World Order with Chinese Characteristics

The Development of Chinese IR and Implications for Chinese Foreign Policy

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ABSTRACT

As China continues to grow in material power it increasingly has the capability and desire to put its own design on world order. The key question is what kind of order does China want? This paper seeks to address this question by looking at the development of Chinese IR theories and their relationship to foreign policy. I argue that Chinese IR theories contain alternative 'Chinese' visions of world order and thus help to shape the worldview of policymakers. Chinese scholars' direct engagement with ideas drawn from Confucianism, and their attempt to bring these ideas into IR theory, has the possibility to influence policymakers' understandings of what constitutes a stable and just international order and China's role in such an order. The recent publication of a white paper detailing China's policies on the future of Asia-Pacific security cooperation will be analyzed for the influence of Chinese IR theory on policy and to assess China's vision for an alternative world order.

Introduction

As China continues to grow in material power it increasingly has the capability and desire to put its own design on world order. Indeed, in recent years China has cast off its previously cautious and insular approach to international affairs and adopted a more 'assertive' foreign policy in a bid to reshape global norms.[1] To explain this metamorphosis in Chinese foreign policy some scholars have looked to system-level factors such as China's changing position in the international system and increasing material capabilities.[2] Others have looked to domestic-level factors such as bureaucratic infighting, competing interest groups and growing nationalism.[3] Still others have looked to individual-level factors such as the beliefs and preferences of policymaking elites that shape their understanding of international politics and the appropriate role of China as a Great Power.[4] Studying the factors behind China's shift to a more activist foreign policy since 2009, Liao argues that it "can mainly be attributed to elite perceptions and leadership preferences."[5]

Accepting that the beliefs of policymaking elites matters in foreign policy, the question still remains: where do these beliefs come from? With regards to China this is still an open question, underscored by the number of scholars asking "what China wants" in recent years.[6] It appears that China still lacks a clear vision of world order that could help guide foreign policy as it takes up Great Power status. Thus, one prominent analyst asks: "If the United States prefers liberal institutions, democracy and human rights, in addition to strategic primacy, what does China prefer as its international ideals?"[7] Part of the answer lies in the alternative visions of world order provided by Chinese international relations scholars.

The recent attempt by Chinese scholars to create a 'Chinese' international relations (IR) theory is a benchmark in the rise of China and its affect on the international order. Chinese scholars are seeking to go past the dominant Western approaches of realism, liberalism and constructivism to create their own 'Chinese' theories of IR. Post-2007, as China emerged as a major power, there has been a concerted effort by Chinese IR

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[1] Michael D. Swaine, "Perceptions of an Assertive China," *China Leadership Monitor* 32 (Spring 2010): 1–19.

[2] Kai He and Huiyun Feng, "Debating China's Assertiveness: Taking China's Power and Interests Seriously," *International Politics* 49, no. 5 (September 2012): 633–44; John Mearsheimer, "The Gathering Storm: China's Challenge to US Power in Asia," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3, no. 4 (December 1, 2010): 381–96.

[3] Linda Jakobson and Ryan Manuel, "How Are Foreign Policy Decisions Made in China?," *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies* 3, no. 1 (January 2016): 101–10; Suisheng Zhao, "Foreign Policy Implications of Chinese Nationalism Revisited: The Strident Turn," *Journal of Contemporary China* 22, no. 82 (July 2013): 535–53.

[4] Nien-Chung Chang Liao, "The Sources of China's Assertiveness: The System, Domestic Politics or Leadership Preferences?," *International Affairs* 92, no. 4 (2016): 817–33; Aaron L. Friedberg, "The Sources of Chinese Conduct: Explaining Beijing's Assertiveness," *The Washington Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (October 2, 2014): 133–50.

[5] Liao, "The Sources of China's Assertiveness," 818.

[6] Jeffrey W. Legro, "What China Will Want: The Future Intentions of a Rising Power," *Perspectives on Politics* 5, no. 3 (September 2007): 515–34.

[7] Feng Zhang, "Rethinking China's Grand Strategy: Beijing's Evolving National Interests and Strategic Ideas in the Reform Era," *International Politics* 49, no. 3 (May 2012): 339.

scholars to create an indigenous IR theory. By developing a distinct 'Chinese' IR theory based on China's history, philosophy and culture, these scholars hope to provide better analytical frameworks and theoretical tools to explain China's rise, its views of world order and to guide foreign policy.

There is little doubt that China will use its power to reshape the current global order more in line with its interests. The key question is what kind of order does China want? This paper seeks to address this question by looking at the development of Chinese IR theories and their relationship to foreign policy. I argue that Chinese IR theories contain alternative 'Chinese' visions of world order and thus help to shape the worldview of policymakers. Chinese IR scholars' direct engagement with ideas drawn from Confucianism, and their attempt to bring these ideas into IR theory, has the possibility to influence policymakers' understandings of what constitutes a stable and just international order and China's role in such an order. The recent publication of a white paper detailing China's policies on the future of Asia-Pacific security cooperation will be analyzed for the influence of Chinese IR theory on policy and to assess China's vision for an alternative world order.

The Development of Chinese IR Theory

The development of international relations theory in China since the 'reform and opening up' of 1979 has been framed by three debates about the nature of international politics and China's role in international society.[8]

The first debate was about whether China was a proletarian revolutionary state that should continue its struggle against global imperialism and capitalism or should become a 'normal' state focused on economic development and peaceful relations with other states. At the heart of this debate was the nature of the international system: was the 'theme of the times' war and revolution or peace and development? The Party, in the 1987 Report to the 13th National Congress of the CCP, would settle on the latter.[9] Debate on the nature of the state and the international system continued among academics until the early 2000s when most settled on the idea that the international system was characterized by peace and development.[10]

The second debate was about China's national interest – what is it and how can it be realized? Since Marxism views the interest of the state as the interest of the ruling class, there existed a taboo about debating the national interest, and the Chinese government proclaimed the "interest of the Chinese people" and the "interest of the people of the world" as the official national interest. Most academics also fell into this line. Forwards to IR textbooks referred to the national interest as "a capitalist international relations

[8] Qin Yaqing, "Development of International Relations Theory in China," *International Studies* 46, no. 1–2 (January 1, 2009): 185–201; Xu Jin, "Debates in IR Academia and China's Policy Adjustments," *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 9, no. 4 (2016): 459–85.

[9] Zhao Ziyang, "沿着有中国特色的社会主义道路前进-在中国共产党第十三次全国代表大会上的报告 ('Advance along the Road of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics: Report of the Thirteenth National Congress of the CCP)," November 4, 1987, http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64162/134902/8092174.html.

[10] Xu, "Debates in IR Academia and China's Policy Adjustments," 464–68.

concept" and would equate the national interest to the interest of the ruling class.[11] Yan Xuetong's book, *Analysis of China's National Interest*, challenged the orthodoxy and caused intense debate because of his claim that the national interest is unrelated to class interest, but rather is the interest of the entire nation. The Chinese government would eventually adopt this position, increasingly defining the national interest in terms of economic development.

The third debate was about China's 'peaceful rise' – could it remain peaceful as China continued its rapid ascent to Great Power status? After Zheng Bijian proposed the idea of "peaceful rise" in 2002 in a speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, the Chinese IR community was quick to respond.[12] Realists, like Yan Xuetong, were sceptical that the United States would allow China to rise peacefully. Liberals were more sanguine and argued for further integration into international institutions to deepen cooperation among the major powers, emphasizing the 'peaceful' in peaceful rise.[13] Constructivism was introduced with the translation of Wendt's *Social Theory of International Politics* in 2000, and immediately became a dominant approach to tackle to issue of a rising power. Constructivists, also believing in the possibility of a peaceful rise, emphasized the constitutive effects of China joining international society.[14]

We can add a fourth debate: whether Chinese foreign policy should continue to follow the cardinal policy of Deng Xiaoping, namely to 'hide one's capacity and bide one's time' (*taoguang yanghui* 韬光养晦), or to shift towards a more assertive foreign policy. As will be discussed later, China has moved away from Deng's cautious policy.

By 2007, research based on the dominant 'Western' approaches of realism, liberalism and constructivism filled Chinese publications.[15] Citing the dominance of 'Western' approaches in the way IR was studied in China, two scholars, Mei Ran of Peking University and Ren Xiao of Fudan University, both called for the development of a 'Chinese School' of international relations (中国学派).[16]

While the label 'Chinese School' has become a point of contention, most scholars nevertheless retain the goal of developing indigenous theories not to replace 'Western' IR theories but rather to enrich them. That is, the search for a 'Chinese' IR theory means reflecting on the lessons provided by Chinese history and philosophy to answer

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[11] Ibid., 468–70.

[12] Yan Xuetong, "对'和平崛起'的理解('Understanding the Peaceful Rise')," *Teaching and Research*, no. 4 (2004): 6; Wang Jisi, "和平崛起提出的意义('The Significance of the Peaceful Rise Proposal')," *Teaching and Research*, no. 4 (2004): 7.

[13] Zhang Minqian, "和平崛起的目标在于和平('The Goal of Peaceful Rise Lies in Peace')," *Teaching and Research*, no. 4 (2004): 8.

[14] Qin Yaqing, "国家身份、战略文化和安全利益－ 关于中国与国际社会关系的三个假设('National Identity, Strategic Culture, and Security Interests: Three Hypotheses on the Interaction between China and International Society')," *World Economics and Politics* 10 (2003): 10–15.

[15] Qin, "Development of International Relations Theory in China," 245.

[16] Qin Yaqing, "国际关系理论的核心问题与中国学派的生成 ('The Core Problems of International Relations Theory and the Birth of a Chinese School of International Relations')," *Zhongguo Shehui Kexue (Social Sciences in China)*, no. 3 (2005): 165–76; Ren Xiao, "走自主发展之路－争论中的'中国学派' ('The Road of Independent Development: The 'Chinese School' Debate')," *国际政治研究 (International Politics Quarterly)* 30, no. 2 (2009): 15–28.

contemporary problems.[17] It is about finding problems that Western IR theory fails to explain, or cannot provide satisfactory answers to, and looking back to the Chinese experience to search for better answers. It is also explicitly involved in offering guidance to China's foreign policymakers.[18] The most pressing problem for China today has naturally become the core *problematique* for Chinese IR research: how to peacefully integrate a rising China into the international system.[19] A related question is what constitutes a stable international order and what is China's role in such an order.

What is particularly notable in this pursuit of a 'Chinese' theory is the revival of traditional Chinese philosophy, particularly Confucianism, and its application to contemporary international relations. Chinese scholars are retrieving Confucian ideas about hierarchy, benevolent rule (王道), deference and rites (礼), coexistence (和而不同), and *tianxia* (天下), in an attempt to rework IR theory.

Despite the constitutive relationship between the ideas of the academic community and China's foreign relations, there has been remarkably little research done on the relationship between Chinese theories of IR and foreign policy.[20]

Ideas and Foreign Policy

There are multiple channels for Chinese scholars to influence foreign policy debates. First, there are several think tanks involved in policy research that maintain close ties to the central government, including: China Institute for Contemporary International Relations (affiliated with the Ministry of State Security), Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (State Council), China Institute of International Studies (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and the Shanghai Institute of International Studies (Shanghai Municipal Government). As Chinese interests around the world have grown, foreign policy has become more complex and the government has increasingly relied on scholars both inside and outside of these think tanks to provide policy analysis and recommendation.[21] Discussions in the academic community are closely linked, and sometimes initiated by, policy debates.[22] Moreover, much academic scholarship in China is written to provide

[17] Feng Zhang, "The Tsinghua Approach and the Inception of Chinese Theories of International Relations," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 5, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 80.
[18] Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 21.
[19] Qin, "国际关系理论的核心问题与中国学派的生成 ('The Core Problems of International Relations Theory and the Birth of a Chinese School of International Relations')," 175.
[20] A recent attempt has been made by Xu Jin. See: Xu, "Debates in IR Academia and China's Policy Adjustments."
[21] Gong Li, Men Honghua, and Sun Dongfang, "中国外交决策机制变迁研究 ('Research on Institutional Changes of Chinese Foreign Policy Decision Mechanisms')," *世界经济与政治 (World Economics and Politics)*, no. 11 (2009).
[22] Zeng Jinghan, "Constructing a 'new Type of Great Power Relations': The State of Debate in China (1998-2014)," *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 18, no. 2 (2016): 422–42; Xu, "Debates in IR Academia and China's Policy Adjustments."

policy advice to the government rather than for the purpose of theory building.[23] Finally, there are more direct opportunities for academics to influence top leaders through Politburo "study sessions" when professionals are invited to give lectures on specialized topics directly to the top leaders of the central government.[24]

The ideas that underpin foreign policy decisions are constituted in part by an actor's identity. Since state interests are constituted by a mix of historical, social, and cultural traditions that help to make up one's beliefs of the world and one's role in it,[25] ideas are not independent from power and interest – the latter are constituted by how an actor understands themselves and their role in the world. Thus, the foreign policy decisions made by great powers are not determined by power or interest alone, but ideas about how power should be used.[26]

An important source for ideas on how state power should be used comes from the writing and advice provided by scholars. IR theory is especially relevant given its explicit focus on state behaviour. A useful way to look at the relationship between IR theory and foreign policy is to understand theories as 'worldviews' that "do not reflect the world (…) [but] represent it, not only constraining our vision but also enabling us to develop a language of concepts and terms that in turn make it possible to talk intelligibly about international relations."[27] Theories of international relations are not objective, systematic frameworks for analyzing international politics in a value-free and universalist manner, but contain assumptions about what constitutes international politics. They also have an evaluative aspect, "providing the basis for judging and prescribing institutional arrangements and principles of conduct with regard to or within the parameters of international relations."[28] Worldviews define how one sees international politics, how units relate to each other, and prescribes and proscribes appropriate action in such a world.

The argument taken here is that Chinese international relations theories provide a worldview(s) that help to shape policymakers' understanding of global politics and how the Chinese state should best use its power in such a world. Of course, this does not imply that the Chinese foreign policy is directed by the advice of international relations scholars, or that policymakers even seek their advice.[29] The functioning of Chinese

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[23] Zhu Tianbao and Margaret Pearson, "Globalization and the Role of the State: Reflections on Chinese International and Comparative Political Economy Scholarship," *Review of International Political Economy* 20, no. 6 (2013): 1215–43.

[24] Alice L. Miller, "Politburo Processes under Xi Jinping," *China Leadership Monitor* 47 (July 14, 2015): 1–12; Lu Yiyi, "The Collective Study Sessions of the Politburo: A Multipurpose Tool of China's Central Leadership" (China Policy Institute, University of Nottingham, October 2007).

[25] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 118–19; Albert S. Yee, "Thick Rationality and the Missing 'Brute Fact': The Limits of Rationalist Incorporations," *Journal of Politics* 59, no. 4 (November 1997): 1001–39.

[26] Jeffrey W. Legro, *Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2007).

[27] Martin Griffiths, "Worldviews and IR Theory: Conquest or Coexistence?," in *International Relations Theory for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Martin Griffiths (London/New York: Routledge, 2007), 6.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Although, this certainly does happen. Qin Yaqing was invited to lecture the Politburo on "world order and China's security environment" in February 2004, right around the time Hu Jintao

foreign policy is extremely opaque and such connections would be tenuous at best. But that is not to say that there is no relationship between scholarship and policymaking. Xu Jin, a senior research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, has recently found that when there is consistency between IR scholarship and policymaking, those academics with scholarship consistent with state policy are more likely to have their policy proposals considered by policymakers.[30]

Hierarchy and Order

After decades of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, ideas drawn from traditional Chinese thought, particularly Confucianism, are seeping back into Chinese foreign policy discourse and practice. Chinese IR theorists have attempted to incorporate Confucian ideas into their reworking of IR theory.

The traditional Chinese order in East Asia was one based on hierarchy, not equality. This international order, in full maturity during the Ming-Qing period (1368-1911), is best understood as a distinct international society with its own formal and informal norms and institutions governing the relations of political units.[31] The central institution – the tribute system – defined relations among regional units in hierarchical terms. China was at the top of this order, with the Chinese emperor ruling all-under-heaven (*tianxia*), and the relationship between China and its neighbours in East Asia was conceived of as one of sovereign-subordinate or father-son.[32] According to Confucian ethics, this relationship implied different responsibilities according to status. The duty of the Chinese emperor was to exercise imperial grace (*en* 恩) and humaneness (*ren* 仁) while the duty of subordinate rulers was to exercise loyalty (*zhong* 忠), integrity (*cheng* 诚), and obedience (*shun* 顺).[33] Although the substance and cohesion of this international society varied over time, it institutionalized hierarchical relations among East Asian states for centuries. It was relatively stable, without the balance of power politics endemic in Europe at the time.[34] As such, some scholars have reexamined the Chinese order as an alternative to the current Westphalian order, which rests on formal and legal equality, but informal hierarchy, among sovereign states.

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embraced "Peaceful Rise" and "harmonious world" See: Lu, "The Collective Study Sessions of the Politburo," 10.

[30] Xu, "Debates in IR Academia and China's Policy Adjustments."

[31] David C. Kang, *China Rising: Peace, Power, and Order in East Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Yongjin Zhang and Barry Buzan, "The Tributary System as International Society in Theory and Practice," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 5, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 3–36; Feng Zhang, *Chinese Hegemony: Grand Strategy and International Institutions in East Asian History* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2015).

[32] Zhang, *Chinese Hegemony*, chap. 2.

[33] Of course, the degree of hierarchy, and the ideal of this Confucian relationship, varied among China's neighbours and over time as the power of China waxed and waned. Zhang, *Chinese Hegemony*.

[34] Kang notes that there were only two wars between the major states of East Asia – China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam – between the founding of the Ming dynasty in 1368 and the start of the Opium Wars in 1841. See: David C. Kang, *East Asia before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute*, Contemporary Asia in the World (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 2.

The foreign policy of China during the early part of this order was influenced by neo-Confucian ideas about proper governance. The emperor should treat foreign rulers with moral excellence (*de* 德) – expressed through grace and humaneness - and in exchange foreign rulers were expected to willingly show deference to the emperor by expressing loyalty and obedience. If foreign rulers lacked these qualities, the emperor should allow them to improve their moral excellence and change behaviour (*xiu de gai xing* 修德改行) or even ask foreign rulers to improve their behaviour (*zi wei sheng jiao* 自为声教) before resuming relations with China.[35] If this was unsuccessful and subordinates continued to show impropriety towards China then a punitive expedition (*zheng tao zhi shi* 征讨之师) was necessary to restore order.

Chinese hegemony within this international system was not simply maintained by coercion alone. David Kang argues that the Chinese order rested above all on Chinese cultural dominance.[36] Regional states chose not to 'balance' against a powerful China but rather acquiesced to Chinese leadership because of a shared set of norms and expectations that governed relations among regional states. Neighbouring Confucian states willingly adopted Chinese institutions, including its style of governance, writing system, and religion. Elites in Japan, Korea and Vietnam recognized China as the cultural centre of the region and, under the influence of Confucian norms of hierarchy, willingly participated in the tribute system.[37]

One should be careful not to understate the tensions among China's neighbours by exaggerating ideological harmony among regional states. It is perhaps more appropriate to say that China's relationship with its neighbours within this order were a "practice of asymmetric international relationships based on an ideology of mutual benefit and a practice of negotiation based on acknowledgement of the autonomy of smaller partners."[38] Smaller states were required to show deference to China, preserving the international order, while China was required to exercise restraint and respect the territorial borders and domestic affairs of smaller states. This helps to explain why ritual was so important in the tribute system. In a hierarchic order defined by unequal power relations, the ritual of sending tribute missions to Beijing reaffirmed both the deference to the Chinese order on the part of smaller states and the acknowledgment of autonomy for the smaller state on the part of China.[39] If both actors fulfilled their appropriate roles the order would remain stable.

Confucian hierarchy and Tianxia

The equation of hierarchy with order is implicit in the concept of *Tianxia*, popularized and brought into the IR debate by Zhao Tingyang, a philosopher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. *Tianxia* describes an ideal Chinese model of world order that is a

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[35] Feng Zhang, "Confucian Foreign Policy Traditions in Chinese History," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 8, no. 2 (June 1, 2015): 204.
[36] Kang, *China Rising*.
[37] Ibid., 43–46.
[38] Brantly Womack, "Recognition, Deference, and Respect: Generalizing the Lessons of an Asymmetric Asian Order," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 16, no. 1/2 (2009): 105–6.
[39] Ibid., 109.

borderless and harmonious world that that "benefits the people of all nations, and produces the common wellbeing in the world."[40] Zhao draws on Laozi's *Dao De Jing* to solve current problems of world order, which he argues are interminably caused by the Westphalian interstate system. It is only by transcending this system of competing state that humanity can solve these problems. Zhao proposes an "all-under-heaven" (*tianxia* 天下) political system whereby a transcendental world government manages states, institutions and law to maintain harmony and uphold universal order. Zhao is concerned with applying the norms of this ideal order in the 21st century. In Confucian fashion, Zhao stresses the ability of practicing good governance to 'turn the enemy into the friend' by citing the 'voluntary' tribute system.[41]

Zhao's interpretation of *Tianxia* shares commonalities with foreign policy initiatives of the central government, most notably Hu Jintao's concept of "harmonious world", which Zhao praised as an effective use of the resources of ancient Chinese thought.[42] "Harmonious world" refers to a world where all civilizations coexist peacefully on the basis of 'shared interests' such as peace and development. It is directly inspired by Confucius' emphasis on 'harmony without uniformity' (*he er bu tong* 和而不同).[43] Yu Keping, a close advisor to Hu, explicitly linked Hu's proposal with *Tianxia*, writing that "harmonious world" is a "new take on the development of the ancient Chinese dream of Tianxia Datong (great harmony of the world)."[44]

One of the foundations of Confucianism is *li* (礼) – generally translated as ritual. A hierarchical society depends on individuals acting out appropriate behaviour according to their rank. *Li* encourages individuals to exercise proper behaviour according to their status in the "five bonds" – father/son, ruler/subject, husband/wife, elder/younger, and friends. Through the practice of ritual a harmonious society can be cultivated.[45]

The identification of order with hierarchy is a core element in Chinese thought that Chinese IR theorists have attempted to incorporate in their reworking of IR theory. To illustrate the relevance of 'Chinese' IR theory to shape foreign policy by offering alternative visions of world order, I draw on one author who has most explicitly translated Confucian ideas of hierarchy and order into policy prescriptions, Yan Xuetong.

Yan Xuetong's Moral Realism

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[40] Zhao Tingyang, "A Political World Philosophy in Terms of All-under-Heaven (Tian-Xia)," *Diogenes* 56, no. 1 (February 1, 2009): 8.
[41] Zhao Tingyang, "Rethinking Empire from a Chinese Concept 'All-under-Heaven' (Tian-Xia,)," *Social Identities* 12, no. 1 (January 2006): 35.
[42] Zhao Tingyang, "关于和谐世界的思考('Some Thoughts on the Concept of Harmonious World)," *世界经济与政治 (World Economics and Politics)* 9, no. 1 (2006).
[43] Zou Keyuan, "Building a 'Harmonious World': A Mission Impossible?," *Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies* 30, no. 2 (2012): 81.
[44] Yu Keping, "We Must Work to Create a Harmonious World," *China Daily*, May 10, 2007, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2007-05/10/content_869406.htm.
[45] Pan Junwu, "Chinese Philosophy and International Law," *Asian Journal of International Law* 1, no. 2 (July 2011): 34.

Yan's moral realism is a theory that combines the tenets of realism with the moral philosophy of pre-Qin philosophers, primarily the work of Xunzi. It retains the realist emphasis on hard power and conflict as the central feature of international politics, but introduces an emphasis on political power in addition to the realist emphasis on material power, morality as an important variable in state power, an international system characterized by hierarchy, and the Confucian ideal of 'humane authority' (*wang dao* 王道). By acting according to moral norms, leading states can shape the behaviour of other states in the international system. Order in the system comes from the moral authority of the leading state. Yan's moral realism differs from 'Western' IR in two ways: political leadership requires moral authority and the international system contains, and is stabilized by, hierarchical structures.

Xunzi believed that establishing norms of hierarchy - distinguishing social classes so that one's conduct could be determined by one's status in the social hierarchy - would reduce the chances of violent societal conflict occurring. Yan brings this insight into the international realm.

The starting point is that states interact in an international system that is characterized by anarchy and that there are differences, sometimes quite large, in the material capabilities among them.[46] Within this anarchical structure, however, there exist hierarchical relationships between states. Yan points to several international institutions that operate on formally differentiated responsibilities according to the power of states, including the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), which gives extraordinary decision-making power over global security issues to its five permanent members, and the World Bank, which has differentiated levels of voting power based on the financial contribution of members. Yan thus joins other scholars in arguing that the international system is not as anarchic as Waltz presumed.[47] An international system in which the norm of formal equality among states coexists with clear differences in material power leads to 'organized hypocrisy' in international affairs.[48]

Yan argues that combining the norm of equality found in contemporary international relations with the norm of hierarchy advocated by pre-Qin thinkers offers a more stable alternative to the current international order. The norm of equality means "states with the same power enjoy the same international rights, while states of different grades respect the implementation of common regulations."[49] This understanding of equality is equality among states of similar status, not complete sovereign equality among all states. The norm of hierarchy means "the strong should undertake greater international responsibilities while the weak respect the implementation of discriminatory international

[46] Kenneth N. Waltz, ed., *Theory of International Politics* (Long Grove, Ill: Waveland Press, 2010).
[47] David A. Lake, "Escape from the State of Nature: Authority and Hierarchy in World Politics," *International Security* 32, no. 1 (Summer 2007): 47–79; Jack Donnelly, "Sovereign Inequalities and Hierarchy in Anarchy: American Power and International Society," *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 2 (2006): 139–70.
[48] Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1999).
[49] Yan, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, 214.

rules."[50] This combination of hierarchy in decision-making and sovereign equality – what Simpson calls "juridical sovereignty"[51] – has been present in international society in varying degrees since the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and implies a special role for Great Powers in world affairs.[52]

There is an affinity between Yan's understanding of hierarchy in international society and the English School. Yan, like English School writers, accepts that hierarchy exists within the anarchical international system,[53] and that this is due to the inequality of power among states in the international system.[54] Consider Yan's example of the Security Council - a regime that formally institutionalizes hierarchical relations, with the United States, Russia, France, UK and China having extraordinary rights and responsibilities over global security affairs. It is an example of what Gerry Simpson calls "legalized hegemony":

> The existence within an international society of a powerful elite of states whose superior status is recognized by minor powers as a political fact giving rise to the existence of certain constitutional privileges, rights and duties and whose relations with each other are defined by an adherence to a rough principle of sovereign equality.[55]

Yan wants to institutionalize hierarchical norms more deeply among states because he takes it to be a normative goal – hierarchical relations equal stability. Although he makes it clear that his project is not one of pure hierarchy à la the tribute system,[56] it is a blend of hierarchical norms with existing norms of equality. What Yan sees is the success of hierarchical institutions in promoting stability among states and is calling for that success to be further replicated in other areas of global order: "China should propose, according to Xunzi's understanding, a normative hierarchical order that helps prevent conflict, whereby different countries bear different international security responsibilities, and promote a system wherein different countries abide by different security norms."[57]

What does this mean for Global Order?

China's position in Asia is more secure than it has been since the First Opium War began in 1839. Its $11.4 trillion economy is the region's largest, more than twice the size of second-place Japan. The $215 billion it spends on its military each year is by far the region's largest, more than fourfold second-place India.[58] It has settled 12 of its 14 land

[50] Ibid., 213.
[51] Gerry Simpson, *Great Powers and Outlaw States: Unequal Sovereigns in the International Legal Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 6.
[52] Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, 4th ed (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).
[53] Donnelly, "Sovereign Inequalities and Hierarchy in Anarchy."
[54] Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 199.
[55] Simpson, *Great Powers and Outlaw States*, 68.
[56] Yan writes that reinstating the tribute system would weaken China's political power. See: Ibid., 104.
[57] Yan Xuetong, "Xun Zi's Thoughts on International Politics and Their Implications," *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 2, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): 164.
[58] "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database 2015," accessed February 28, 2017, http://milexdata.sipri.org.

borders – just Bhutan and India remain. China has re-emerged as the region's dominant power. This strong position provides China with an opportunity to put its own imprint on regional order.[59]

The roots of the current order are found in the period after World War II when the US took advantage of its position as the most powerful state in the world to construct a new international order based on the principles of multilateralism and "embedded liberalism".[60] The United Nations system codified the norms governing international relations, including the principle of sovereign equality among states, the peaceful settlement of international disputes, and refraining from the threat or use of force. The Bretton Woods agreements established an open multilateral trading order. In the "unipolar moment" after the end of the Cold War, the US moved to further institutionalize a global order based on liberal norms.

The consensus among Chinese scholars is that the post-Cold War order benefited China.[61] Indeed, in the decade after China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, the Chinese economy grew at an average of more than 10 percent annually.[62] But while nearly a decade ago John Ikenberry could write that China "is increasingly working within, rather than outside of, the Western order"[63], it seems that integration has reached its limits. China is confronting an order that was built when Western power was at its apex, and which parts are viewed as inimical to Chinese economic and security interests. Stymied by the intransigence of the Western powers at serious reform of existing institutions to better accommodate China's new position in the international system, and buoyed by a sense of national rejuvenation, China has begun to take the lead as an institution-builder in a bid to reshape global order to better reflect its status as a Great Power.[64]

Chinese IR scholars argue that a Chinese order must contain elements of China's past order and the direction of China's foreign policy should be to move world order to that place. An important question is: towards which order? And how can we assess the progression towards a more Chinese global order? China's attempt to reshape world order will start in the Asia-Pacific region where China is already second-among-equals to the US. It is to this region that we should look for Chinese attempts to reshape existing order.

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[59] Zhang Yunling, "China and Its Neighbourhood: Transformation, Challenges and Grand Strategy," *International Affairs* 92, no. 4 (2016): 835–48.
[60] John Ruggie, "International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order," *International Organization* 36, no. 2 (Spring 1982): 379–415.
[61] Zeng Jinghan and Shaun Breslin, "China's 'New Type of Great Power Relations': a G2 with Chinese Characteristics?," *International Affairs* 92, no. 4 (2016): 776.
[62] More precisely, 9.1% (2002), 10% (2003), 10.1% (2004), 11.4% (2005), 12.7% (2006), 14.2% (2007), 9.7% (2008), 9.4% (2009), 10.6% (2010) and 9.5% (2011). World Bank, "GDP Growth (Annual %), China," accessed February 19, 2017, http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=CN.
[63] G. John Ikenberry, "The Rise of China and the Future of the West," *Foreign Affairs* 23 (2008): 32.
[64] Ren Xiao, "China as an Institution-Builder: The Case of the AIIB," *The Pacific Review* 29, no. 3 (May 26, 2016): 435–42.

Chinese President Xi Jinping's most important foreign policy speech to date was given at the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs (FAWC) in November 2014.[65] Speaking to an unusual number of high-level officials, including the entire Politburo Standing Committee as well as nearly every ambassadorial-level official posted overseas, Xi provided an overview of China's foreign relations since the 18th Party Congress held in November 2012, an assessment of the current international environment and China's place in it, and provided a blueprint for China's foreign policy priorities in the coming years.

Xi emphasized China's growing interdependence with the international community:

> "China's relations with the world are going through profound changes; its interactions with the international community have become closer than ever before. China's dependence on the world and its involvement in international affairs are deepening, so are the world's dependence on China and its impact on China."[66]

The mutual dependence between China and the world means China is now in a position to have a more noticeable effect on the development and operation of international norms. It also means that China's interests are now global. With global interests have come subtle changes in China's long-standing insistence on the principles of absolute sovereignty and non-interference.[67] Given the increasing interdependence between China and the outside world, a more active, dynamic, and sophisticated foreign policy strategy is necessary. Accordingly, Xi called on diplomats in the audience to "conduct diplomacy with a salient Chinese feature and a Chinese vision" and to "develop a distinctive diplomatic approach befitting its role of a major country."[68] That statement signaled a break from the cardinal policy of Deng Xiaoping to 'hide one's capacity and bide one's time' (*taoguang yanghui* 韬光养晦) towards a more assertive foreign policy.

A particularly notable feature of Xi's FAWC speech was the emphasis placed on the twin goals of development and security.[69] The latter includes the oft-repeated call for the protection of sovereignty, territorial integrity and maritime rights, but also the more active goal of reshaping the regional security environment. Indeed, just several months prior, at the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), an annual gathering of 26 Asian states, Xi called for regional states to "establish a new regional security cooperation architecture."[70] The fact that it is China making this proposal, as well as the massive resources at its disposal, suggests that China is poised to take a more active role as the leader of Asia.

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[65] Xi Jinping, "The Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs Was Held in Beijing," November 29, 2014, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1215680.shtml.
[66] Ibid.
[67] "The Libyan Dilemma," *The Economist*, September 10, 2011, http://www.economist.com/node/21528664.
[68] Xi, "The Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs Was Held in Beijing."
[69] Michael D. Swaine, "Xi Jinping's Address to the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs: Assessing and Advancing Major Power Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics," China Leadership Monitor, Winter 2015, 14.
[70] Xi Jinping, "New Asian Security Concept For New Progress in Security Cooperation," May 21, 2014, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1159951.shtml.

China's latest white paper on Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation

In January, China's State Council Information Office released a white paper detailing "China's Policies on Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation".[71] The report lays out China's vision for regional security cooperation, relations with other major Asia-Pacific nations, participation in regional multilateral institutions and views on regional "hotspot" issues, including North Korea, THAAD, and competing maritime claims in the South China Sea.

The white paper begins by outlining six recommendations to "promote peace and security" in the region[72]: (1) Promote "common development" by increasing economic integration and the building of regional free trade areas. China's contribution to this first recommendation is the "One Belt One Road" (OBOR) initiative, the Silk Road Fund and the AIIB. (2) Promote "the building of partnerships and strengthen the political foundation" of the region. Although the values and ideals of regional states are quite diverse, countries may strengthen political relations by "seeking common ground while reserving differences" (*qiutong cunyi* 求同存异). To strengthen the political foundation of the region, China has called for a "new model of international relations" (discussed more below). (3) To "improve the existing regional multilateral mechanisms" including Chinese-initiatives such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Xiangshan Forum, and CICA. (4) To "promote the rule-setting and improve the institutional safeguards" based on international as well as regional laws and norms. China's contribution includes the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. (5) To "intensify military exchanges and cooperation" among regional states. China's armed forces, by engaging in international security cooperation, not only provide support for its own national development goals but also "make positive contributions to the maintenance of world peace and regional stability." (6) To "properly resolve differences and disputes" through direct negotiation and consultation.

The publication of this white paper is a benchmark in China's return to regional supremacy and suggests that China is ready and eager to take a leading role in shaping the region. China maintains a central role in each of the six recommendations listed above either materially by supplying public goods (OBOR, AIIB) or conceptually by offering ideological principles to undergird interstate cooperation (Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, *qiutong cunyi*).

There are signs that the new regional order that China seeks to move toward has more hierarchical qualities than the current liberal order. Liu Zhenmin, vice-minister of foreign affairs, hinted toward a more hierarchical vision of regional order in his remarks to the 2014 Xiangshan Forum when he made divisions between 'major' countries and 'middle' and 'small' countries, suggesting that each has a distinct responsibility appropriate to their status.[73] This hierarchical division has been reiterated in the latest white paper:

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[71] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "China's Policies on Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation," January 2017, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1429771.shtml.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Liu Zhenmin, "Uphold Win-Win Cooperation and Promote Peace and Stability in the Asia-Pacific," October 17, 2015, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/t1306891.shtml.

> "Major countries should treat the strategic intentions of others in an objective and rational manner, reject the Cold War mentality, respect others' legitimate interests and concerns, strengthen positive interactions and respond to challenges with concerted efforts. Small and medium-sized countries need not and should not take sides among big countries."[74]

This is a vision of regional order that is not based on formal alliances. When US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter, speaking at the 2016 Shangri-La Dialogue just a few months before the Xiangshan Forum, proposed a "principled security network" amongst regional states, some Chinese scholars understandably viewed this as a threat.[75] The exhortation for smaller powers to 'not take sides' is a response to Carter's call to strengthen the system of formal alliances that act as the bedrock of America's regional strategy.

It could also be viewed as the first step towards normalizing Chinese leadership based on hierarchical norms that the Chinese order was once based on and that Chinese scholars believe is a foundation of order. The vision of future security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific as presented in the white paper, especially the distinction between major states and others, bears a resemblance to the hierarchical vision of order present in Chinese thought and reflected in contemporary Chinese IR scholarship in which China and the other major powers have an extraordinary role to play in establishing stable order while smaller powers have a responsibility to defer to their larger peers.

Benevolence for Deference

China has started to provide global public goods in a modern form of benevolence in exchange for deference to China's core interests.[76] Through the AIIB, New Development Bank, the Silk Road Fund, and perhaps most consequentially over the long-term, the OBOR project, China supplies excess capital and expertise in infrastructure development to neighbouring countries. Of course, there is an obvious instrumental benefit to China in distributing massive loans – it will have the long-term effect of tying the economic future of the region to the Chinese economy. But these projects also carry the possibility of institutionalizing China's relationship with recipients on a sovereign-subordinate basis whereby smaller states choose, willingly or not, to defer to Chinese interests. If states infringe on Chinese core interests they can expect economic retaliation unless they rectify improper behaviour. In 2016 alone, China punished Mongolia[77], Taiwan[78] and South

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[74] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "China's Policies on Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation."

[75] Shi Jiantao and Minnie Chan, "Washington Keen to Build 'principled Security Network' in Asia-Pacific, Says US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter," *South China Morning Post*, June 4, 2016, http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/1964662/washington-keen-build-principled-security-network-asia.

[76] Jeremy Paltiel, "Out of the Shadows: Xi Jinping and Peaceful Order in Post-Hegemonic Asia," *Unpublished Manuscript*, n.d.

[77] Michael Kohn, "Mongolia Vows No More Dalai Lama Visits After China Turns Screws," *Bloomberg Politics*, December 21, 2016, https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2016-12-21/mongolia-vows-no-more-dalai-lama-visits-after-china-turns-screws.

[78] "China 'Cutting Number of Tourists to Taiwan by Half,'" *Straits Times*, June 12, 2016, http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/china-cutting-number-of-tourists-to-taiwan-by-half.

Korea[79] in retaliation for actions that China deemed to be objectionable. Similar strategies of coercive economic diplomacy have been used against Japan, the Philippines, and Norway.[80]

States that defer to Chinese interests can expect to reap rewards, as Cambodia and the Philippines under President Rodrigo Duterte have found out.[81] Traditional Chinese foreign policy dealt with others on the basis of their acceptance of the Chinese Confucian order. Those that accepted or identified with Chinese hegemony would be granted more benevolence. In modern times, this means the granting of access to China's large domestic market, easy access to development loans and the bestowal of "strategic partnership" on allies.[82]

Chinese IR and Foreign Policy

Why is China assuming a leadership role and trying to reshape the regional order now, sixty years after Bandung and more than twenty-five years after Deng Xiaoping enumerated the strategy of *Taoguang Yanghui*? Following the 18th Party Congress in November 2012, China's foreign policy has turned away from focusing on friendly coexistence and peaceful development to actively managing the regional order.[83] After Xi Jinping assumed leadership, China has adopted a new, more active regional foreign policy in attempting to create a "community of common destiny" with regional states.[84] Chinese leaders view China assuming a leadership role in the region as the revival of a benign hierarchical order of shared peace and prosperity.[85]

The transformation of Chinese foreign policy could simply be the fact that China's rise has put it in a dominant material position to reshape regional order.[86] But a purely system-level explanation cannot explain why this shift has taken place under Xi, or indeed what Beijing's vision of world order looks like. The recent transformation in

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[79] Ankit Panda, "China Brings More Economic Retaliation for THAAD Against South Korea," *The Diplomat*, December 12, 2016, http://thediplomat.com/2016/12/china-brings-more-economic-retaliation-for-thaad-against-south-korea/.
[80] Bonnie Glaser, "China's Coercive Economic Diplomacy: A New and Worrying Trend," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, August 6, 2012, https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-coercive-economic-diplomacy-new-and-worrying-trend.
[81] Veasna Var, "China's Influence in Cambodia," *Khmer Times*, June 29, 2016, http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/26618/chinas-influence-in-cambodia/; Andreo Calonzo and Cecilia Yap, "China Visit Helps Duterte Reap Funding Deals Worth $24 Billion," *Bloomberg*, October 21, 2016, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-10-21/china-visit-helps-duterte-reap-funding-deals-worth-24-billion.
[82] Avery Goldstein, "The Diplomatic Face of China's Grand Strategy: A Rising Power's Emerging Choice," *The China Quarterly* 168 (December 2001): 835–64.
[83] Yan Xuetong, "From Keeping a Low Profile to Striving for Achievement," *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 7, no. 2 (June 1, 2014): 153–84; Zhang, "China and Its Neighbourhood."
[84] Xi Jinping, "让命运共同体意识在周边国家落地生根 (Let a Community of Common Destiny Take Root in Neighbouring Countries)," *Xinhua*, October 25, 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-10/25/c_117878944.htm.
[85] William A. Callahan, "China's Strategic Futures: Debating the Post-American World Order," *Asian Survey* 52, no. 4 (2012): 617–42.
[86] He and Feng, "Debating China's Assertiveness."

Chinese foreign policy is the result of individual-level factors, including changes in political elites' perceptions.[87]

To understand political elites' perceptions we must understand the traditional Chinese view of world order and how the Chinese IR community translates this worldview into policy prescriptions for China in the 21st century. By going back to ideals of 'humane authority', *Tianxia*, hierarchy and order, Chinese scholars are providing alternative visions for world order and offering advice for China as it takes up Great Power status. These alternative views of world order help to shape the beliefs and perceptions of Chinese policymakers about what kind of order China would like to move towards.

Since 2007, Chinese IR scholars have sought to create indigenous theories of IR to help answer some of the most pressing questions facing China today, including how to peacefully integrate a rising state into the international system and what a stable and just world order looks like. To answer these questions Chinese scholars have gone back to traditional Chinese philosophy and thought. Chinese IR scholars are excavating Confucian ideas about hierarchy that are applicable to China's reshaping of global order today. Their vision of world order is based on norms of hierarchy, with more deference given to major powers than the current liberal order.

Chinese IR scholars are bringing in ideas of Confucianism to help explain world politics and help guide Chinese foreign policy at a time when China is re-emerging as the leader of Asia and actively working to reshape regional norms. In order to make better foreign policy decisions, the Chinese government increasingly relies on scholars within think tanks and universities to provide policy prescriptions. Both the timing and form of China's adoption of an 'assertive' foreign policy and its assumption of a leading role in the Asia-Pacific suggests that a particular understanding of China's traditional role in the region shapes political elites' perceptions of China's role in international politics.

This preliminary study does not suggest that the Chinese IR shapes the beliefs and perceptions of policymaking elites alone or consistently over time. Clearly, policymakers are driven by system-level concerns such as gaining strategic primacy vis-à-vis the US and securing resources to fuel growth as well as domestic-level concerns such as answering to the needs of competing interest groups. But it does suggest a role for Chinese scholars in helping to shape what policymakers consider China's appropriate role in the world and its relations with smaller states. Perhaps Chinese IR will help to shape the international ideals that the Chinese state will have to eventually embrace as it becomes a global power. More research is needed to determine when and where IR scholarship influences foreign policy.

[87] Liao, "The Sources of China's Assertiveness"; Friedberg, "The Sources of Chinese Conduct."