



# Theory of Unipolar Politics (Cambridge Studies in International Relations)

*By Nuno P. Monteiro*

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Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States enjoys unparalleled military power. The international system is therefore unipolar. A quarter century later, however, we still possess no theory of unipolarity. Theory of Unipolar Politics provides one. Dr. Nuno P. Monteiro answers three of the most important questions about the workings of a unipolar world. Is it durable? Is it peaceful? What is the best grand strategy a unipolar power such as the contemporary United States can implement? In our nuclear world, the power preponderance of the United States is potentially durable but likely to produce frequent conflict. Furthermore, in order to maintain its power preponderance, the United States must remain militarily engaged in the world and accommodate the economic growth of its major competitors, namely, China. This strategy, however, will lead Washington to wage war frequently. In sum, military power preponderance brings significant benefits but is not an unalloyed good.

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### **Review**

"Now that Waltz has passed away, Monteiro seems to be claiming his mantle as the most self-consciously structural-realist theorist in the discipline. ... Monteiro shows that realists are not necessarily pessimists: He views major powers as able to moderate their aspirations and make cogent judgments of costs and benefits. *Theory of Unipolar Politics* ... presents a creative, theoretically sophisticated, and tightly argued case for what one could call optimistic realism."

Robert O. Keohane, *Perspectives on Politics*

"This is undoubtedly one of the most important works in IR theory in recent years, restoring 'grand theory' to honor ... and posing anew the fundamental questions in the discipline. ... Mandatory reading for both academics specialists and for policy makers who are trying to decipher the new configurations of the contemporary world. ... A real masterpiece, one of those books that allow us to improve our understanding of world affairs, revealing the extent to which IR theory is indispensable."

Olivier Schmitt, *War Studies Publications*

"*Theory of Unipolar Politics* provides an outstanding contribution to our understanding of unipolarity and to current U.S. foreign policy discourse, as well as an impressive structural theory of international politics in its own right."

Brian Blankenship, *Political Science Quarterly*

"Theory of Unipolar Politics is a signal contribution to the scholarship on the nature and functioning of today's international system. Conceptually bold and smoothly and carefully written, it takes on central questions of the day with arguments and evidence that even skeptics have to confront. Long after dozens of speedily written tomes about contemporary rise-and-decline dynamics are forgotten, Monteiro's book will continue to shape scholarly inquiry."

William C. Wohlforth, Daniel Webster Professor of Government, Dartmouth College

"Nuno Monteiro has written a major book on unipolarity that makes it clear he is among the very best international relations theorists in the land. Most importantly, he explains why, contrary to conventional post-Cold War wisdom, unipolarity has not been peaceful, especially for the United States. Theory of Unipolar Politics will be a must-read for those in international relations for many years to come."

John J. Mearsheimer, R. Wendell Harrison Distinguished Service Professor of Political Science, University of Chicago

"Theory of Unipolar Politics fills an important gap in international relations theory by providing a full, careful exploration of unipolarity. Moving beyond debates about whether unipolarity will endure, Monteiro explains the central role of the unipole's grand strategy and its critical link to international conflict. Building on these arguments, this book provides valuable guidance for the United States in dealing with China's rise."

Charles Glaser, George Washington University

"... [Monteiro's] crisp account offers a strong theoretical argument and vivid empirical evidence ... Impressively, he eschews determinist claims about both the inevitability of American decline and the

perpetuation of America's international advantage. Instead, he identifies crucial choices that face policy makers in the United States, China, and in smaller states whose decisions will shape the evolution of international politics over the coming decades."

Avery Goldstein, David M. Knott Professor of Global Politics and International Relations, University of Pennsylvania

#### About the Author

Nuno P. Monteiro is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Yale University, where he teaches international relations theory and security studies. Dr Monteiro's research focuses on great power politics, power transitions, nuclear proliferation, the causes of war, and deterrence theory. His articles have appeared in *International Organization*, *International Security* and *International Theory*. Dr Monteiro's commentary on these and other topics has appeared in *The Guardian*, *Foreign Affairs*, *The National Interest*, and *Project Syndicate*, among other outlets. He is a research fellow at Yale's Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies and a member of the Scientific Council of the Portuguese International Relations Institute.

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