prantl and Ryoko Nakano (2011: 210, 2018) and Xiaoyu (Lu, 2021: 6) have demonstrated, it is crucial to reveal these interactive dynamics to capture the continual ‘feedback loop’ or the ‘constant process of negotiation and appropriation’ as ideas are shared internationally between actors operating across local and global levels.

Part II: how ideas are shared

To understand how subordinate states contribute to an order’s shared ideas, we need to move beyond the top-down or bottom-up perspectives that have dominated the IPE and norm diffusion literatures, and instead consider the interactive ways in which shared ideas emerge. Constructivists emphasise how ideas constitute states’ interests vis-à-vis order, but tend to underplay the role of coercive power and violence in maintaining orders or prompting their transformation (Phillips, 2011: 5–8, 19–20, 40–43). I therefore also turn to English School conceptions of order transition to consider how unequal power affects the sharing of ideas. The English School views international order as constituted by shared ideas ‘about the basic goals and means of conducting international affairs’ (Goh, 2013: 7). These shared ideas include the underlying norms, understandings and embedded practices that define the legitimate membership, goals and behaviour of a given international society (what the English School regards as ‘primary institutions’); and the deliberately crafted rules, regimes and organisations that regulate specific aspects of that society’s interaction (‘secondary institutions’) (Buzan, 2018: 450; Hurrell, 2007: 15–17). An international order transition, then, involves ‘significant alterations’ in both primary and secondary institutional shared ideas (Goh, 2013: 16). Such alterations are precipitated by major redistributions of power in the international system, allowing newly powerful states to ‘lock in’ their preferred ideas (Clark, 2001, 2014: 330; Hurrell, 2007: 67–77). And yet, notwithstanding the reality of unequal power, the social foundations of order transition open up space for less powerful, subordinate states to shape an order’s underpinning ideas (Goh, 2013). As in any society, transitions in the shared ideas comprising an international order are reached through inherently social processes of bargaining and negotiation. Subordinate states help to shape the ‘social compact’ (to use Goh’s term) on which order rests by responding to ideas put forward by the dominant state with ‘selection, rejection, adaptation, localisation, extension and negotiation’, and ‘do so depending upon their own existing identities and interests, for instrumental as well as normative reasons’ (Goh, 2013: 12). Moments of order transition, then, offer critical windows in which to observe a subordinate state’s role in the negotiation of an order’s changing shared ideas.
In practice, studying how subordinate states participate in this negotiated process of idea sharing requires us to look for cases in which their ideas both diverge and converge from those of superordinate states. When their ideas diverge, subordinate states have strong motivations for trying to shape an order’s shared ideas. Without traditional modes of coercive, structural or institutional power with which to impose their ideas on others, subordinate states may instead draw on what constructivist scholars refer to as ‘ideational power’, or the use of ‘ideational elements’ to influence others (Carstensen and Schmidt, 2016: 320, 326). For instance, subordinate states may exercise ‘power through ideas’, by deploying persuasion, reasoning and other discursive tools to induce superordinate states to do something they would not otherwise have done. Subordinate states can enhance the persuasiveness of an idea by explicitly grafting their ideas onto those that are already accepted by superordinate states as right and true (Reus-Smit, 2001: 525, 534). Grafting represents a clear mechanism of idea sharing because the ideas of different states are graftected onto one another, creating a new shared idea.

Alternatively, subordinate states may exercise ‘power over ideas’ by challenging, reinterpreting or exploiting ambiguities in, a superordinate state’s idea (Carstensen and Schmidt, 2016: 326; Prantl and Nakano, 2011, 2018). To do so, subordinate states may engage in acts of shaming and public criticism to bring superordinate states’ behaviour in line with a subordinate state’s understanding of a particular idea (Carstensen and Schmidt, 2016: 326; Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Risse et al., 1999). Or, they may engage in knowledge appropriation or translation, whereby they appropriate the ideas of a superordinate state, translate them to fit their own subordinate state context, and then use those ideas to delegitimise the superordinate state’s behaviour or the extant order (Cheney, 2017; Kroll, 2013). Finally, the subordinate state may contest a superordinate state’s idea by qualifying its key properties, or containing its local application, and then feeding this re-interpreted idea back to the global level (Prantl and Nakano, 2011: 213–217; 2018: 107–109). Regardless of whether the superordinate state ultimately internalises the subordinate state’s idea, each of these mechanisms represents a form of idea sharing: the subordinate state’s reinterpreted idea may become embedded in new international practice, or the superordinate state may feel persuaded or compelled to adhere to the subordinate state’s understanding of the meaning of an idea because of the perceived political costs of public censure, or because of the desire to have its ideas, and thus authority, legitimised in the eyes of subordinate states (Clark, 2011: 4).

However, while relatively simple to look for cases in which subordinate state ideas obviously contradict those of the superordinate state, confining ourselves only to cases of idea divergence risks missing equally significant cases of convergence between superordinate and subordinate state ideas. Convergence may exist because the subordinate state has consciously chosen to amplify, defer to, or appropriate the superordinate state’s ideas. This may be because the superordinate state’s ideas happen to coincide with those of the subordinate state, or because the subordinate state seeks to associate itself with the superordinate state as a way of cloaking itself in the superordinate state’s authority (Carstensen and Schmidt, 2016: 330; Clark, 2011: 4, 51–70, 236; Goh, 2013: 210, 214–215). However, convergence may also exist because the superordinate state’s structural or productive power has unconsciously shaped the subordinate state’s ideas (Cox, 1992; Lukes, 1974: 23–24). Theories of structural power hold that actors’ ideas are constituted by their relative positions within a social structure, such as that of a coloniser-colonised
or master–slave relationship. The way in which the subordinate state understands the world, and comes to define its ideas, is therefore shaped by its unequal relationship to the superordinate state (Barnett and Duvall, 2005: 52–54; Carstensen and Schmidt, 2016: 330–331; Cox, 1992: 169–170). Productive power, a related but somewhat different concept, sees actors’ ideas as being constituted by dominant social processes and systems of knowledge. Subordinate states operate in a world in which superordinate states have defined the very meaning of what is taken for granted in international political life, and in which superordinate state knowledge has become embedded in international institutions and practices (Barnett and Duvall, 2005: 55–57; Carstensen and Schmidt, 2016: 330–331; Cox, 1992: 169–173).

The reality of unequal power in IR highlights an empirical challenge in isolating subordinate states’ ideas and their effects on international order. That is, it is difficult to disentangle a subordinate state’s ideas from their relationship to, and position within, the unequal superordinate-subordinate state social structure. Thus, trying to define a distinct ‘subordinate state idea’ is inherently problematic. Empirical research must, therefore, pay attention to the unconscious effects of structural and productive power on a subordinate state’s ideas, as well as to the conscious instrumental or normative factors that may drive idea convergence. In practice, undertaking such research requires us to map out the terrain of idea convergence (and divergence), and then to examine those empirical sources that allow the analyst to carefully trace the reasons for that convergence. Such sources might include detailed ‘behind the scenes’ accounts, such as archives or interviews with officials, from which one could observe whether conscious decisions were made by subordinate state officials to amplify, defer to, or appropriate the ideas of a superordinate state. Equally, sources such as academic journals, biographies, translations of foreign texts and histories of key institutions enable one to trace a superordinate state’s formative influence on a subordinate state’s ideas.

Three conclusions emerge from Part II’s discussion of how ideas are shared. First, an international order’s ideas are not passed on intact between superordinate and subordinate states, but are shared through social, interactive processes. Second, subordinate states do have agency in shaping the shared ideas underpinning an order transition. However, as a result of their unequal power, this agency is typically expressed when subordinate states consciously or unconsciously operate in conjunction with superordinate states. Third, the extant literature offers a range of potential mechanisms through which a subordinate state can shape an order’s ideas. In Part III, I contribute to this literature by offering three illustrative (though not exhaustive) mechanisms – amplifying, grafting, and resistance by appropriation – through which a subordinate state operated in conjunction with a superordinate state to shape the shared ideas underpinning a major transition in international order.

Part III: China, the United States and the Bretton Woods order

In 1944, the Allied powers met in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, to find ways to stem the protectionism, currency wars, and economic deprivation that had characterised the global economy throughout the 1920s and 1930s. A systemically significant case of international order transition, Bretton Woods represented a fundamental transformation
in both primary and secondary institutional shared ideas. Among the most salient of these transformations, for our purposes, were a shift in shared ideas about: sovereign equality rather than empire as the order’s legitimate form of membership and behaviour; the maintenance of an open, market-based global economy that protected domestic populations and developing countries from the unpredictable ravages of a laissez-faire market system as new legitimate goals of the order; and the creation of new rules and multilateral organisations to regulate interactions among the order’s members (Clavin, 2013; Gardiner, 1969; Helleiner, 2014; Ikenberry, 1992).

The US-Republic of China dyad offers a significant case through which to examine idea sharing between a pair of superordinate and subordinate states. The United States represented the most important superordinate state to shape the post-WWII economic order. By the 1940s, the United States had amassed both sufficient material power capacity and a willingness to project its political authority, such that it could be described as an ‘ascending hegemonic power’ (Ikenberry, 1993: 60). Through its triumvirate leadership of the Allied powers (with Great Britain and the Soviet Union), the United States facilitated major wartime conferences at which the blueprints for the post-war international order were drawn, working closely with Great Britain and British economist John Maynard Keynes in developing plans for the post-war economic order (Van Dormael, 1978; Gardiner, 1969). Yet notwithstanding the importance of British power and ideas, the United States remained superordinate even to Britain. The United States was the only state to emerge stronger after WWII than before the war, while WWII and the Global Depression before it had badly weakened British power, rendering Britain highly dependent on the United States for its diplomatic and military objectives and financial survival (Kennedy, 1987: 357–369).

The Republic of China, by contrast, represented a subordinate state. Prior to the 1940s, the European-led international order and its strict ‘standards of civilisation’ had largely excluded China (Zhang, 1998: 13–14). However, China’s contribution to the Allied WWII effort facilitated China’s recognition as an increasingly important member of the order (Gong, 1984: 163; Mitter, 2013). By the early 1940s, US President Franklin Roosevelt regarded China as one of the ‘Four Policemen’, who, together with Great Britain and the Soviet Union, would be responsible for rebuilding the post-war international order (Loke, 2016: 858; Zhang, 1998: 15–16). Subsequently, in July 1942, the United States made the decision to include China in the group of five or six countries with whom it would consult on post-war economic plans (Helleiner, 2014: 186). Yet despite this change in status, China remained a subordinate state on both material and ideational grounds. War with Japan had decimated China’s economy, leaving it financially dependent on the United States, and to a lesser extent Great Britain, and reducing China’s per capita gross domestic product to just 5 percent of US levels (Brandt et al., 2014: 89–92; Maddison, 2007: 52–53, 102). Moreover, notwithstanding Roosevelt’s labelling China as one of the ‘Four Policemen’, both the United States and other states continued to regard China as subordinate by virtue of her weak economy, fledgling political institutions and former semi-colonial status. The British government did not believe that China had sufficient technical competence to participate in the Bretton Woods negotiations on an equal footing, with Keynes, for instance, describing US attempts to include China in a special ‘inner circle’ of countries with whom it would consult on the post-war
international monetary order as a ‘stupid, futile notion’ (Van Dormael, 1978: 67–68). Finally, within the US–China dyad, the United States and China both regarded the United States as the superordinate state and China as the subordinate one; these mutual perceptions of relative status would condition US and Chinese interactions throughout the early 1940s.

In what follows, I draw on the analytical framework developed in Part II to explore how ideas were shared between these two unequal powers. I demonstrate three distinct mechanisms by which China operated in conjunction with the United States to shape the shared ideas underpinning the Bretton Woods order. The first mechanism, amplifying, took place in the realm of idea convergence. I consider why US and Chinese ideas converged, paying attention not only to conscious Chinese decisions to amplify US ideas, but also to the role of US structural and productive power in unconsciously shaping Chinese ideas. The second and third mechanisms – grafting and resistance by appropriation – both took place in the realm of idea divergence. I explore the content of these diverging ideas, and the forms of ideational power China deployed to persuade the United States of the merit or interpretation of its ideas.

**Amplifying**

The first way in which the Republic of China sought to shape the Bretton Woods order was by amplifying, or publicly supporting, American leadership of the post-war economic order, and American ideas about ‘managed multilateralism’ which converged with those of its own. ‘Managed multilateralism’ represented the nascent idea that a liberal international economic order, in which unfettered inter-state trade took place, would not result automatically through the workings of the market or the uncoordinated action of individual states. Rather, under ‘managed multilateralism’, new multilateral organisations would coordinate states’ monetary and trade practices (Ikenberry, 1992: 99, 292; Van Dormael, 1978: 2–3). This was not an exclusively American idea, but one that had developed during the 1920s and 1930s, through the work of the League of Nations and individual European and American economists (Clavin, 2013). By early 1943, ideas about managed multilateralism had found their way into the texts of both the American and British draft plans for the post-war economic order. Nevertheless, for reasons outlined below, it was America’s contribution to these ideas, and America’s order-leading role, that featured most prominently in China’s amplifying strategy.

After receiving the American and British plans in February and March 1943, respectively, the Chinese government immediately set about translating and studying them (Republic of China Ministry of Foreign Affairs (ROCMFA), 1943). Chinese officials observed that there were small but significant distinctions between the two plans, and that on certain issues – namely, requirements regarding gold, quota calculations and foreign exchange policy – the British plan was more beneficial to China (Wang, 2015: 141–150, 221; Young, 1943c). However, instructions issued from the headquarters of Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek in late April 1943 made clear that, despite some objections to aspects of the American plan, ‘China should cooperate with other nations to reach an agreement on this Plan’ (Young, 1943c). Chinese Finance Minister Kong Xiangxi concurred, arguing that ‘maintaining close cooperation’ with the United States
would be of greatest benefit to China (Zhang, 2013: 124). While China should negotiate ‘in private’ with the United States over issues on which their ideas about the post-war economic order diverged, in public settings, China should support the United States’ leadership role and proposal (Wang, 2015: 145).

China carried out its amplifying strategy in April and May 1943 when it drafted its own ‘Proposal for A United and Associated Nations Fund for Monetary Rehabilitation and Stabilisation’, copies of which were sent to the United States, Britain and Soviet Union. China’s proposal endorsed what it saw as ‘the best features of the American and British schemes’, including goals such as ‘close international economic cooperation in order to promote post-war recovery’ and the return to a ‘more liberal practice in the field of international trade’ (Young, 1943a). It also amplified many of the deliberately-crafted rules underpinning managed multilateralism, including the creation of a ‘multilateral clearing of international balances of payments’ to promote trade, capital flows and monetary stability; an international monetary unit with a gold value; a free and dependable market for gold; and agreement that members’ exchange rates could only be altered in accord with the new international monetary organisation (Young, 1943d). Yet while making clear to the US Treasury that China’s proposal drew on both British and American ideas, in public settings the Chinese government amplified only the American leadership role and ideas. For instance, in April 1944, following the international release of a ‘Joint Statement by Experts on the Establishment of an International Monetary Fund’, official Chinese speeches, international press conferences, and editorials in state-affiliated newspapers contained near-verbatim language noting approvingly that the United States had ‘taken the lead’ in efforts to set out the terms of the post-war economic order (see, for example, Da Gong Bao, 1944a). The release of this ‘Joint Statement’ was itself an important marker of the success of China’s amplifying strategy; informing the press that China ‘supported’ the Joint Statement enabled US Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau to demonstrate internationally that a diverse group of nations had helped craft the United States-led order transition (Da Gong Bao, 1944b).

Conscious decisions, as well as more ‘insidious’ unconscious factors, explain China’s desire to amplify the US role and ideas. From a conscious perspective, China’s financial dependence on the United States prompted Chinese decisions to amplify US economic ideas. Since late 1941, the United States had been financially backing China via the US–China Stabilisation Fund and the Lend-Lease Agreement (Young, 1963: 138–148, 213, 223–226, 284–285, 417–418). Throughout 1943 and 1944, Chinese officials were simultaneously trying to secure larger US loans to China and negotiating the emerging plans for the post-war economic order. China’s interests in supporting the US economic proposals were made clear in May 1944 when Chinese officials in Washington cabled Finance Minister Kong Xiangxi for instructions on how to respond to the US Treasury’s latest draft proposal. Kong (1944c) replied, stating that because ‘the American Government has been so helpful in support of China’s finances . . . it is only proper that the Chinese Government should support their program in so far as it is consistent with China’s interests’.

Moreover, the Chinese government made conscious decisions to amplify the US leadership role and ideas because it enabled China to associate itself with US authority, thereby having US authority conferred upon China too. Beyond obtaining financial
support, China viewed the Bretton Woods negotiations as ‘the first attempt of the Allies to put forward a concrete proposal for establishing the world order’ and in deciding ‘important political issues, such as those concerning our country’s political status in the future’, as Chinese Foreign Minister TV Soong (1943: 19–21) wrote to his brother-in-law Chiang Kai-shek in April 1943). It also recognised that a key distinction between the US and British plans was that ‘the US proposal aims to put the control of the Fund into its own hands and those of its allies, whereas the UK proposal intends to make the British Empire the centre of the (International Monetary) Fund’ (Song, 1943: 19–21). With the United States having welcomed China, against Britain’s wishes, into the leading group of Allies with whom it consulted on post-war plans, conferring authority on the United States, and supporting the United States’ rather than British proposal, enabled China to cloak itself in US authority. Doing so secured China’s elevated status in the post-war order and enabled China to voice its support for the order’s transition away from empire. Thus, China’s public discourse on the Bretton Woods negotiations not only amplified the US leadership role, but also emphasised China’s close association with the United States. As Kong Xiangxi put it in international press conferences and newspaper editorials: ‘the Chinese Government was kept informed of the progress of the discussions by the American Government’ (see, for example, Sao Dang Bao, 1944).

However, US structural and productive power also unconsciously conditioned Chinese officials to amplify the US leadership role. Throughout 1943 and 1944, Chinese officials were concurrently negotiating with the US Treasury over the terms of the post-war economic order and trying to secure larger US loans to China. These negotiations typically took place in the same meetings and involved the very same Chinese (Xi Demao, Song Ziliang, Guo Bingwen and Li Guoqin) and US officials (Harry White and Irving Friedman) (see, for example, White, 1943a). The co-location of these discussions had the effect of reinforcing China’s sense of dependence upon the United States and conditioning Chinese officials to approach discussion of the Bretton Woods order in ways that would meet with US approval. Xi Demao and his colleagues frequently appealed to their US Treasury counterparts for: permission to communicate China’s draft proposal to other states; updates on the status of the negotiations; or confirmation that senior Chinese government officials would indeed be invited to the Bretton Woods conference (see, for example, Friedman, 1943c). A clear example of the conditioning effects of US structural power came in October 1943, when Kong (1943b) Xiangxi learned via international press reports that a new round of drafts for the IMF were being negotiated exclusively between the United States and Britain. This discovery prompted a flurry of anxious telegrams between Chongqing and Washington in which Kong implored his officials to determine whether there was any ‘foundation’ to these press reports. After the United States eventually agreed that it would send China a copy of the new draft ‘in one week or two’, Kong Xiangxi suggested establishing a separate Chinese channel of bilateral communications with Great Britain. Yet rather than simply approaching Britain directly, Xi Demao instead first asked permission from the US Treasury to initiate this channel, and was promptly informed that he should ‘talk with Mr White’ before doing so (White, 1943a: 8–11). While the Chinese government believed fervently that China’s wartime sacrifices had earned their country the right to be a leading member of the post-war order (Mitter, 2013: 309–313), US structural power still conditioned Chinese
officials to think of China as dependent upon the United States for entry into the post-war order negotiations, and as the gate-keeper for critical access to information about them.

US productive power also played an unconscious role in the prior shaping of Chinese ideas, partially explaining China’s amplification of those American ideas that converged with its own. As noted in Part II, care must be taken when trying to distinguish between ‘indigenous’ Chinese ideas, and those shaped by China’s position within an international social structure defined by United States-produced systems of knowledge. It is possible to trace Chinese ideas about managed multilateralism by examining the writings of economists and officials who discussed their country’s often troubled relationship with the extant international economic order in the leading economics periodicals of the 1940s, such as Zhongyang Yinhang Yuebao (Central Bank Monthly) and Xin Jingji (New Economics). Yet the ideas expressed in these periodicals cannot be divorced from the US education system in which so many of their authors were trained. The majority of the Chinese economists and officials involved in drafting China’s proposal for the post-war economic order, and in representing China at the Bretton Woods conference, had spent their formative years studying in American universities, under the auspices of the Boxer Rebellion Indemnity Scholarship or the wartime Lend-Lease economics training programme (Pomfret, 2016: 123–124; United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC, 1947)). This included Finance Minister Kong Xiangxi and Foreign Minister TV Soong, who had obtained economics degrees from Yale and Harvard, respectively; Vice Finance Minister Guo Bingwen, who had completed his Masters and PhD at Columbia University; and Bei Zuyi, a prominent member of the Chinese proposal drafting team, who had travelled to the United States in the early 1930s to study that country’s banking system (Boorman and Howard, 1979 [1967]: 65–67, 149–153, 263–269, 276–277). Their time in the United States provided these individuals with an American education, particularly in economics, and immersed them in a society in which they had access to, and familiarity with, American authors, ideas and ways of seeing the world. The result of this was a complex entanglement between ‘indigenous’ Chinese ideas and United States-produced systems of knowledge.

Such entanglement can be seen, for example, in the ideas of Li Zhuomin, one of China’s leading economists and a member of his country’s delegation to the Bretton Woods conference. Li had completed his PhD in economics at the University of California, Berkeley, before becoming a professor at Nankai University. In a pair of articles published in 1942, Li wrote at length about how China had suffered from the profoundly unequal international economic order established following the Opium Wars (1839–1860). Nevertheless, Li (1942a, 1942b) was cautiously optimistic that a ‘fair and equitable’ international economic order could be developed in the post-war period, and that long-term world peace and China’s own post-war economic recovery would both rest on the creation of such an order. Li’s optimism stemmed in large part from his understanding of the economic policies and ideas of the major, capital-abundant countries. Of the five major countries Li (1942a) examined, he devoted the majority of his study to the United States, outlining in great detail ongoing debates within the United States about the desirability of managed multilateralism (or what Li referred to as an ‘internationalist’ economic policy), and the likelihood that such ideas would prevail (pp. 22–24). For Li, and the many other Chinese officials and economists who had been educated in, and
were deeply familiar with, the United States, the convergence between US and Chinese ideas stemmed from the entanglement between their own lived experience and study of China’s economic history and their deep immersion in US systems of knowledge.

The final, unconscious ‘driver’ of China’s amplifying strategy resulted also from US productive power, and in particular the role played by the American economist, Arthur Young (1963: v), who had served as a ‘money doctor’ advising the Guomindang government since 1929. Though the drafting of China’s proposal for post-war economic arrangements was officially led by Finance Minister Kong Xiangxi, much of the actual writing of the draft was undertaken by Arthur Young. It was Young (1943a, 1943f) who, in April 1943, produced the first memoranda for the Chinese government comparing the British and American schemes and who detailed at length their implications for China’s post-war financial situation. Young’s support for the idea of managed multilateralism strongly influenced the Chinese government’s amplification of managed multilateralism in its proposal for the post-war order. He believed that because ‘China will be very dependent upon large-scale foreign capital after the war’, it would be ‘far better if such capital can be provided under more or less permanent arrangements’ such as via a permanent monetary organisation, than to have to rely on the ad hoc willingness of individual countries to lend to China. ‘It will be in China’s interest, therefore, in my opinion, for China to go along with her stronger associates in such plans and policies’, Young (1943f: 35–36) argued. Yet US productive power was not absolute nor unilateral in the prior shaping of Chinese ideas. Young’s more than decade-long immersion in China’s financial system also enabled him to see how US (and British) post-war ordering ideas could be detrimental to China. It was these ideas that, along with those of his Chinese counterparts, would become the basis for China’s divergence with US ideas, as we shall see below.

**Grafting**

Beyond areas of convergence, Chinese ideas about the post-war order diverged from US ideas in key ways. The Chinese government believed that neither the American nor British plans made ‘adequate provision for monetary rehabilitation after the war’ for countries like China who had experienced ‘very severe disruption’ of their financial and economic system ‘during the long course of the war’ (Young, 1943a). From China’s perspective, war-torn countries would require a two-to-three year ‘transitional period’ at war’s end, before they ‘can safely assume responsibility’ of a managed multilateral system (Bei, 1943). During this transitional period, countries would: undertake internal financial reforms; receive international financial assistance to restore monetary equilibrium; and be permitted to maintain some capital controls, trade protections and adjustable exchange rates (Bei, 1943; Young, 1943b). Chinese ideas also diverged in their focus on the economic needs of ‘underdeveloped countries’. As Bei (1943) explained, the only way to ‘ensure the world of freedom from want’ and to ‘secure for it the freedom from fear’ – aspirational language expressed in the 1941 US–British Atlantic Charter – was to ensure that ‘underdeveloped countries’ had ‘equal access’ to world capital markets through which they could finance economic reconstruction and long-term industrial development.
China sought to persuade the US Treasury that its goal of managed multilateralism could not be realised without first addressing the economic needs of war-torn, underdeveloped countries. It did so by grafting Chinese ideas onto US ones. The memorandum accompanying China’s proposal reiterated China’s support for the US goal of rehabilitating the global economy and building an open, cooperative international monetary order. However, the memorandum then continued by emphasising the inseparability of Chinese and US ideas, stating that ‘the provision of capital for development of nations’ resources’ has ‘close bearing upon the satisfactory working of any plan for monetary rehabilitation and stabilization’, and suggesting that:

As to monetary rehabilitation, it is clear that stabilization of prices, determination of the level of exchange, and rehabilitation of the public finances are *intimately related*. Without relative price stabilization, rates of exchange and the balance of payments *cannot be maintained* in equilibrium. And without equilibrium in the budget, price stabilization *will not be possible*. Solution of all these problems, in turn, *is closely bound up with* restoration of the internal economy of the country, and its production, transport and foreign trade. Consequently the earliest possible beginning of relief, rehabilitation and economic reconstruction in China *will be essential* to monetary reform and sound finance. The problem will have to be tackled *simultaneously* and from many angles (Young, 1943a: 1–2, emphasis added).

Throughout the summer of 1943, China’s Washington-based officials lobbied the US Treasury about the ‘inter-related’ nature of relief, monetary rehabilitation and price stabilisation, and in August, Harry White conceded to Guo Bingwen and his colleagues that ‘all these problems were inter-related’. But China’s grafting strategy was only partially successful in its attempts to persuade the United States of how this inter-related set of problems should be dealt with. White explained that the United States was not willing to resolve all these problems ‘simultaneously’ as China recommended. Instead, the US view was that these problems ‘had to be dealt with separately’, lest the stabilisation fund become overburdened with issues of post-war reconstruction, relief and rehabilitation (Guo et al., 1943). The United States *was* willing to modify its IMF draft to enable some flexibility on initial exchange rates and gold payments for ‘countries whose home areas have been wholly or partly occupied by the enemy’, modifications which, US Treasury Secretary Morgenthau (1943) acknowledged, ‘have resulted largely from discussions held with the Chinese technical experts in the United States’. Moreover, in November, the United States published a draft plan for the IBRD which would provide the capital for post-war reconstruction and development that China, along with a number of other countries, had urged (Bei, 1943; Helleiner, 2014: 187–199). However, on the eve of the Bretton Woods conference, both the IMF and IBRD plans remained silent on the most important economic issue for China: dedicated funds and measures to enable post-war monetary rehabilitation (Kong, 1944a). At Bretton Woods (1944), the Chinese delegation continued its grafting strategy, explaining that supporting the post-war economic development of war-torn countries like China would create bountiful new trade markets and investment opportunities for ‘foreign friends’. But the conference ultimately failed to enact the concrete transitional arrangements for monetary rehabilitation that China had urged. At best, Arthur Young (1944b) concluded, the ‘elastic’ wording adopted in the
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final plans may enable future such arrangements, although it would be another two years before the IBRD board would exploit this elastic language to permit lending ‘in special circumstances’ for monetary rehabilitation (Helleiner, 2014: 197–198).

Despite its failure to graft ideas about monetary rehabilitation onto the IMF or IBRD plans, China remained a vocal supporter of the Bretton Woods process. Kong Xiangxi praised the ‘remarkable progress on international economic cooperation’ that had been achieved at the conference, and China’s state-owned Central News Agency gave widespread positive coverage to its outcomes (Da Gong Bao, 1944c). China’s support stemmed, in part, from a determination, Kong explained, to preserve ‘close relations between China and the United States’, which were vital for accessing the bilateral financial support China so badly needed (Young, 1944a; see also Zhang, 2013). But supporting the United States-led Bretton Woods order spoke to China’s understanding that this order transition – and not simply a close relationship with the United States – would help to secure China’s other coveted goals: an end to the imperialism of the pre-war world, and a recognised place as one of the four leading powers. How China worked in conjunction with the United States to realise these goals – even in the face of US–China ideational divergence – is examined below.

Resistance via appropriation

The second key area of idea divergence between Chinese and US ideas concerned calculation of national quotas within the new institutions that would govern the post-war order. According to the US and British proposals, quotas should reflect: the size of a country’s financial contribution to the IMF, its voting power within the organisation, and its level of access to IMF loans. China agreed with the need for national quotas, but diverged sharply with the assumptions underpinning British and American ideas about how quotas should be calculated. Britain proposed that quotas should be proportional to countries’ annual ‘pre-war’ foreign trade, while the United States proposed basing quotas upon ‘a country’s holdings of gold and foreign currency, the size of fluctuations in its balance of payments, and its national income’ (Young, 1943e). Both proposals were ‘unsatisfactory from the point of view of China’, argued Zhang Jia’ao (1943), former general manager of the Bank of China and Minister for Railways and Communications, because they would effectively entrench the ‘pre-war status quo’. Instead, Zhang argued, quota formulas needed to take into ‘special consideration’ the ‘necessary post-war development of countries like China’. Such ‘undeveloped’ countries needed to be given time to undertake economic reconstruction before their development levels ‘can be regarded as anything like normal’, Zhang (1943) noted. The Chinese economist, Liu Dajun, concurred, arguing that quotas should be based on a country’s ‘potential productive forces’, such as cultivable land, mineral resources and population size, rather than ‘fixed’ pre-war levels of foreign trade or national income. These ‘potential productive forces’, Liu (1943) noted, had already enabled China to contribute to the war, and they would underpin China’s future economic growth. Persuaded by these arguments, Young (1943b: 3) stipulated a different formula for quotas in China’s proposal, which combined ‘pre-war’ and ‘probable’ post-war measures of economic development.
To resist US and British quota proposals, the Chinese government operated in close conjunction with the United States by appropriating US ideas, and those British ideas that the United States had already endorsed, as a way to mount an ideational challenge against the US and British proposals. In particular, it appropriated US President Roosevelt's idea that China should be one of the four leading powers because of its contribution to the war effort. Roosevelt’s ‘Four Policemen’ idea had gained international attention in early 1942; by early 1943, US Treasury Secretary Morgenthau had made public the US view that China should therefore hold the fourth-highest quota in the IMF (behind the United States, the United Kingdom and Soviet Union) (Jin, 2015: 12). Yet despite its notional support for China’s status as one of the four leading powers, US quota proposals did not actually convert into a fourth-place quota for China. As Kong Xiangxi (1943a) noted, ‘The American proposal is more elastic [than the British proposal]; but everything depends on the figures chosen’. US support for China was also being contested by France and India, which desired the coveted fourth place position, and by Britain, which was eager to elevate the voting power of countries within the British Empire as a check on US power (White, 1944). Reliant upon the United States to help guarantee China’s fourth place quota, the Chinese government therefore skilfully appropriated US ideas about a country’s wartime contribution as a way to undermine the legitimacy of existing quota proposals, and to provide the US Treasury with the justification needed to put forward alternative quota measures.

In the months leading up to the Bretton Woods conference, Chinese officials in Washington lobbied the US Treasury for revised quota measures by consistently reinforcing the idea that, beyond raw economic criteria, ‘a certain percentage of the voting power’ should be allocated in accordance with the sacrifices [countries had made] in contributing to the victory’ (Li Guoqin in White, 1943b). Xi Demao, Guo Bingwen and Song Ziliang argued that China’s quota should reflect ‘China’s status as one of the four great powers and . . . its contribution to the war effort’ (in Friedman, 1943a). White and his colleagues agreed, and reassured their Chinese counterparts that the United States already ‘contemplated having China as the fourth largest contributor’, but that the United States still needed a formula that could both ‘give a greater quota to China and which at the same time could be applied to the other countries’ (Friedman, 1943a). One idea circulating at the time was Britain’s proposal for a ‘special assessment’ or ‘special allotment’ quota that might be applied to countries that had been badly affected by the war. White and his colleagues suggested that applying such a quota to China might make it possible to ‘take into consideration such factors as China’s contribution to the war effort’ (Friedman, 1943a). Chinese officials agreed enthusiastically, arguing that a ‘special allotment’ quota would make the quota rankings more ‘equitable’ and ‘fair’ (in Friedman, 1943b; Kong, 1944b).

US officials’ testimony and the timing of changes to US proposals allow us to gauge whether China was successful in using resistance by appropriation to persuade the United States of its ideas. In May 1944, the US Treasury acknowledged that US and British quota measures did not adequately reflect China’s circumstances, and that ‘it might be necessary to use other procedures in computing the quotas of countries where there was little data available’ (Lipsman, 1944). Furthermore, in a memorandum to US Treasury Secretary Morgenthau a week before the conference, White (1944) noted that the
American technical advisers had ‘regarded the determination of quotas as fundamentally an objective matter’, based on measures that could be plugged neatly into a formula, such as national income, foreign trade and gold and dollar holdings. But, White (1944, emphasis added) went on,

Because the data of the past are not completely applicable to the future and because intangible considerations cannot be measured by a formula, it is proposed to set aside 10 per cent of the aggregate quotas ($800 million) to be apportioned among countries whose quotas, based on the formula, are clearly inequitable.

While a number of countries in addition to China had complained about quota proposals before the conference, China’s influence on White’s thinking was particularly significant. China was the only country to have put forward a quota proposal that explicitly included measuring countries’ ‘future’ economic development, and it had consistently emphasised the need for ‘equitable’ quotas for developing, war-torn countries. Moreover, ‘China has pressed the view that her quota must be the fourth largest as a recognition of her role in the war’, White (1944) noted.

China’s ideational strategies were also critical in maintaining US support for China’s desired quota formula and ranking at the Bretton Woods conference itself. Amid fierce international contestation at the conference, Kong emphasised China’s ‘suffering’ and ‘heavy losses’ over the past eight years of war both in public speeches and in side discussions with the United States, and argued that a quota of US$600 million was crucial to China’s post-war ‘recovery and reconstruction’ (Zhang, 2013: 126). Such arguments ultimately paid off. US Secretary Morgenthau engaged in complicated backroom deals to secure China’s fourth-place quota, and both he and the Vice Chairman of the US delegation, Frederick Vinson, cited China’s contribution to the war effort as a way to justify US support for China’s quota (Helleiner, 2014: 199; Zhang, 2013: 126–127). Though China had to settle for a quota of just US$550 million to reach agreement with the Soviet Union, Kong was satisfied that China had achieved a ranking in the post-war hierarchy that ‘matches our country’s international political status’ (Kong, 1944b). Obtaining this fourth-place ranking had undeniably relied upon US power in setting the terms of the new order, but China’s appropriation of US ideas had persuaded the United States to change its quota proposal, and given the United States the ideational language to publicly justify China’s quota.

**Conclusion**

Four decades ago, Ruggie observed that only by understanding how power and shared ideas become ‘fused’ could we say anything about the content, legitimacy and endurance of an international order. And yet, in the decades since, persistent gaps have remained in the IR literature over precisely how that fusing of power and shared ideas takes place. Moreover, as Ruggie (1982: 413) acknowledged, his own account of the transition to the Bretton Woods order was overwhelmingly focussed on the ideas of superordinate states – those industrialised countries situated relatively high in the power ranking. Since then, constructivist and English School scholars have emphasised the subordinate state-side of
order transitions, and their role in furnishing an order’s content, legitimacy and endurance (Acharya, 2004, 2009, 2011; Clark, 2011: 4; Goh, 2013; Prantl and Nakano, 2011, 2018; Reus-Smit, 2001). Contributing to that literature, this paper theorises how an order’s ideas are shared, and illustrates some of the idea-sharing mechanisms adopted by subordinate states.

The paper demonstrates that subordinate states have more agency in shaping international order transitions than is acknowledged by IPE accounts, but that this agency is less straightforwardly linear than third-wave norm diffusion scholars attest. International order is the product of genuinely shared ideas, which are not passed on intact between the global and local, but are instead newly created through the social interactions of superordinate and subordinate states. Because these interactions take place within hierarchical power relationships, subordinate states must adopt creative strategies – namely, operating in conjunction with the superordinate state – to shape an order’s underpinning ideas. Through amplifying, grafting and resistance by appropriation, the Republic of China harnessed the United States’ disproportionate power to embed ideas about the economic needs and status of war-torn, post-colonial and underdeveloped states into the Bretton Woods order.

Nevertheless, while cases of idea divergence show that subordinate states are not merely ‘order takers’, it is far more difficult to gauge a subordinate state’s order-shaping role when its ideas converge with those of the superordinate state(s). By drawing upon a rich qualitative source base (Chinese, the United States and Taiwanese archives, periodicals, and biographies) to carefully distinguish between the conscious and unconscious factors that drove idea convergence, the paper highlighted the challenge of disentangling an apparently ‘indigenous’ Chinese idea from the unconscious idea-shaping effects of the United States’ financial power, gate-keeping role, educational systems and ‘money doctors’. Such cases remind us that we cannot unproblematically refer to ‘subordinate state ideas’. Instead, we must pay attention to the ‘insidious’ effects on order transition of unequal structural and productive power, a finding that has long been recognised by neo-Gramscian approaches (see, for example, Ciplet, 2015).

And yet, contra to more coercive Gramscian notions of consent, China was still able to resist the United States on key issues. China pursued this resistance not by rejecting US ideas outright, but instead by creatively appropriating US ideas to ensure that IMF quotas measured a country’s wartime contribution. This form of resistance was not merely China’s inability to consider challenging its hegemonic backer. Nor was China’s deference to the United States simply the result of some long-standing cultural acceptance of hierarchy (Buzan, 2018: 463–466). A subordinate China chose to reinforce US superordinate status because a United States-led international order secured, for China, the goal it valued most: a leading place within the post-war order (on hierarchical orders as social contracts, see Goh, 2008: 357–358).

In acknowledging China’s instrumental use of ideas, this paper concurs with recent rationalist works that emphasise how rising powers use particular negotiating strategies to ‘advance their own visions of global order’ (Narlikar, 2013: 569). Yet the combined constructivist and English School approach I adopt here allows me to go further by illuminating the messy, interactive origins of the ideas that constituted China’s particular vision for the Bretton Woods order; why China, therefore, prioritised relative interests
within that order; and, most importantly, the shared processes by which the order’s primary and secondary institutions were reached. China’s fourth-place position within the Bretton Woods order represented a significant alteration in primary and secondary institutional shared ideas. That a non-Western, post-colonial, and underdeveloped country like China could ascend to a leading position marked a fundamental transformation away from empire to a new international order that recognised, however imperfectly, the voices, experiences and status, of such countries. Though Bretton Woods had not achieved all that the Republic of China had hoped that it would, the Chiang government viewed the order as a legitimate one because of the shared quality of its primary and secondary institutional ideas.

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Notes

1. Ian Clark (2001: 176–179) provides a helpful distinction between ‘hegemonic’ and ‘constitutional’ approaches to order creation.
2. Whereas rationalists tend to focus on an order’s ‘secondary institutions’ (such as the global arms control regime), the English School contends that these secondary institutions emanate from an order’s deeper primary institutions. A conceptual focus on order transition, rather than regime negotiation, for example, allows us to observe a subordinate state’s role in sharing ideas at both levels.
3. Indeed, one of the major texts in the field contains not a single chapter on subordinate state ideas: Goldstein and Keohane (1993).
4. The norm diffusion literature views norms as a major subset of ideas, typically distinguishing them from ‘cognitive’ or ‘functional’ ideas, and viewing norms as collective, rather than individually-held, ideas.
5. In his separate work on ‘norm localisation’, Acharya (2009: 5) does pay attention to the dynamic sharing of ideas between local and global levels. Nevertheless, Acharya is concerned
with how this ‘fusion’ of ideas takes place at the local level, rather than with how local or subordinate states’ ideas are shared with superordinate state ideas at the global level.

6. A similar understanding of convergence in actor interests is adopted in Goh (2016: 7–11).

7. I am grateful to Andrew Hurrell for helpful discussions on this point.

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