5

Order Transition and Effectiveness

As mentioned in the earlier chapters, Clark’s account of legitimacy is firmly based on the assumption of US hegemony (2005:226–229). Similarly, a later analysis by the same author revealed the degree to which his approach remained wedded to debates about America’s international standing in the wake of the last Iraq war. In his view, “arguably the key problem of contemporary international order” was “finding a stable accommodation between US power and the general interests of international society” (2011:36). More specifically, he suggested that what needed to be specified were “the duties that the US must bear as the key upholder of community values; it stipulates also the duty of the remainder of international society to make full acknowledgement of the costs to the leading state entailed by this role. This is the core of the constitutional bargain to be sought” (Clark 2005: 242). Consequently, Clark referred to the years 2001/2003 as “pivotal year[s]” (2011:24). Beginning in 2008, however, those years seem much less significant as a frame of reference, but his perception of a theoretical environment which is, largely, shaped by US hegemony was confirmed.

In the meantime, other approaches suggested alternative ways of providing effective global governance solutions, though they have proved to be intermittent. For instance, second-image-based attempts to establish a new foundation for global governance due to the perceived lack of legitimate and effective leadership during the last Iraq crisis proved to be rather short-lived. Prominent authors suggested a concert/league of democracies, which was supposed to substitute for the UN Security Council after its – perceived – failure in 2003. Theoretically at least, it was designed with resources and rights similar to the ones of its model (Bobbitt 2002; Ikenberry and Slaughter 2006; Keohane and Buchanan 2004, 2006). Using the same frame of reference as Clark, that is, the last
Iraq war, consequently appears to be unsuitable to capture the nature of today’s leadership dilemma. More importantly, what Clark’s and the league proponents’ efforts point to is the unsettled and larger problem of how to conceive of effective global governance. As a result, Clark’s US-focused notion of constitutionality needs to be revised.

As this study has argued throughout, central to understanding today’s international politics are the China–US renegotiations of a political grand bargain. These ongoing, often stalled, negotiations underlie the deeper tensions of the emerging international order and have increasingly become more salient. Having said that, there are two recent empirical developments revealing the parameters of and, in turn, requiring revised conceptual tools for the analysis of a critical new phenomenon: firstly, contrary to what Zoellick still thought in 2005, China does no longer accept its status as a passive or responsible stakeholder. As a former Australian foreign minister and regional expert put it, China is the “Hidden Dragon No Longer” (Rudd 2013). Rather, since it views itself historically as a natural great power, it “will want to lead the 21st century as co-equal” to the United States (Yew 2013:3). Thus, it will “not settle for less” (White 2012:63). Secondly, a new discourse, as Chinese top leaders have phrased it since 2012, envisions a “new type of great-power relations” (Economist June 8, 2013:10). These official statements are confirmed by the prevalence of the “realist school”, which is “the dominant one in Chinese IR discourse today (if not forever)” (Shambaugh 2013:31). Such findings also seem to underline a broader realist pattern of the US–China relationship, in that both states reserve the right for themselves to determine “which games will be played and how” (Waltz 1979:194; Williams 2005:ch. 5). In other words, when “China views globalization” it looks “toward a new great-power politics” (Deng and Moore 2004:177). The United States government has reciprocated these inclinations through calls for a “new model” of great-power politics (Economist September 11, 2013:51). Moreover, while concealing the large extent of “strategic distrust” between them, the new demands for great-power leadership are accompanied by repeated and self-interested calls of the leaders of both countries “to ensure…effectiveness in conducting global governance” (Jiechi 2012).

Clearly, in light of these developments, Clark’s original assumptions of a singular, US-based hegemony have lost much of their explanatory power. Identifying major gaps in the existing literatures in the following sections then helps to emphasize the importance of this chapter’s task. In particular, the fourth component of Clark’s notion of legitimacy, that