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Harmony and humane governance - Contesting the social order in classical Chinese thought and 21st century global society

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Abstract

When China's President Hu Jintao articulated his country's 'harmonious world' (*hexie shijie*) foreign policy perspective at the United Nations' 60th anniversary in 2005, he spoke of the need 'to preserve the diversity of civilizations in the spirit of equality and openness, make international relations more democratic and jointly build a harmonious world where all civilizations coexist and accommodate each other.' This message has retained its salience in subsequent years and represents a particular vision of world order that is viewed as the 'preferred' option within current Chinese foreign policy. Where does this vision come from? In investigating the ancestry of the current leadership's policy posture of 'harmonious world', which has its domestic counterpart in 'harmonious society', it is necessary to delve into classical Chinese thought. But more than investigate the past to seek the origins and meaning of a key Chinese cultural concept, *harmony*, this paper also examines the implications of a stronger China articulating such a vision. Like the *Contention of the Hundred Schools of Thought* (770-221 BC) which flourished with the passing of the Zhou dynasty and its socio-political order, so too the sudden end of bipolar strategic competition at the close of the 20th century has left the field open to alternative modes of relating as nations and peoples, with globalization accelerating the transformative process. Is the world on the threshold of a new age of contestation of ideas for how global society advances? China's focus on constructing a 'harmonious world' is indicative of an attempt to render this Confucian idea as more than merely Chinese, that 'harmonious world' is, in effect, harmonious with the UN's vision and global governance cooperation in an era dominated by transnational security issues. This paper will investigate 'harmony' and the notion of humane governance in classical Chinese thought when the social order was being contested, as well as the prevailing world order when the crucial level of analysis is the global system, with China playing a more active role harmonizing dominant and weaker powers, Western and non-Western values.

1. Introduction

The global system need not be characterized by a zero-sum mentality of distrust, exclusionary politics, and a democratic deficit. In short, discord need not be accepted as the natural order of the socio-political universe. Win-win cooperation in security and economic affairs and a consultative system of global governance are both conceivable and achievable. Harmonious relations in the presence of diversity, rather than the expectation of discordant ones as the default setting in international relations, is a project supported by the nation that has risen to number two in global economic power while not renouncing its socialist political credentials. China's achievements in this and other sectors suggest its global stance in favour of harmony as the defining global concept of the future must be taken seriously. What is this concept as expressed by the Chinese government and where does it come from? How does it fit with the emergent global system of soft governance in which civil society, multilateral institutions, and international regimes are more commonplace in dealing with transnational issues than the traditional state-centric international system?

This paper will investigate 'harmony' and the notion of humane governance in classical Chinese thought when the social order was being contested, as well as the prevailing world order when the crucial level of analysis is the global system, with the People's Republic of China (PRC) playing a more active role harmonizing dominant and weaker powers, Western and non-Western values.

2. 'Harmony' and Humane Governance in Classical Chinese Thought

The concept of social harmony is part of a long and deep tradition within Chinese thought and culture focused on humane governance, a set of ideals that were valued by dominant Confucian¹ and syncretic schools of thought even during periods of intense conflict (see below). The real problems in achieving interstate and social harmony, moreover, were well understood from the 6th century B.C.E. onwards, and formed part of an extensive debate ranging across issues such as government, ethics, warfare, human nature, and the ultimate meaning of the cosmos and humanity's place in it. These ideas, and their historical contexts, are one channel among the complex inputs transforming government policy within the PRC during recent years.

The ancient, classical and medieval periods of Chinese thought provide a rich resource of moral, political and strategic thought that sought to achieve social harmony and political stability within a world in which military conflict remained common, and in which issues such as power, legitimacy and authority could not be ignored. Thus, harmony was sought amid diversity and conflict, and provided one of the keys towards shaping a relatively humane vision of governance. Even when overridden by pragmatic necessities or the failure of particular rulers, this moral agenda established a pattern of restraint and cultivation that emerged as a sophisticated vision of statecraft and government. Though at times Chinese

¹ Confucius (551-479 B.C.E.) was the codifier of Chinese tradition and is regarded as China's most influential philosopher.

Legalist doctrine favoured a harsher vision of government by laws and punishments, this was moderated both by the Confucian emphasis on humanity and the Taoist vision of a 'way' (*tao*) that positioned humans naturally within the universe.

2.1 Harmony and Diversity

Harmony (*he*, 和; sometimes transliterated as *ho*) has been taken as a core doctrine in Chinese culture generally and Confucian thought in particular, as found in early Chinese art, literature, historical texts and philosophy.² *He* in its root sense means 'and' and the original meaning goes back to singing patterns in which one singer replies to another and thus can be said to be in harmony.³ Thus the root character is indicative of grain and the mouth conjoining, and as a concept indicates the proper preparation and taste of food as a balance of elements that is satisfying and health-giving.⁴

However, it is important to distinguish this concept from 'identity' or 'assent' since only diverse components or different things can be in harmony, and this includes political views and the advice of ministers to rulers.⁵ Thus in the *Yijing (I Ching)* one of the early formative texts of ancient Chinese culture, harmony is based on a whole modality of complementary components in which the transformation of 'things' ends strife and leads back dialectically to a new harmony.⁶ Harmony thus becomes an active and transformative principle. In later periods *he* came to take on this notion of a 'creative process of harmonizing the world by the mind which results in a better state of the world'.⁷

'Harmony' readily took on political usages in early Chinese history, e.g. in materials referring back to early Zhou (Chou) history:

... Hence the former kings gave different surnames to the princes, looked for talent wherever it was to be found, chose ministers, took practiced workers and did this so as to increase variety.

² KEIGHTLEY, David N. "Early Civilization in China: Reflections on How It Became Chinese", in ROPP, Paul S. (ed.) *Heritage of China: Contemporary Perspectives on Chinese Civilization*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, p43.

³ ZHANG, Dainian *Key Concepts in Chinese Philosophy*, trans. Edmund Ryden, Beijing, Foreign Languages Press, 2005, p270.

⁴ CHENG, Chung-ying "On Harmony as Transformation: Paradigms from the *I Ching*", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 16 no. 2, June 1989, p227; WU, Joseph S. "Basic Characteristics of Chinese Culture", *Comprehensive Harmony: e-Journal for Comparative Philosophy and Culture*, Vol. I, No.3, Fall, 2004, <http://www.thomehfang.com/suncrates3/1wu.html> (accessed 11.12.09)

⁵ ZHANG, Dainian *Key Concepts in Chinese Philosophy*, trans. Edmund Ryden, Beijing, Foreign Languages Press, 2005, pp270-271; CHENG, Chung-ying "On Harmony as Transformation: Paradigms from the *I Ching*", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 16 no. 2, June 1989, pp229. See further below.

⁶ CHENG, Chung-ying "On Harmony as Transformation: Paradigms from the *I Ching*", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 16 no. 2, June 1989, p230, p247.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p236.

If voices are the same no one will listen; if things are alike none have decoration; if tastes are the same there is no fruit; if things are the same there is nothing to talk about.⁸

This is most explicitly expressed in the ‘Doctrine of the Mean’ (*Zhongyong*, the *Mean*), leading step-by-step from individual equilibrium to social, political and cosmic harmony.⁹ This text was influential from the Han period onwards but had elements drawn from much earlier traditions.¹⁰ Harmony takes on a central explanatory role for the cosmos and society:

Before pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy have arisen, this is called centrality. After they have arisen and have attained their appropriate degree, this is called harmony. Equilibrium is the great root of the world, and harmony is the pervasive Way of the world. Once centrality and harmony are realized, Heaven and Earth take their proper places and all living things are nourished.¹¹

In classical Chinese thought this orientation leads to an emphasis on social harmony and the regulation of human relations as the basis of family, society and government, including a harmonious differentiation of class roles.¹² Thus the gentleman (the *chun-tzu* or *junzi*, the superior or educated man) ‘harmonizes’ but is not a ‘yes’ man, indicating his ability to make distinctions and work within his social setting without being subservient, fawning or conformist.¹³

The concept of harmony is either explicitly deployed or implicit across most early Confucian doctrinal texts (the Five Classics and the Four Books, the latter becoming the basis of imperial examinations). At the most developed, some Confucian thought went as far as positing a ‘great unity’, a utopian society in which hierarchy and force was not needed, a concept further developed in the 19th century in the socialist utopia outlined by Kang Youwei, showing some parallels with communist thought and the ‘equal community for all’ concept

⁸ *Sayings of the States* [*Guo Yu*] 16, ‘Sayings of Zheng’, pp515-516, in ZHANG, Dainian *Key Concepts in Chinese Philosophy*, trans. Edmund Ryden, Beijing, Foreign Languages Press, 2005, p271.

⁹ LI, Yi-Yuan “Notions of Time, Space and Harmony in Chinese Popular Culture”, in HUANG, Chun-Chieh & ZÜRCHER, Erik (ed.) *Time and Space in Chinese Culture*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1995, pp394-395.

¹⁰ De BARY, Wm. Theodore and Irene Bloom (comp.) *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol. 1, 2nd edn, New York, Columbia University Press, 1999, pp333-334.

¹¹ *The Mean*, 1, translated in De Bary & Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 1999, p334.

¹² KEIGHTLEY, David N. “Early Civilization in China: Reflections on How It Became Chinese”, in ROPP, Paul S. (ed.) *Heritage of China: Contemporary Perspectives on Chinese Civilization*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, p53; BODDE, Derk “Harmony and Conflict in Chinese Philosophy”, in WRIGHT, Arthur F. (ed.) *Studies in Chinese Thought*, University of Chicago Press, 1953, p48; CHENG, Chung-ying “On Harmony as Transformation: Paradigms from the *I Ching*”, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 16 no. 2, June 1989, p233, following Confucius Analects XVI.1.

¹³ *Analects* XIII.23; CHENG, Chung-ying “On Harmony as Transformation: Paradigms from the *I Ching*”, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 16 no. 2, June 1989, p232; ZHANG, Dainian *Key Concepts in Chinese Philosophy*, trans. Edmund Ryden, Beijing, Foreign Languages Press, 2005, p272; DELURY, John “‘Harmonious’ in China”, *Policy Review*, No. 148, April & May 2008, p42; MORTON, W. Scott & LEWIS, Charlton M. *China: Its History and Culture*, 4th edition, N.Y., McGraw-Hill Inc., 2004, pp36-37.

put forward by Sun Yatsen.¹⁴ This notion was expressed in the early Confucian text known as the *Great Learning* and then made more explicit through the concept of the *Datong* (*ta-t'ung*), usually translated as 'Great Community' or 'Great Unity'.

This model can be re-conceptualized as a 'Great Harmony', based on a harmonized and diverse society, rather than on any false concept of rigid compliance or strict unity.¹⁵ Such a *Datong*, however, was only possible under ideal conditions and as such it may have been 'construed more as a meta-historical or ahistorical model of political and social excellence'.¹⁶ Much of the writing in the Confucian tradition recognized limitations among the common people, gentlemen and rulers that led to ages of decline, chaos and partial achievement, and sought to rectify these problems with an extended body of theory and practical morality.¹⁷ In an ideal sense, the Emperor would come to be viewed, at least by the time of the Tang, as a 'Grand Harmonizer', who through bringing peace to the realm, creating social order, engaging in proper rituals and regulating the calendar, was indeed the Son of Heaven.¹⁸

Confucian cosmology sought to link heaven, earth and humankind to form a great triad, providing humans with a crucial place in the world order, which 'is a state of the utmost

¹⁴ DELURY, John "'Harmonious' in China", *Policy Review*, No. 148, April & May 2008, p38; MORTON, W. Scott & LEWIS, Charlton M. *China: Its History and Culture*, 4th edition, N.Y., McGraw-Hill Inc., 2004, p171; KWONG, Luke S.W. "The Rise of the Linear Perspective on History and Time in Late Qing China c. 1860-1911", *Past & Present*, no. 173, 2001, p173. By the time of late Han, Taoist religious thought could entertain sentiments such as 'What human beings can imagine they can always bring about', *T'ai-p'ing ching ho-chiao* 18-34.25 in HOLCOMBE, Charles *In the Shadow of the Han: Literati Thought and Society at the Beginning of the Southern Dynasties*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1994, p104. Later utopian concepts such as 'Taiping', Great Peace, were mobilized as part of a progressive historical schema by some late Qing thinkers, KWONG, Luke S.W. "The Rise of the Linear Perspective on History and Time in Late Qing China c. 1860-1911", *Past & Present*, no. 173, 2001, pp167-168. The revolutionary implication of such utopian ideas was shown by the actual practice of the Taiping revolutionaries in the mid-18th centuries, who in their effort to set up the *Taiping Tianguo* (Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace) engaged in fierce warfare that ravaged much of Southeast China, MORTON, W. Scott & LEWIS, Charlton M. *China: Its History and Culture*, 4th edition, N.Y., McGraw-Hill Inc., 2004, p157. A retreat from government and society into a 'utopian communal ideal' is found in early Taoist thought as well as in writing from the Eastern Jin, such as T'ao Chi'ien's (365-427) Peach Blossom Spring story (reflected in numerous later paintings, e.g. by the 16th century Ch'iu Ying), and in the retirement from 'active service' trends by many early Sung literati, HOLCOMBE, Charles *In the Shadow of the Han: Literati Thought and Society at the Beginning of the Southern Dynasties*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1994, p55, p84.

¹⁵ See further CHENG, Chung-ying "On Harmony as Transformation: Paradigms from the *I Ching*", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 16 no. 2, June 1989, p234; FERGUSON, R. James "Confucius, Mencius, and the Participatory Society", in Martin Lu, Rosita Dellios, R. James Ferguson (eds), *Toward A Global Community: New Perspectives on Confucian Humanism*, Bond University and International Confucian Association, Gold Coast, Australia, 2004, pp151-177.

¹⁶ KWONG, Luke S.W. "The Rise of the Linear Perspective on History and Time in Late Qing China c. 1860-1911", *Past & Present*, no. 173, 2001, p165.

¹⁷ See *Analects* quotes; BODDE, Derk "Harmony and Conflict in Chinese Philosophy", in WRIGHT, Arthur F. (ed.) *Studies in Chinese Thought*, University of Chicago Press, 1953, p68. Thus for Ch'êng Yi (1033-1107) even the prosperous Han and Tang had still 'adulterated' the 'Way' of the Sage Kings, De BARY, W. Theodore "A Reappraisal of Neo-Confucianism", in WRIGHT, Arthur F. (ed.) *Studies in Chinese Thought*, University of Chicago Press, 1953, pp97-100.

¹⁸ WECHSLER, Howard J. *Offerings of Jade and Silk: Ritual and Symbol in the Legitimation of the T'ang Dynasty*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985, pp212-213.

harmony and ultimate goal of Confucian education'.¹⁹ The linkage of 'natural' and 'social' order was not just wishful thinking. This quest was not a purely religious impulse (though later on influenced by Taoist and to a lesser extent Buddhist conceptions). It was a desperate and essential search for social and political harmony by an agricultural society subject to extended periods of intense warfare. This was especially true of the later Zhou (Chou) period (from 770 B.C.E. onwards) with its quest for interstate peace, and of later imperial periods (post-221 B.C.E.) where rebellions, followed at later times by external invasion, division of the empire, and the extinction of dynastic lines, were real threats.²⁰ The emphasis on a unified empire was due to bitter experience.

The relative stability of the early Han, early Tang, and culturally the Sung dynasties was seen as a product of these philosophies put into practice, while the failure or end of dynasties was often interpreted as failures in ritual conduct, declining morality and poor government policies.

2.2 Overcoming Conflict: The Legacies of Warfare

What is masked by these philosophical traditions is that early Chinese states had good reason to fear disorder, disharmony, rebellion and destructive warfare. In the *Spring and Autumn* period most of central China was supposedly under the hierarchical system of cities and regions owing ultimate allegiance to the Zhou Emperor. The first three centuries of this period, called the Western Zhou, were still quite vigorous, but once the capital was forced to move to the east, after a disastrous attack on the royal domain in the Xi'an region by barbarians and 'disaffected vassals' in 771 B.C.E., the Zhou went into political decline.²¹

In large measure the history of the period from 771 B.C.E. to 221 B.C.E. (covering the period of the Eastern Zhou, including the *Spring and Autumn* period, and the *Warring States* period) was a record of interstate conflict as the central authority of the Zhou empire lapsed, leading to intensifying warfare, social turmoil, the extinction of small states by strong powers, and to the eventual reunification of empire under the Qin dynasty.

In the later part of this period sophisticated theories and practices of governance, diplomacy and warfare emerged. There was a desperate search for legitimacy and enhanced capacity by these states as they faced their peers. These struggles demanded internal cohesion and harmony before any kind of interstate stabilisation or 'peace' was possible. The dangers and terrible reality of military conflict emerged as one of the truisms of the period. Though a crude militarism was generally disdained in later Chinese culture, its necessity was

¹⁹ CHENG, Chung-Ying "Education for Morality in Global and Cosmic Contexts: The Confucian Model", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, Vol. 33 no. 4, December 2006, pp562-563.

²⁰ BARNES, Gina L. *China, Korea and Japan: The Rise of Civilization in East Asia*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1993, p206.

²¹ HAW, Stephen G. *China: A Cultural History*, London, Batsford, 1990, pp48-9.

recognized as part of wider conceptualization of statecraft.²² In the formative period of the Eastern Zhou the arts of warfare, state organisation, economics²³ and diplomacy were developed under the threat of major invasions and the possible extinction of a princely line and the state itself. It has been estimated that for the entire *Spring and Autumn* period less than 50 years were without warfare.²⁴ It is therefore not surprising that warfare would become one of the necessary tools of statecraft, and that during this period Sun Tzu could open his famous text, the *Art of War*, with the lines: ‘War is a vital matter to the state, an area of life or death, a path to survival or extinction; it must be investigated.’²⁵

The ideals of Confucian thought were not developed by ignoring the realities of power and conflict, but were a direct reaction to them. Within the limits of the time, they sought to create a language and ideology of governance that would regulate the action of rulers, aristocrats, officials, and ordinary people. In doing so they moved beyond regulation and punishment to an embracing theory of how order could be achieved within a diverse society made up persons with different abilities and shared needs.

2.3 Harmony of Concepts

In Confucian thought, harmony was linked to a range of important concepts: *ren* (benevolence), *li* (rules of propriety), *zhong* (‘equilibrium or centrality of the mind’ or ‘loyalty’, ‘central-mindedness’, equilibrium as ‘central-heartedness’), *shu* and *yi* (variously interpreted as morality, righteousness or even justice).²⁶ These values, activated through the cultivated and committed person or a sage-king, could become the basis of a pragmatic and humanitarian system of government (*renzheng*).²⁷ It is important to sense how these different concepts are organically linked, though there is always a danger of over-systematising the early thought of the Confucian ‘school’, as found in the laconic statements collected together in the *Analects* for example. In the longer term, it is also important to recognize that Confucian thought was not just one ‘thing’, but rather an evolving tradition in which a great

²² As noted in the Chin dynasty, ‘A warrior managing affairs of state is like letting a wolf tend sheep’, HOLCOMBE, *Charles In the Shadow of the Han: Literati Thought and Society at the Beginning of the Southern Dynasties*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1994, p58.

²³ CHANG, James L.Y. "History of Chinese Economic Thought: Overview of Recent Works", *History of Political Economy*, 19 no. 3, 1987, p483.

²⁴ HAW, Stephen G. *China: A Cultural History*, London, Batsford, 1990, p54.

²⁵ Sun Tzu I.1. See further BALMFORTH, Edmund Elliot *A Chinese Military Strategist of the Warring States, Sun Pin*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University of New Jersey, PhD Thesis, 1979 (University Microfilms International), p12.

²⁶ CHENG, Chung-ying “On Harmony as Transformation: Paradigms from the *I Ching*”, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 16 no. 2, June 1989, p231, p236; CHENG, Chung-Ying “Education for Morality in Global and Cosmic Contexts: The Confucian Model”, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, Vol. 33 no. 4, December 2006, pp561.

²⁷ MORTON, W. Scott & LEWIS, Charlton M. *China: Its History and Culture*, 4th edition, N.Y., McGraw-Hill Inc., 2004, p114; SATO, Masayuki *Confucian State and the Society of Li: A Study on the Political Thought of Xun Zi*, Leuven, Daiwa Bank Foundation, 2001, pp195-197.

variety of contesting ideas were hammered out, with periods of partial orthodoxy emerging in the Han and then in the Sung dynasties.

In this process, core words were transformed into powerful principles. Confucius took the idea of *ren* and transformed it into an articulated virtue. The central starting place for the development of this human quality is the relationship between child and parents. Moral development begins in the family context, but also affects other social and political relations. From this we can see that for the Confucian tradition, politics was ethics played out at the national level. Furthermore, the roots of the superior person, the *junzi* (*chun-tze*) – that is, those fit for office – lie with certain basic qualities, such as obedience, self-sacrifice, truthfulness, and benevolence. Metaphorically, *ren* points at the proper relationship between human beings as the very core of the Confucian social message.²⁸

Harmony, then, is one important concept supported by a sophisticated ethical and political language that evolved during the *Warring States* period. This language was readily adapted to the craft of governance, even as formal state systems emerged in ancient China. It was part of a moral-political theory developed by early Confucianism, partly in opposition to the harsher Legalist methods of rule, and partly a critique of early Taoism and Mohism.²⁹ The maintenance of order and harmony emerged at the core of debates on statecraft that was taken up by many groups, e.g. in the Jixia Academy of the late fourth and third centuries B.C.E., later Huang-Lao conceptions of imperial rule,³⁰ and in the ‘orthodox’ Confucian tradition as developed in the Han and Sung periods. Achieving harmony was an active human process, a harmonisation and regulation of differences that was at the heart of governance. It is no surprise, therefore, that the Confucian philosopher Mencius (372–289 B.C.E.) would argue that the three crucial factors for a state included natural resources and good climate, but most importantly the need for human harmony (*ren-he*).³¹

3. PRC Policy Context for the Return of Harmony

While the philosophical origin of ‘harmony’ may be traced to classical Chinese thought, it is new in terms of ‘new China’s’ policy orientation. Born of revolution, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) emphasized struggle over harmony. The latter, with its Confucian connotations, was considered by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) a ‘feudal’ remnant of a class-structured society. This view changed soon after the death of China’s revolutionary

²⁸ FOX, Russell Arben "Confucian and Communitarian Responses to Liberal Democracy", *The Review of Politics*, 59 no. 3, Summer 1997

²⁹ Mohism is a school of thought named after Mo Tzu (Mozi, 470-391 B.C.E.) whose text is of the same name, the *Mo Tzu*. He taught that social well-being derives from ‘universal love’ or impartiality (rather than favouring an inner circle of family and nation).

³⁰ Based on the founding myths of the Yellow Emperor and the view of special qualities and powers held by a ruler, WECHSLER, Howard J. *Offerings of Jade and Silk: Ritual and Symbol in the Legitimation of the T'ang Dynasty*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985, p204.

³¹ Mencius IIB.1; CHENG, Chung-ying “On Harmony as Transformation: Paradigms from the *I Ching*”, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 16 no. 2, June 1989, p233, following Mencius 2B.1.

leader Mao Zedong in 1976. At the Third Plenary Session of the 11th CCP Central Committee in December 1978, the 'second generation' leadership under Deng Xiaoping launched the 'reform and opening up' policy. It replaced the Marxist rhetoric of 'class struggle' in favour of a market oriented (capitalist) policy of economic development. 'To get rich is glorious,' was Deng's advice at the time. Moreover, the 'colour of the cat' did not matter, he instructed in metaphorical terms, as long as it 'caught mice' (became rich). With an average of 9% annual growth since then, the Chinese cat grew fat on this policy, but divisions in society returned. On the one hand, China's successful economic growth has meant a reduction in poverty in absolute terms - from 65% to 10%, according to the World Bank; on the other, 'China is no longer the low-inequality country it was a quarter century ago'.³²

Wealth disparity grew between individuals, between provinces and between rural and urban dwellers. The coastal regions which were developed first through Special Economic Zones (SEZs) fared better than the Western interior; rural incomes dropped to less than a third of their urban counterparts.³³ The government has come to view this as a 'serious threat to social stability'.³⁴ After all, the Chinese communist revolution of the early 20th century was supposed to have emancipated the masses from the oppression of the aristocracy; in other words, to have overcome stark social inequalities. Tradition was blamed for holding China back through 'counter-revolutionary' feudal ethics that favoured the aristocracy. Yet the teachings of Confucius did not endorse the abandonment of the poor to their misery or the exploitation of one class of humans by another, but emphasized empathy: '*ren*' (benevolence, see above) is the core virtue in Confucianism.

Paralleling the wealth gap of people-to-people relations, there emerged an environmental one of human-to-nature relations. Instead of humans being in harmony with nature, as classical philosophy taught, China's rapid industrialization brought into conflict the human-environment relationship, whereby the environment is both ecosystem and source of livelihood. The price of industrial development has meant that the health of both citizens and the environment they inhabit has suffered, and arable land has diminished in relation to the vast rural population.³⁵ Environmental problems such as pollution have accounted for a 30% annual increase in the tens of thousands of 'mass incidents' against government policies, according to China's environmental protection ministry.³⁶

³² WORLD BANK, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Department, East Asia and Pacific Region, 'From poor areas to poor people: China's evolving poverty reduction agenda - *An assessment of poverty and inequality in China*', March 2009, pp iii, vii, URL: <http://go.worldbank.org/62HINPBR40>

³³ See MOORE, Malcolm "China's wealth gap the widest since economic reforms began", *Telegraph.co.uk*, 2 March 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/7350677/Chinas-wealth-gap-the-widest-since-economic-reforms-began.html> (accessed 1.9.10)

³⁴ *Ibid.*, citing *China Daily* report.

³⁵ See ZHAN, Zhuangqing, Wang Tianyi and Wang Qionjin *Rural Development and a Harmonious Society*, Beijing, Foreign Languages Press, 2007.

³⁶ REUTERS "More parents protest against lead poisoning in China", 20 August 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSPEK183380> (accessed 1.9.10). 'Chinese authorities now use the term "mass

The desire for social justice and ‘virtuous’ government has not gone unanswered. Rather than turning to Western democratic or revolutionary rhetoric, the Chinese Communist Party looked to rehabilitating the previously maligned classical tradition. As noted by John Delury, ‘Beginning in the late 1980s, the concept of a “harmonious society” (*hexie shehui*) rose steadily from keyword to buzzword to paradigm.’³⁷ Even though President Jiang Zemin, of the third generation leadership, used the ‘harmony’ rhetoric,³⁸ it was his successor, Hu Jintao who officiated over its adoption as a ‘paradigm’. Indeed, ‘harmonious society’ and its counterpart of a ‘harmonious world’ (*hexie shijie*) have become the distinguishing feature of the fourth generation leadership of President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao.

Hu Jintao proposed the construction of a ‘harmonious society’ during the 2005 National People’s Congress (NPC, China’s legislature – the highest organ of state power) and in 2006 it became part of China’s 11th Five-Year Plan (2006–2010), approved by the NPC in 2006. The Plan entailed ‘scientific, harmonious and peaceful development’ for the ‘goal of building a well-off society in an all-round manner’. It included the strengthening of ‘ethical education’ to ‘make fresh achievements in building a harmonious society’.³⁹ The 12th FYP (2011–2015), is expected to improve the balance of societal, economic and environmental relations through better social services, reforming income distribution, and ‘greening’ the economy.⁴⁰

The Strategic Planning Department of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) under the Chinese State Council (responsible for formulating and implementing the FYP strategies of socio-economic development) would like to see less dependence on exports and a stronger domestic market. This has an implication for China’s international outlook. A 2010 report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has found that China’s foreign policy is being shaped by a wider range of interests than the ‘traditional power structure’:

The authors also observe that the emergence of new foreign policy actors has resulted in a multitude of approaches within China to the country’s internationalization. On the one hand, the Ministry of Commerce, local governments and large companies, for example, favour China

incident” to describe a group protest. According to official statistics, there were 74,000 mass incidents in 2004 with a total of 3.7 million citizens taking part. In 2005, the number of mass incidents with at least 15 participants totaled 87,000.’ (WU Zhong “Beijing hears dissenting voice on unrest”, *Asia Times Online*, 28 April 2010, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/LD28Ad01.html> (accessed 2.9.10).

³⁷ DELURY, John “‘Harmonious’ in China”, *Policy Review*, No. 148, April & May 2008, p38.

³⁸ See JIANG Zemin, ‘Speech by President Jiang Zemin At George Bush Presidential Library’, 24 October 2002, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/topics/3719/3721/t19082.htm> (accessed 6.9.10).

³⁹ NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND REFORM COMMISSION (NDRC), PRC, ‘The 11th Five-Year Plan: Targets, Paths and Policy Orientation’, 19 March 2006, http://www.gov.cn/english/2006-03/23/content_234832.htm (accessed 9.9.10).

⁴⁰ See GREENWOOD, C. Lawrence Jr. “Rebalancing Economic, Environmental, and Social Performance during China’s 12th Five-Year Plan”, *NDRC and ADB International Seminar on the Direction and Policy Orientation of the 12th Five-Year Plan*, Beijing, 19 January 2010, <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Speeches/2010/ms2010005.asp> (accessed 10.9.10).

becoming a more active international player. They advocate free trade agreements, regional development projects and greater investment opportunities.

On the other hand, actors such as the National Development and Reform Commission want China to avoid an over-reliance on world markets and view China's foreign policy in terms of the benefits it brings for economic development. The Ministry of State Security, in turn, is concerned that an increasing prevalence of Western values will make it more difficult for the Communist Party to dominate public discourse on questions concerning human rights, transparency and accountability.⁴¹

This diversification of domestic policy inputs and the crossover between domestic and foreign policy reflects the interaction between harmony at home and abroad. At a practical defensive level, 'harmonious society' and 'harmonious world' are designed to stave off social instability at home and suspicion abroad. On a longer term proactive basis, their role is to transform China's society and politics into a hybrid Confucian-Socialism that cushions domestic upheaval and shapes global governance. In antiquity, it was a 'creative process of harmonizing the world by the mind which results in a better state of the world' (see above, 2.1).

A restoration of 'harmony' within the national discourse means that the CCP has found contemporary relevance for traditional culture while not renouncing its socialist ideology. The retention of Marxist-Leninist thinking may be considered incompatible with Confucian values, yet this duality comes easily to a culture of *yin-yang* correlativity. Foreign systems which China has adopted – from Marxism to capitalism and even the 'Revolution in Military Affairs' (RMA) – are best indigenized through appending 'Chinese characteristics'. Hence 'Socialism with Chinese characteristics' permits not only the development of a market economy but also the regeneration of traditional philosophy for China's continued longevity. Those selected for the fifth generation leadership (such as Xi Jinping and Le Keqiang) at the next party congress in 2012 will be far removed from the Chinese revolution of 1949, but strategically immersed in the twin phenomena of (1) globalization and (2) China's 'peaceful' rise within it, under the 'harmonious-socialist' paradigm.

It is therefore instructive that Confucius is no longer vilified as a class enemy, but has been put to productive use at home and abroad. Domestically, a Confucian harmony is sought to fill the values vacuum left by Marx, to replace the avariciousness of capitalism, and to ensure the CCP retains the Mandate of Heaven (legitimacy in the eyes of the people),⁴² all the while working to restore greater equilibrium in society. Internationally, Confucius has been employed as the emblem of Chinese identity: more than 280 Confucius Institutes (much like

⁴¹ JACOKSON, Linda and Dean Knox "New Foreign Policy Actors in China", SIPRI Policy Paper No. 26, 6 September 2010; Media Release "New Actors Shape China's Foreign Policy, Says SIPRI", <http://www.sipri.org/media/pressreleases/100906chinaforeignpolicy> (accessed 10.9.10).

⁴² Mandate of Heaven (*tianming*) is an ancient concept which states that whoever rules must do so virtuously in accordance with Way of Heaven (*tiandao*). Otherwise, Heaven will withdraw its mandate and pass it onto another more worthy of leadership.

France's Alliance Française and Germany's Goethe Institute) have been established around the world to teach Chinese language and culture. Confucian ethics underpins China's good neighbourly relations.⁴³ An outstanding example was the 2008 Beijing Olympics which featured traditional China as its identity statement to its own people and to the world.

While the Opening Ceremony began with the beating of traditional drums and the explosion of fireworks, 3000 Confucian disciples did welcome guests with the opening lines of *The Analects*: "Is it not delightful to have friends coming from distant quarters?" which was followed by other aphorisms including the communitarian theme of "all those within the four seas are brothers."⁴⁴

4. Contemporary Chronology and Content of 'Harmonious World' (*hexie shijie*)

China's 'harmonious world' advocacy is included in the government white paper, *China's Peaceful Development Road*, released in December 2005, under the sub-heading, 'Building a Harmonious World of Sustained Peace and Common Prosperity'. This has become a paradigmatic slogan oft-repeated in official speeches and documents; the phrase was adopted as an amendment to the Constitution of the Chinese Communist Party at the CCP 17th party congress on 21 October 2007.⁴⁵

Even though Hu Jintao first broached the idea of building a harmonious world during his May 2003 visit to Moscow,⁴⁶ the 'harmonious world' concept's most celebrated international launch occurred at the premier global platform, the United Nations, during its 60th anniversary in 2005.⁴⁷ Addressing the UN General Assembly on 15 September, Hu Jintao spoke of the need 'to preserve the diversity of civilizations in the spirit of equality and openness, make international relations more democratic and jointly build a harmonious world where all civilizations coexist and accommodate each other.'⁴⁸ He offered a four-point proposal for building a harmonious world: (1) security cooperation for peace, (2) economic cooperation for prosperity, (3) inter-civilizational dialogue for mutual respect, and (4) reforms to the UN for strengthening its global governance role. Hu Jintao maintained his

⁴³ This is evident in its adjoining regions, notably the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Southeast Asia, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Central Asia, and the two Koreas in Northeast Asia.

⁴⁴ LEIBOLD, James "The Beijing Olympics and China's Conflicted National Form", *The China Journal* 63 pp1-24. ([Preprint version](#) – pdf,) 2010, p. 16.

⁴⁵ Constitution of the Communist Party of China, amended and adopted at the 17th CPC National Congress on 21 October 2007, <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6290980.html> (accessed 31.8.10).

⁴⁶ He said in a speech at the Moscow Institute of International Relations that 'in order to achieve lasting peace and universal prosperity, the international community should cooperate fully with unremitting efforts, so as to build a harmonious world'. PEOPLE'S DAILY ONLINE "President Hu elaborates the theory of harmonious world", 26 November 2009, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90780/91342/6824821.html> (accessed 11.9.10).

⁴⁷ XINHUA "President Hu Makes Four-Point Proposal for Building Harmonious World", *China View*, 16 September 2005, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2005-09/16/content_3496789.htm (accessed 1.12.08).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

message, with the 2009 address to the UN General Assembly also being based on a ‘four-point proposal on building a harmonious world’.⁴⁹

Like the ‘four modernizations’ (of agriculture, industry, science & technology, and national defence) which marked the beginning of the ‘reform and opening period’, the four proposals for ‘harmonious world’ were adjusted in accordance with the demands of the times. In the former case, defence was the third ‘modernisation’ in 1975, but was demoted to fourth under Deng Xiaoping’s economic focus. Moreover, the modernization of defence required a higher technological base from which to operate; thus science and technology came third. Similarly, with the four points proposed in 2005, when reform to the UN was high on the agenda, a change occurred in favour of transnational problems – especially climate change. Thus in 2009 points 1 and 2 on security and economy remained, but point 3 became cooperation on transnational problems such as ‘climate change, food security, energy and resource security and public health security’⁵⁰ and point 4 retained the inter-civilizational message of tolerance and trust: ‘Countries should acknowledge differences in cultural tradition, social system and values and respect the right of all countries to independently choose their development paths’.⁵¹ Here the cultural and economic points find common purpose. Meanwhile, the UN has been subsumed in all the points – including the need to address transnational issues and to give developing countries a stronger voice as part of the ‘democratization of international relations’, placing it at the centre of global governance.⁵² In this way, the principle (doctrine) remains but the strategy alters to account for the empirical realities that China faces.

As indicated from a number of official public statements, the content of ‘harmonious world’ is process-based (in keeping with harmony as an active and transformative principle in classical thought), with recurring themes of security cooperation for peace; economic cooperation for prosperity; inter-civilizational dialogue for mutual respect; and cooperation in global governance. It has been criticized as vague, ambiguous, and insufficiently coherent,⁵³ though these are not necessarily faults in a world where flexibility rather than dogma best serves the needs of a far from static global society. After all, globalization itself represents a

⁴⁹ XINHUA “Chinese President Calls for Building Harmonious World”, *People’s Daily Online*, 24 September 2009, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6766150.html> (accessed 11.9.10); for full text speech: Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the United Nations, ‘Statement by President Hu Jintao at the General Debate of the 64th Session of the UN General Assembly (23 September 2009)’, <http://www.china-un.org/eng/hyyfy/t606150.htm> (accessed 13.9.10).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the United Nations at Geneva and Other International Organizations in Switzerland, ‘President Hu Jintao Delivers an Important Speech at the Second Summit Meeting of BRIC Leaders (15 April 2010)’, 19 April 2010, <http://www.china-un.ch/eng/bjzl/t683054.htm> (accessed 11.9.10).

⁵² PEOPLE’S DAILY ONLINE “President Hu elaborates the theory of harmonious world”, 26 November 2009, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90780/91342/6824821.html> (accessed 11.9.10).

⁵³ For example, CALLAHAN, William A. “China’s Grand Strategy in a Post-Western World”, *Open Democracy*, 1 July 2010, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/william-callahan/china%E2%80%99s-grand-strategy-in-post-western-world> (accessed 11.9.10); BUZAN, Barry “China in International Society: Is ‘Peaceful Rise’ Possible?”, *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 3, no. 1, January 2010, pp5-36.

dynamic process and global governance (like China's socialism) may be considered to be at an early stage of development. Moreover, the four points put forth for 'harmonious world' are not the subject of the slogan – they are not the 'four harmonies' – as has occurred with the 'four modernizations', the 'three represents',⁵⁴ and other numerical formulations commonly found in CCP policy statements. They are an interface of conditions deemed worthy of global society's attention. This softer approach contrasts with communist rhetoric.

5. Harmony and Humane Governance in 21st Century Global Society

Having examined the conceptual deployment of harmony past and present in China, what of its role in emerging efforts at global governance under conditions of a strengthening China? Like the *Contention of the Hundred Schools of Thought* (770–221 B.C.E) which flourished with the passing of the Zhou dynasty and its socio-political order, so too the sudden end of bipolar strategic competition at the close of the 20th century has left the field open to alternative modes of relating as nations and peoples, with globalization accelerating the transformative process. Is the world on the threshold of a new age of contestation of ideas for how global society advances? China's focus on constructing a 'harmonious world' is indicative of an attempt to render this Confucian idea (with elements of Taoism and Buddhism, given the syncretism that has evolved among all three traditions) as more than merely Chinese;⁵⁵ that 'harmonious world' is, in effect, harmonious with the UN's vision and global governance cooperation in an era dominated by transnational security issues. For this reason it is worthwhile investigating the contents of harmonious world, what they imply for China, and how they relate to other world governance concepts – notably:

- Hegemonic governance under the US (more commonly known as unipolarity)
- Its conceptual rival in the form of a renewed concert of powers⁵⁶
- The European Union's pooling of sovereignty as an evolved form of global regionalism (supranationalism)
- A revitalized United Nations as the centre of a wider global governance entailing a global civil society based on norms rather than power, and international regimes and institutions as the mechanism for world order.

The above interact with one another but represent distinctive approaches in the direction of governance. Meanwhile, security cooperation, common prosperity, cooperation for dealing with transnational problems, and inter-civilizational trust are hallmarks of the now entrenched 'harmonious world' perspective of the world's foremost candidate for global power status in the 21st century. If China is indeed rising peacefully, then it is unlikely to seek hegemonic

⁵⁴ The 'Three Represents' was Jiang Zemin's contribution to Marxist theory and states that the CCP must always represent (1) the development trends of advanced productive forces, (2) the orientations of an advanced culture, and (3) the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people in the country.

⁵⁵ Contra BUZAN, Barry "China in International Society: Is 'Peaceful Rise' Possible?", *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 3, no. 1, January 2010, pp5-36.

⁵⁶ See BELL, Coral "The End of the Vasco da Gama Era: The Next Landscape of World Politics", Sydney, Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2007.

governance, though it shows both the capability (through its rise) and intent (through its rhetoric) to dilute any form of hegemonic governance. Similarly, if it is rising equitably in the company of others, making ‘international relations more democratic’, it will eschew a privileged concert of powers. The EU’s pooling of sovereignty model may clash with China’s more restrictive views on sovereignty. The UN, with its respect for sovereignty but its emphasis on international cooperation through elaborate global governance structures, provides the most ‘harmonious’ model for the globalization of Confucian governance. Below are the key contents of ‘harmonious world’ and, briefly, how they relate to philosophical antecedents, China’s rise, as well as prevailing ideas on governance.

5.1. ‘First, we should view security in a broader perspective and safeguard world peace and stability.’⁵⁷

Security cooperation for ‘enduring peace’ is presented in official articulations as a multilateral enterprise of collective security under the auspices of the UN, with an emphasis on China’s ‘new security concept featuring trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation’.⁵⁸ In relation to international peace, China is quick to proclaim its own peaceful intentions and that it does not seek hegemony. The unity of diverse nations in cooperating for peace through the UN is suggestive of the Chinese holistic philosophy of ‘unity of principle and the diversity of its particularizations’.⁵⁹ It also echoes Mencius who sought to spread Confucianism as the political ideology among the warring states as he believed this would lead to unity and end warfare.⁶⁰

Security, in 21st century ‘harmonious world’ parlance, is more broadly defined: ‘Traditional and non-traditional security threats are intertwined, involving political, military, economic, cultural and other fields. They are our common challenges that require a joint and comprehensive response.’⁶¹ This fits with the trend in security studies that has expanded from military ‘balances’ to include non-traditional security threats such as terrorism and areas that have been ‘securitized’ such as ethnic tension – that is, non-military issues that have an impact on a security. Because many non-traditional security issues are transnational (e.g.

⁵⁷ Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the United Nations, ‘Statement by President Hu Jintao at the General Debate of the 64th Session of the UN General Assembly (23 September 2009)’.

⁵⁸ See Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the United Nations, ‘China’s Position Paper on the New Security Concept’, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/ceun/eng/xw/t27742.htm> (accessed 20.3.09).

⁵⁹ See De BARY, Wm. Theodore and Irene Bloom (comp.) *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol. 1, 2nd edition, New York, Columbia University Press, 1999, p689.

⁶⁰ The following dialogue is reported in the *Mencius* (1a.6):

King Hui: ‘How may the world be at peace?’

Mencius: ‘When there is unity, there will be peace.’

King Hui: ‘But who can unify the world?’

Mencius: ‘One who is not fond of killing can unite it’.

⁶¹ Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the United Nations, ‘Statement by President Hu Jintao at the General Debate of the 64th Session of the UN General Assembly (23 September 2009)’.

climate change, crime, pandemics), the state is not the only unit of analysis. Regional and global levels of analysis are also relevant. When it comes to the militarization of outer space, China upholds the UN's position of the peaceful use of space. Given that the US is the most advanced in space capabilities,⁶² this would detract from US preponderance of power, and hence opposes hegemonic governance as a theory for world governance. Such a theory holds that global stability is based on a strong hegemonic power that guarantees the prevailing system.⁶³

***5.2. 'Second, we should take a more holistic approach to development and promote common prosperity.'*⁶⁴**

Economic cooperation for 'common prosperity' often employs the 'win-win' formula, indicating that China's own economic development is a positive force for the world. An emphasis is placed on assisting developing countries to 'enhance capacity for self-development'.⁶⁵ At the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) Summit in April 2010, Hu Jintao called for resolving the 'imbalance in global economic governance structure' and 'increasing the representation and voice of emerging markets and developing countries'.⁶⁶ This does not imply support for the Western-coined 'Beijing Consensus'⁶⁷ as an alternative development model to that of the West (specifically, the hegemonic 'Washington Consensus'). Unlike Maoist China's export of revolution, today's China is careful not to seek hegemony in economic models or embark on another ideological cold war era. Also, in keeping with the Confucian superior person (*junzi*) philosophy (see above), 'China will never seek to advance its interests at the expense of others'.⁶⁸

***5.3 'Third, we should pursue cooperation with a more open mind and work for mutual benefit and common progress.'*⁶⁹**

⁶² On US space policy, see Executive Office of US President, *National Space Policy of the United States*, 28 June 2010, http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/national_space_policy_6-28-10.pdf (accessed 14.9.10).

⁶³ Hegemony is defined as a situation in which "one state is powerful enough to maintain the essential rules governing international relations, and willing to do so" (KEOHANE, Robert O. and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, Boston, Little, Brown, 1977, p44).

⁶⁴ Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations, 'Statement by President Hu Jintao at the General Debate of the 64th Session of the UN General Assembly (23 September 2009)'.

⁶⁵ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States, 'Uphold World Peace and Promote Common Development--Speech by H. E. Yang Jiechi Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China at the Geneva School of Diplomacy and International Relations (08/12/09)', 13 August 2009, <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zt/768675/xw1/t578483.htm> (accessed 10.9.10).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ RAMO, Joshua Cooper *The Beijing Consensus: Notes on the new physics of Chinese power*, London, Foreign Affairs Policy Centre, 2004.

⁶⁸ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States, 'Uphold World Peace and Promote Common Development'.

⁶⁹ Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations, 'Statement by President Hu Jintao at the General Debate of the 64th Session of the UN General Assembly (23 September 2009)'.

Climate change was uppermost on the global agenda when Hu Jintao made this statement in 2009 at the UN. The decade had been characterized by transnational problems that required cooperation, beginning with the UN's eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),⁷⁰ and the 'war on terror' waged by the US and its allies; and concluding with the global financial crisis which saw the rise of the influential Group of Twenty (G20) Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors.⁷¹ It marked the inclusion of large developing countries to decision-making ranks. China's championing of this cooperative global governance indicates recognition of a global and not only regional path of development. It fits in with the expanding circles of cultivation in Confucian philosophy, from the self, to family, society, nation, the world and the biosphere (nature); and the above noted (2.1) 'Doctrine of the Mean' speaking of a transition from individual equilibrium to social, political and cosmic harmony.

The way in which global threats have focused the global mind on cooperation with purpose suggests that this era's conditions are ripe for Confucius – once again. Viewed in conjunction with the UN and its endorsement as seen in the MDGs of a cosmopolitan global governance (cosmopolitanism being a humanist counterpart to globalization), Confucian values may find compatibility with 21st century evolving norms.

***5.4 'Fourth, we should be more tolerant to one another and live together in harmony.'*⁷²**

The quest for inter-civilizational dialogue for mutual respect draws on: the above need to cooperate to solve global problems; the 'unity of principle and the diversity of its particularizations'; as well as highlighting the relationship between harmony and diversity (see 2.1 above). Former PRC president Jiang Zemin expressed the idea well during his visit to the US in 2002:

Confucius said more than two thousand years ago, "In human relationships, a gentleman seeks harmony but not uniformity." That is to say, harmony but not sameness; reserving differences without coming into conflict. Harmony promotes co-existence and co-prosperity; whereas differences foster mutual complementation and mutual support. Harmony without sameness is an important principle in the development of all social affairs and relationships and in guiding

⁷⁰ These are: 1) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; 2) achieve universal primary education; 3) promote gender equality and empower women; 4) reduce child mortality rate; 5) improve maternal health; 6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; 7) ensure environmental sustainability; 8) develop a global partnership for development.

⁷¹ In 1999, the G20 formed as a response largely to the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98 and the emergence of large developing nations that needed representation in global economic governance institutions. Its members may be divided, as Coral Bell ("Seven Years to Get it Right: Powerful Challenges for Barack Obama and the G20", *American Review, Issue 1*, 2009, p41) distinguishes, into great powers (USA, China, India, Russia, EU and Japan), major emerging powers (Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Indonesia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, South Korea and South Africa), and established, developed Western powers (Germany, UK, France, Italy, Canada and Spain).

⁷² Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations, 'Statement by President Hu Jintao at the General Debate of the 64th Session of the UN General Assembly (23 September 2009)'.

people's conduct and behavior. Indeed, it is the essential factor of the harmonious development of all civilizations.⁷³

At his UN speech in 2005 President Hu Jintao spoke of the need 'to preserve the diversity of civilizations in the spirit of equality and openness, make international relations more democratic and jointly build a harmonious world where all civilizations coexist and accommodate each other.'⁷⁴ Quite apart from endorsing a more pluralistic world, respect for difference justifies China's emergence as a non-Western nation, with a socialist political ideology, in a Western liberal dominated world order. China need not become an American clone. Yet the interdependence of nations under conditions of globalisation suggests that China with all its difference must cooperate and coordinate with others for common security and prosperity (all the above three points).

6. Conclusion

Harmony and humane governance have been deployed in contesting the social order in classical Chinese thought as well as 21st century global society where the phenomenon of global governance is still unfolding. In the classical past the Confucian teachings of a harmony concept that is inclusive of diversity took root and preserved the Chinese civilization-state for two millennia after the upheavals of the *Warring States* period. So, too, global society in the 21st century is in dire need of governance without world government, in that the nation-state remains a vital actor but with the acceptance that it must work with non-government actors and cooperate on a regional and global scale to overcome transnational problems that threaten the state's very existence. There is not so much a *warring states* period that requires unity for peace but a *interdependent states* period in which cooperation and even in parts the 'pooling' of sovereignty that is necessary for survival and civilized life.

Such a transition to a global level of analysis has been made possible through China's learning from the West as well as from its own cultural resources. Above all, the country has been forced to think in this way in view of its modernization program that requires overseas markets, investment and resources to continue. That such a global program is being conducted under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party with its adherence to socialist values suggests that China's contribution to global governance will not only be based on Confucian ethics but also socialistic ones. Armed with a Confucian-Socialism China can be expected to play a more active role harmonizing dominant and weaker powers, Western and non-Western values. It will, however, need to harmonize its own defensive, sovereignty-guarding stance with a new emerging global correlativity: that is, the *interdependent states* period which becomes correlative like *yin* and *yang*, each articulating the other, in a more advanced state of global governance. Given the premise that the Chinese

⁷³ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Speech by President Jiang Zemin At George Bush Presidential Library (24 October 2002)', 28 October 2002, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/topics/3719/3721/t19082.htm> (accessed 11.9.10).

⁷⁴ XINHUA "President Hu Makes Four-Point Proposal for Building Harmonious World", *China View*, 16 September 2005, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2005-09/16/content_3496789.htm (accessed 1.12.08).

harmony concept, both past and present, comprises mutuality in the presence of difference (like the musical or culinary arts), so too China's conceptualization of sovereignty as being an inclusive as well as an exclusive condition will be needed. The cultivation of self and the 'other' is at the heart of such a 'harmonious world'; China's cultivation of self through harmonious society will need to make as much progress as its cultivation of harmony abroad. Otherwise the legitimacy of this party-civilization-state will be in question.

Another issue that would need to be handled carefully is the traditional role of hierarchy in East Asian international relations. China would need to make extra efforts at reassuring those living near and far that it does not regard itself as the leading power of its region within a wider concert of powers. Otherwise the regional threat perceptions of peer actors such as Japan, India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations will be aroused.

Criticisms that China is parochial with its inclusion of 'Chinese characteristics' in borrowed systems (and is therefore hardly in a position for offering universal advice),⁷⁵ is not so convincing when viewed in this light of multi-level awareness in the classical Chinese roots of 'harmony' and the nature of today's globalization. Moreover a sense of autonomy goes only so far as celebrating difference rather than assenting to hegemonic uniformity. Epistemologically, to the West's 'being' and 'principles' is China's 'process' and the *tao* or way; Chinese thought likes to synthesize and contextualize. The next step in China's global message of 'harmonious world' appears to be converging on a redefinition of national interest to account for global interest. In seeking the global interest, China (through both government and non-government organizations) will need to play a stronger role as a normative power in global society, advancing further shared development ideals as well as its unique value system.

⁷⁵ This is an argument raised by BUZAN, Barry "China in International Society: Is 'Peaceful Rise' Possible?", *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 3, no. 1, January 2010, pp5-36.