Humanities & Social Sciences papers         Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

2011

# International relations theory and Chinese philosophy

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# Chapter Two

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## Introduction

Insights drawn from a comparison between International Relations theory and Chinese philosophy provide a timely vantage point for 'Chinese Engagements' at this historical juncture of China's emergence as a twenty-first century global power. In this chapter, after a brief historical background, three major International Relations theoretical perspectives are examined: neorealism, neoliberal institutionalism, and social constructivism. In addition, hegemonic stability theory and global governance are selected as concepts relevant to the globalised political world. The theory of correlativity is discussed as an introduction to Chinese philosophy and this is followed by Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism as the

tripartite philosophical foundations of the Chinese tradition. Legalism and Mohism are two added perspectives that help elucidate the polarities of Chinese philosophy. Conclusions are drawn in terms of mutuality between the two, soft power and the correlative nature of the global governance phenomenon.

Rudyard Kipling perhaps best introduces this discussion. In 1889, he wrote: 'Oh, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet'. He did concede in the same poem that there was a possibility of this occurring in the afterlife, where 'there is neither East nor West, Border nor Breed nor Birth'.[1] Today, globalisation is suggestive of such an afterlife. Difference in culture and class is less decisive politically. Hybridity, even transcendence of traditional tribal and class affiliations, takes precedence. In the sphere of global politics, cultural diversity is evident in the range of states represented in the influential Group of Twenty (G20) Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors.[2] Coral Bell has rightly remarked that compared to past ages, nation states today are 'numerous and enormous, as well as being, as a group, culturally and normatively diverse'.[3]

For International Relations (IR) as a field of study there is a clear implication: it can no longer be assumed that the world will continue to operate in accordance with Western constructs of thought. In 2008–09, for example, the global recession saw the traditional Western-centric G8 marginalised in clear preference for the G20. Great power multilateralism continued as an international practice, but the interests of non-Western states were now being asserted. Such interests represent diverse genealogical roots. The fastest rising global power that has already become a peer to the United States of America (US), even if it has not achieved military or economic parity, is the People's Republic of China (PRC). It

is neither 'Western' nor predominantly Christian, or even a child of the Enlightenment. The Middle Kingdom developed independently of Western philosophy, recasting foreign ideas—including Marxism and Capitalism—within its own of templates of thought.

The West, too, has cast China within its own system of understanding and values. The absence of multi-party democracy puts China at odds with the zeitgeist of this rights-based era. The West's opinion-makers do not believe the world has anything to learn from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), or that a CCP-ruled China could find legitimacy in the international order. Moreover, anything that predates contemporary China may be dismissed as 'Oriental despotism' politically, pre-scientific mysticism philosophically, and a hierarchical patriarchy in societal terms: nothing of value in today's world. This caricature of Old China—at times mirroring the failings of New China—belongs to the habits of intellectual and moral hegemony in the political West.

Leaving aside for the moment alternative views to the contemporary relevance of China's philosophical heritage, or the PRC's credentials as a responsible global stakeholder, even if China is of no account except in its capacity to influence decisively the health of the planet or its economic fortunes, then this is enough to justify a better understanding of Chinese thought. Any country whose actions are now critical to the 'high politics' end of the international agenda is worth studying at a deeper theoretical level. This chapter seeks to understand how the Chinese mind fits with conceptions of the international (Western) political system. Can the two work together productively, harnessing strengths in both that may otherwise go unheeded when left apart? More specifically, how do the two work on one another

intersubjectively, as a process within the plasticity of international affairs in the present age?

In recognition of China's growing influence in global politics, this chapter seeks to position the theoretical domain of IR with Chinese philosophy in an effort to find common ground as well as qualitative differences. IR theory in the West and Chinese philosophy in the East have not officially met. There has been no attempt at a school of thought that privileges key elements of Chinese philosophy in IR, except through the introduction of China's Harmonious World perspective at the United Nations (UN) in 2005. This is often dismissed by critics as propaganda from the CCP, and thus generally not taken seriously by the Western IR community. Even outside of official circles or the UN, any meeting of the minds between Western and Chinese theorists has remained peripheral to IR discourse, not only because of cross-disciplinary considerations (IR and philosophy), but also because of perceived temporal and epistemological divergences.

Temporally, one is a post-World War I scholarly phenomenon, and the other goes back some three thousand years in Chinese history, with constant renovations along the way to the present era. Epistemologically, to the West's 'being' and 'principles' is China's 'process' and the '*dao*' (the way); Chinese thought likes to synthesise and contextualise; the West to analyse and argue. Western thinking prefers breaking up the whole into its more 'manageable' constituent parts in the quest for knowledge. The 'Cosmos' is thought of as 'a single-ordered whole'.[4] To the Chinese, this depends on context. The 'parts' and the 'whole', as Hall and Ames explain,[5] may be more productively thought of as 'foci' within the 'field' of alternative realities: 'A particular is a focus that is both defined by and defines a context—the field.'

Moreover, 'Alternative foci entail the notion of alternative wholes ... there is no overarching whole, no single context that contains all foci.'[6]

## Methodology

This raises the issue of commensurability of philosophical traditions: can comparisons be made and, if so, how? There are those who say they can, and that there are universal values which allow for a 'dialogue of civilisations'. Radical incommensurability, by comparison, is less sanguine. It argues that basic principles and even the notion of truth or reality—whether it is absolute or contingent (such as 'alternative foci' that entail 'alternative wholes')—would go against the expectation of a common ground of comparison. In demonstrating this view, David Wong cites passages from key Chinese classical texts:

> Looking for a possible Chinese-Western instance of radical incommensurability, one might go to Daoist texts such as the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*. When it is said in chapter one (as traditionally arranged and on one translation) of the *Daodejing* that 'The Way that can be spoken of is not the constant Way' or in chapter two that the 'sages abide in nonaction and practice the teaching that is without words,' one is finding something different from the usual in Western texts infused with ideals of discursive rationality and argumentation. Or consider the *Lunyu* or *Analects* 1:2, where the importance of rightly ordered family relations is emphasized for right order in the state ('He who has grown to be a filial son and respectful younger brother will be unlikely to defy his superiors and there has never been the case of someone inclined

to defy his superiors and stir up a rebellion'). The prominent and enduring place of this theme of state as family writ large sets that tradition apart from Western contractual traditions that have come to emphasize right order in the state as that which can be ratified by an uncoerced agreement among equals concerned to protect their private interests.[7]

Moderate incommensurability would take exception to such radical incommensurability by noting that both Western and Chinese traditions are internally heterogeneous; differences need not be dramatised on the basis of only selected strands within the tradition; and that some values are given greater emphasis in one tradition, such as strict adherence to filial piety in Chinese culture, but are of less prominence in others. Common understanding is nonetheless possible. Bilingual speakers are cited as evidence of the possibility of two traditions being capable of mutual comprehension,[8] even if not always easy to reconcile—such as a possible clash between individual liberty and filial piety.

Moderate incommensurability has much to recommend it. The strands of tradition investigated in both the Chinese East and the Anglo-American West are diverse but mutually understandable, even if not always in agreement. By only looking at IR theory and not Western philosophy on which it is based, it is possible to focus within the field of global governance as a particular rendering of reality. Chinese international relations are not a separate analytical compartment, as has developed in the West, but part of the larger synthesis of a tradition that includes political considerations. Confucianism, for example, regards the state as based on the metaphor of the family, which itself is part of an expanding circle of relations that begin with one's own moral cultivation, extending to family, community, state, international relations and to the biosphere (or the Chinese

trinity of Heaven-Human-Earth). In some respects it has anticipated the cross-levels of analysis that have developed in the West: globalisation has meant that transnational governance issues—from the economy to ecology—interact across scales of the local and the global. They work across multiples scales: the individual, the state, the region, the international system and the planet.

With the rise of China, and therefore its philosophical base, an increased intersubjectivity of the two systems would be expected to occur. This suggests a process of emerging norms which would allow for a 'dialogue of civilisations', thus moving from moderate incommensurability to greater commensurability.

Moderate incommensurability takes heart in diversity within the tradition. For IR theory between the First and Second World Wars, this diversity took a bipolar form: idealism versus realism. Was it better to rely on diplomacy, institutions and international law to solve interstate conflict, or was the quest for power and readiness to engage in war the way to address the problem of security in an anarchic system—where there is no overarching sovereign authority to protect the state? (See Chapter Five, which develops analysis of China's connections to global energy security issues with reference to different schools of IR theory, but privileging realism.) Realism appeared to have won the debate with the outbreak of the Second World War, an event which was used to depict the idealists as too utopian. However, a second debate broke out in the 1960s between scientific and historical approaches to the study of IR. In this development, realism is modified significantly. Classical realism relied not on science, but a philosophy of regarding the world as unpredictable and human nature as avaricious and competitive, a world in which 'might is right'. With IR being developed as a social science, a branch of political science, realism was changed by the

scientific view that it possessed laws (or 'principles') and hence predictability. In addition to its scientific manifestation, realism had to countenance the emergence of post-war international institutions, most notably the UN, thus modifying its triumphalism over idealism.

The result was 'neorealism'. It focused on the structural constraints of the system. Indeed, the structural distribution of capabilities meant that there would be constant efforts towards a 'balance of power', so that no one state or coalition could achieve power over its rivals. Neorealism, like realism, is still occupied with the problem of how to maintain security in anarchy: it regards the distribution of power as the mechanism for maintaining the structural stability needed for security.

By contrast, the idealist approach that evolved into neoliberal institutionalism favours international regimes and institutions as the ordering principle for world order. International regimes represent a wide cross-section of activity, from the environment to security to trade. They represent 'a set of rules, norms and procedures around which the expectation of actors converge on a certain issue area'.[9] An international institution, such as the UN, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or the International Monetary Fund, is normally viewed as a regime's 'tangible manifestation of shared expectations as well as machinery for coordinating international actions based on those expectations'.[10] The neorealist emphasis on state power in the pursuit of national interests is still important, but it is deployed through regimes and institutions that regulate this activity via 'rules, norms and procedures'. This is the domain of normative soft power and institution-building.

Social constructivism[11] takes matters further by claiming that states not only pursue interests and material power, but also values that relate to ideational power. These colour the way a state views itself, its interests and other states. IR becomes an

intersubjective experience that can bring about change in identity and therefore behaviour. Qin Yaqing, Vice President of the China Foreign Affairs University, Professor of International Relations and translator of Alexander Wendt's writings on social constructivism, draws attention to China's change of identity from an outsider to a member of the international community.[12] Compared to the confrontational Maoist era, China's international behaviour became far more cooperative as it engaged more deeply with the world. For example, in 1980, China's international trade accounted for only 12% of GDP; by 2005, in some areas it exceeded 70%.[13] Besides trade, social interdependence is revealed in China's membership of 289 international multilateral conventions.[14] Qin Yaqing compares the success of the post-1978 Dengist reforms with earlier attempts at reform: those of the Westernisation movement of the Qing dynasty, constitutional modernisation of 1911 and the 1949 Communist revolution. In these earlier movements, he observes, China was marked by entrenched conservatism or ideological constraints, while international society was led by arrogant Western powers; neither was ready to cooperate. Deng introduced economic and social reforms, while the end of the Cold War allowed for further cooperation between politically diverse systems. The probability of war between major powers has been much reduced, 'mainly because of cooperation between China and the United States'.[15]

Such cooperation between a weaker state (China) and a stronger one (the US) not only demonstrates social constructivism in its mutuality, but also introduces the key idea behind hegemonic stability theory, which is also discussed in Chapter Six. Successful hegemonic leadership, whereby 'one state is powerful enough to maintain the essential rules governing international relations, and willing to do so',[16] needs asymmetric (hierarchical) cooperation. In

China's official employment of the term, 'hegemony' refers to imperialistic behaviour. However, in the disciple of IR, hegemonic stability theory refers to an enabling rather than oppressive leadership. In this it shares an affinity with Confucian hierarchical relations, as long as they are reciprocal. As Robert O. Keohane has expressed it: 'The hegemon plays a distinctive role, providing its partners with leadership in return for deference; but, unlike an imperial power, it cannot make and enforce rules without a certain degree of consent from other sovereign states'.[17] Hegemonic stability theory, however, needs to take care that it does not transgress into the domain of negative hegemony. This would occur if the benefits of the system which the hegemon upholds are viewed to be unacceptably unfair. Moreover, if the hegemonic power is a genuine stabiliser, it cannot marginalise international institutions like the UN in their contributions to global governance.

Global governance itself is redefining what it means to be a hegemonic stabiliser, or even a great power. Global governance may be defined as 'collective efforts to identify, understand, or address worldwide problems that go beyond the capacities of individual states to solve; it reflects the capacity of the international system at any moment in time to provide government-like services in the absence of world government'.[18] In so doing, the state is no longer paramount within the larger scheme of things global. It is the processes to which states commit themselves that matter: the regimes, institutions and other forms of cooperation that characterise the dispersion of political authority in the twenty-first century.

As Qin Yaqing has noted, a return to a Concert of Europe type grouping, in which great powers collectively attempt to solve problems, retains its Eurocentric credentials and displaces the less powerful (often non-Western) states. It retains a belief that major powers by their material capabilities (neorealism)

can govern. Secondly, Qin holds that such a gathering should not be regarded as a group for decision-making, but for 'dialogue, negotiation, and consensus building'. Certainly this accords with the preferred Chinese position. 'In Chinese tradition', Qin adds, 'China never teaches other nations to be Chinese'.[19] So what does Chinese tradition teach?

## Chinese Philosophy

The theory of correlativity (or correlative thinking) may be regarded as a foundational influence in Chinese philosophy, as it is central to several schools of thought, including Daoism. It is a form of dialectics that needs to be distinguished from that of the Hegelian West. The latter is well summed up by Fang Tung-mei as an 'ideology of fatal contradiction',[20] more descriptive of twentieth century ideological struggle than the integrative complexity of twenty-first century globalisation. Perhaps better attuned to the dynamics of the present era is the theory of correlativity, a Chinese dialectics of harmonisation (*bianzheng siwei,* meaning dialectical thinking), better known in both East and West as yin-yang cosmology.[21] The complementary polarities of yin-yang are the female (yin) and male (yang) principles. Yin-yang may also be thought of as waning-waxing, negative-positive, receptive-proactive, hidden-open, and defensive-expansive (see Figure 2.1). The *Daodejing* speaks of it thus: 'The myriad creatures carry on their backs the yin and embrace in their arms the yang and are the blending of the generative forces of the two' (XLII).

Figure 2.1: *Yin-Yang* Symbol
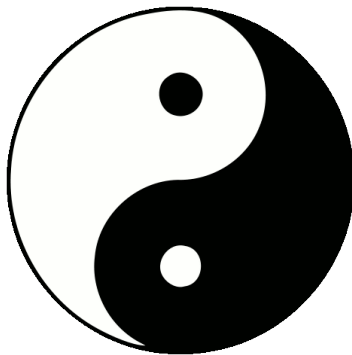
*When yin and yang embrace each other, they reveal that they are not a world that can be divided into black and white, but black-in-white and white-in-black, forming a unity.*

The 'myriad creatures' are therefore not autonomous, but mutually determining. This is the essence of yin-yang correlativity, the relationship between any two pairs. Chinese philosopher Tian Chenshan explains that in the West 'there is a clear essentialism in individualism: the individual as the final end' with the subsequent emphasis on democracy and human rights; whereas the Chinese individual—like the state—is correlatively constituted. This implies an absence of dualism between government and people: The ruler is the heart and people are the body.[22]

Thus, how does the Chinese correlative thinking avoid discord? Simply put, it does not. Rather, effort is directed toward restoring a yin-yang balance. Employing Robert C. Neville's chaos-totalisation spectrum, one can say harmony is obtained through the dynamic balance of elements, of which discord is one. Conflict occurs when an imbalance results in dynamic harmony breaking up into chaos, or when diversity is overwhelmed by a totalising force destroying its independent comprehensive nature.[23] In yin-yang thinking, harmony is lost when too much of one (yin or yang) spills over into its polar opposite.

Indeed, the basic idea of Chinese civilization is the quest for harmony on Earth. There are various approaches to this in China's tripartite philosophical foundations of Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism (Legalism and Mohism are also discussed below). Each has a distinctive quality to offer, while all three combine in the common search for harmony.

**Daoism**

The *dao* of Daoism comes from *dao*, meaning 'the way'. There are as many 'ways' or guiding discourses as there are schools of thought: the Confucian *dao* of social morality, the Buddhist *dao* of *dharma* (law of the universe), Legalism's *dao* of state power, Moism's *dao* of universal utilitarianism. Daoism's *dao* is spontaneous, without divine pretensions, but of aesthetic spiritual resonance. In Irene Bloom's description, it is 'the source of all being, the governor of all life, human and natural, and the basic, undivided unity in which all the contradictions and distinctions of existence are ultimately resolved'. [24] Daoism shows concern for the way of an individual's cooperation with the course of the natural world. Out of this arises 'non-doing' (*wu-wei*), or not acting unnaturally. To 'go with the flow' is regarded as more beneficial than to try to overly manage things, or even to oppose them.

In keeping Chinese spiritual traditions, a teacher rather than a transcendent being, is venerated for indicating the *dao*/way. Daoism's most renowned teacher was Laozi (Old Master), who lived in China at a time between the sixth and the fourth centuries BC. The major tenets of Daoism are in the *Daodejing* (the *Book of the Way and Its Power)*, derived from Laozi's teachings. Hence the *Daodejing* is also called the *Laozi.*

While *dao* is universal, when it is particularistic it is called *de* (virtue/power). This is the *de* which appears in the *Daodejing*. The Dao operates in accordance with the interactions of yin-yang, and its symbols are water, woman, and infant. 'In the world there is nothing more submissive and weak than water. Yet for attacking that which is hard and strong, nothing can surpass it. This is because there is nothing that can take its

place' (XXVIII). Woman also has the subtle *yin* qualities, so are admired in Daoism: 'Know the male/But keep to the role of the female' (XXVIII); while the infant represents harmonious integration with its environment. [25] It is noteworthy that Laozi's teacher was said to be a woman, as was the teacher of the first legendary emperor, Huang Di.[26] One of Daoism's earlier names is the Huang-Lao Teaching.

## Confucianism

Daoism may be regarded as the naturalistic yin to Confucianism's anthropocentric yang. Its principle teacher, Confucius or Kong Fuzi (551–479 BCE), whose ideas are recorded in *The Analects* (*Lunyu*), codified Chinese tradition and addressed the problem of building a just world order. He drew a distinction between petty individualism or the self-serving *xiaoren* (small-minded person) and the morally cultivated individual, *junzi*, who benefits the whole of society. According to *The Analects* (14:45):

> Zilu asked about the noble person [junzi]. The Master said, 'He cultivates himself with reverence.' 'Is that all there is to it?' 'He cultivates himself in order to bring peace to others.' 'Is that all there is to it?' The Master said, 'He cultivates himself so as to give peace to all people. Cultivating oneself so as to give peace to all people—[the sage kings] Yao and Shun were also anxious about this.'

To be a *junzi* requires intensive self-cultivation in the form of inner humaneness, *ren.* This is expressed through the outer propriety of *li*, and accounts for the ceremonial nature of Confucian conduct. This applies to states as well as individuals. When a state is civilised in this Confucian manner, it has a stabilising and harmonious influence. From

the Chinese cultural point of view, the process is not only global (in Chinese, *datong*–'all under Heaven are one'), but cosmic through the triad of Heaven, Earth and Humanity. This means that the human component—be it individual or state (through its government) or the international system—finds harmony with both Heaven (*yang:* the moral universe, related to justice and ethics) and Earth (*yin:* the source of nourishment, related to economics, environment, governance).

If the relationship is not properly handled, the influence from Heaven is distorted into totalising ideological control; Earth becomes the site of conflict and exploitation. The *dao*/way is lost; imbalances occur by appropriating Heaven and Earth for the Human component in its *xiaoren* (self-serving) guise. Chapter Seven, which also emphasises the potential for a resurgence of Chinese philosophical approaches to governance, advances the idea of a larger integrated (rather than self-serving) reality as the *Unity of Heaven and Humanity*.

## Buddhism

Buddhism came to China from India, via Central Asia, around the first century AD. Like Daoism and Confucianism, Buddhism has no personal god but a founding teacher, the Indian prince, Gautama. Gautama became the Buddha, the Enlightened One, after pursuing the 'middle path' by avoiding the extremities of both royal self-indulgence and the self-mortification of Hindu ascetics. Instead he meditated on the problem of suffering until the solution presented itself as the Four Noble Truths. These are: (1) life is suffering; (2) desire or craving causes suffering; (3) if craving is stopped, then so too is suffering; and (4) the way to do this is the Eightfold Path of right understanding, thought, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness and concentration. These

reflect the law of the universe and the nature of phenomena, known as the Buddhist *dharma*.

If Daoism's symbols are water, woman, and infant; and Confucianism's concerns are humaneness, propriety and social harmony; then Buddhism's teachings that life in this world is 'sorrowful, transient, and soulless'[27] must have come across as morbid to the 'this-worldly' Chinese. Yet Buddhism was indigenised through association with Daoism to form the 'spontaneity' of Chan Buddhism; while in its Mahayana form, salvation was possible through good works in society rather than the more anti-social practice of asceticism.

Still, the idea that there is no permanence (which is craved) or origin or soul, but a cross-impact of many forces, is so fundamental to Buddhism that it cannot be ignored. It is explained as 'co-dependent origination' (also known as 'dependent origination' and 'causal interdependence'). The pivotal Buddhist term 'emptiness' (Sanskrit: *sunyata*) is a simplified form of co-dependent origination. Without recognition of co-dependent origination, neither peace nor selflessness is possible on this planet. In other words, if the individual becomes self-less and hence free of attachments and cravings, there comes a greater openness to life and a compassionate disposition to others. Buddhist ethics derive from this position. Giving up the delusion of a 'self' permits a life-affirming practice of helping others to avoid suffering and to fulfil their potential.

## Legalism

While Buddhism may be regarded as a form of realism in its view that the world is essentially a pessimistic proposition governed by delusion, desire (craving), and aggression, its aim is to improve the human condition by prescriptive tasks. Legalism (*fajia*), on the other hand, aims to use known

conditions for the purposes of accruing power and imposing stability on its own terms. Legalism takes its name from the early need to regulate the state and its resources through law (usually in the form of punishment) rather than Confucian moral example, in order to compete against rival states for power and to control one's subjects. Linked to the rise of imperial China, Legalism was practised by the first emperor of China who unified the country in 221 BC under the Qin dynasty. This dynasty was short-lived but it did, correlatively, provide the conditions of unity and stability for the flourishing of the Confucian state under the subsequent Han and later dynasties. This dialectic has aptly been expressed by Reischauer and Fairbank as follows: 'The Legalist victory, while seeming to destroy Confucianism, in reality created a stable society in which it could triumph. The Confucian victory, far from destroying Legalism, made the Legalist empire all but indestructible'.[28]

## Mohism

Another philosophy critical of, but also correlative to, the dominant Confucian strain in Chinese thought is Mohism, with its message of 'universal love' (impartial care), as distinct from the Confucian modelling of relations on the family unit. Moreover, Mohism provides a polar extremity to Legalism in Chinese philosophy, thereby demonstrating moderate incommensurability's message of internal heterogeneity. This was especially evident during the Spring and Autumn (770–475) and the Warring States (475–221 BC) periods, when the *Hundred Schools of Thought* contended to rectify the ancient Chinese world order. Mohism is named after its founder, Mo Di or Mozi, who opposed Confucianism's emphasis on ritual and what he saw as partiality, such as filial piety, which discriminates and is not universal. In this there is a lesson for IR:

Mozi said, 'Partiality should be replaced by universality. But how can partiality be replaced by universality? If men were to regard the states of others as they regard their own, then who would raise up his state to attack the state of another? It would be like attacking his own... Now when the states and cities do not attack and make war on each other and families and individuals do not overthrow or injure one another—is this a harm or a benefit to the world? Surely it is a benefit...' (Mozi, Section 16: Universal Love, Part 3).[29]

Mohism is utilitarian in identifying 'general welfare as a criterion of the correct and equal concern for everyone', and by engaging Confucianism in its perceived weaknesses contributed to 'a Confucian version of benevolence-based naturalism that was implicitly universal'.[30]

## IR Theory Engaging Correlatively with Chinese Philosophy

If such disparate philosophies as Mohism and Confucianism could engage, why not Western IR theory and Chinese Philosophy? Like the *Contention of the Hundred Schools of Thought* (770–221 BC) which flourished  with the passing of the Zhou dynasty, when rival warlords contended for power, so too the sudden end of bipolar strategic competition at the close of the twentieth century has left the field open to alternative modes of relating as nations and peoples. One is contained in the 'harmonious world' (*hexie shijie*) perspective, which the Chinese President has identified as the primary condition for peace and development in IR. That President Hu Jintao chose the UN's 60th anniversary in 2005 to articulate the idea of constructing a harmonious world is indicative of an attempt to render this Confucian idea as more than merely Chinese; that a harmonious world is, in effect, harmonious

with the UN's vision and global governance cooperation. This demystifies the concept, but also steers clear of rendering 'harmonious world' as yet another impossibly idealistic slogan bandied about in global discourse.

Hu Jintao's speech at the UN on 15 September 2005 is worth noting in its concrete approach to bring harmonious world values into the global system. He offered a four-point policy prescription:

> *1. Multilateralism - for the purpose of common security under UN auspices*
> 'We must abandon the Cold War mentality, cultivate a new security concept featuring trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation, and build a fair and effective collective security mechanism aimed at preventing war and conflict and safeguarding world peace and security ... [The UN's role] can only be strengthened and must not in any way be weakened.'

> *2. Mutually beneficial cooperation (win-win) - for common prosperity*
> 'We should work actively to establish and improve a multilateral trading system that is open, fair and non-discriminatory.' He also suggested worldwide energy dialogue and cooperation be stepped up to jointly maintain energy security and energy market stability.

> *3. Inclusiveness - all civilizations coexist harmoniously*
> 'In the course of human history, all civilisations have, in their own way, made positive contributions to the overall human progress. Uniformity, if imposed on them, can only take away their vitality

and cause them to become rigid and decline. The world's civilisations may differ in age, but none is better or more superior more others... We should endeavour to preserve the diversity of civilisations in the spirit of equality and openness, make international relations more democratic, and jointly build a harmonious world where all civilisations coexist and accommodate each other.'

*4. UN reform*
The UN needs 'rational and necessary reform' to maintain its authority, improve its efficacy and give a better scope to its role in meeting new threats and new challenges. The UN reform 'may be conducted step by step', focusing on easier tasks first and more difficult ones later in order to achieve maximised benefits, he said.[31]

Related to the above, China's 'new security concept', noted in its defence white papers from 1998 onwards, holds for a more inclusive and multilateral doctrine that features 'mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination with a view to securing a long-term and favourable international and surrounding environment'.[32] It is reminiscent of Mozi's call to transcend distinctions of 'us and them', 'friend and foe', 'family and stranger'. The 'new security concept' also calls to mind the Confucian emphasis on the morally cultivated individual, *junzi*, who benefits the whole of society. So too the morally cultivated state may be said to have a stabilising and harmonious influence on the system.

In 2006, China implemented its *'harmonious world-oriented'* diplomacy, which took into account 'both its national interests and the interests of other countries'.[33] The concept of a harmonious world, like global governance, may be viewed as a journey. Its ultimate destination, like a river's journey to the

sea, may be a cosmopolitan *datong*—translated as greater community or universal commonwealth—but at present it is still a river having only just emerged from its source in the upper reaches of Chinese cultural experience, strongly infused with the humanist instincts of Confucianism. Herein lies the attractive influence of normative soft power, as distinct from coercive hard power evident in both IR's realism and China's ancient Legalism.

To understand whether the harmonious world concept can retain its (sincere) *dao* or way in its river-like journey, or becomes diverted in a *xiaoren* (self-serving) pursuit of power, requires further investigation to determine what it really is. In using the term *dao*, as noted above, it is acknowledged that harmonious world derives from a Chinese conceptual base, and while Confucianism is prominent, it is not without influence from the other schools of thought. This may be seen as it winds its way through Chinese history to form Neo-Confucianism through the influence of Daoist and Buddhist thought, most notably in the Song (960–1279) and Ming (1368–1644) dynasties, down to the twentieth century's New Confucianism that expanded its scope beyond the traditional Confucian cultural area in Eastern Asia. In 1958 the latter issued 'A Manifesto on Chinese Culture to the World' that argued for mutual learning between East and West for 'a more all-encompassing wisdom'; and foresaw a critical moment in human development when what amounts to global interdependence occurs, at which point world harmony would benefit from Confucian philosophy.[34]

Within New Confucianism there have been four generations. The first (1921–1949) emerged after the May Fourth Movement and sought to respond to Western learning, accepting its strengths, but also asserting that Confucianism had distinctive 'moral-metaphysical' dimensions not found in Western thought; by contrast, another branch focused on

'practical and cultural values in the Chinese tradition as forms of life'.[35] The second generation of New Confucians came after the establishment of the PRC. They also reflected the moral-metaphysical and practical-cultural branches, but in addition had a group who included the influence of Marxism. By the 1980s, when the reform era had begun in China, the third generation of New Confucians were able to dispel the conventional ideas about Confucianism being antithetical to capitalist modernisation, or that it was only Chinese. In the United States a school of thought led by Robert C. Neville at Boston University and Tu Weiming from Harvard became 'Boston Confucianism', demonstrating New Confucianism's adaptation to Western thought and society. Indeed, Confucian scholars need not be delimited by nationality. Theodore de Bary represents a notable Western Confucian. The 1990s saw the emergence of a fourth generation that bifurcated into the old divide of morality (known as 'apologetic New Confucianism') and a 'critical New Confucianism' that was more concerned with social justice issues.[36] In other words, the fourth generation still preserved the divide between theory and practice, despite it being resolved in the 1958 manifesto and the principle of correlativity that distinguishes Chinese epistemology.

In its latest incarnation as Confucian global governance, New Confucian thought (that synthesises other philosophical influences) intersects with IR theory. The introductory stage of the harmonious world concept in the first decade of the twenty-first century would render it as a Confucian nuance on a cosmopolitan form of global governance. In strategic terms, cosmopolitan global governance (inclusive of recent Confucian layering) has demonstrated intent at transnational order, but still lacks the cohesion or persuasive capability to overcome what Mozi calls 'partiality'. There is still work to be done.

In authenticating the global view, Buddhism's co-dependent origination is of assistance in that it stresses the interdependent existence of all phenomena; that they are empty of their own existence and therefore contingent. If the 'world of delusion' is produced by the mind, yet 'it is also from this same mind that the world of Enlightenment appears'.[37] This is matched by the Preamble of UNESCO's constitution: 'Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed'.

## Conclusion

It may be concluded that IR theory and Chinese philosophy are mutually most productive when functioning within the domain of normative soft power and institution-building. The advantage of incorporating Chinese philosophy in Western IR is that this represents a process-based method of adapting to new conditions of a rebalancing of East and West. In doing so, intersubjective relations allow for a yin-yang correlativity toward more cooperative behaviour.

The dangers to avoid are the 'totalising' effect on diversity in the name of Legalist control; a negation of the possibility of common international norms (that include Chinese governance concepts) through radical incommensurability; and an overly-prescriptive path for global governance. Global governance, which lacks accountability, prescriptive legitimacy and the power of enforcement, still poses question marks in terms of the future direction of political authority. In this, a *wu-wei* attitude of 'non-action' would tend to be better than undue haste to impose a global order. According to a traditional Chinese saying, 'Ruling the world is like frying small fish: neither must be overdone'.

It is conceivable that China's leadership may become more nationalist than internationalist Confucian in the future, especially if mutual (correlative) trust does not take root. Thus the predictive quality of a 'harmonious world' philosophy based on Confucian (and other Chinese) philosophies for the positive development of global governance is not assured. However, the application of Western and Eastern normative philosophies over time increases the probability of a positive scenario occurring. For this reason, more work needs to be done on the contemporary utility of Chinese philosophy in relation to Western IR theory.

However, there is more to be considered than the possibility of Confucian governance in IR and what needs to be done by today's cultural brokers. Even if a future Chinese leadership deviates from the current leadership's 'harmonious' blueprint, it does not necessarily mean that the harmonious world endeavour will fail also. It is more likely that China will not remain the advocate for, or exemplar of, harmonious world. That role may go to another member of the Confucian cultural area—Japan, Taiwan, or South Korea. It may cross civilisational lines and find itself embodied in a Western Confucian values country. If China loses this role, it will lose more than can be quantified in terms of an economic crisis or a military vulnerability. This is a qualitative element that animates China's international quest for legitimacy over and beyond any realist calculation of power. It provides another reason for China to maintain its momentum in promoting regional cooperation and the deepening of institutional integration. Northeast Asia, where the other possible contenders for the advocate/exemplar role reside, is the least developed institutionally compared with Southeast and even Central Asia. When performed under the auspices of the UN, the presence of the US, and the inclusive attitude of the 'new security concept', China would have a stronger chance of

regionalising its key cultural cousins in Northeast Asia–Japan and South Korea.

In IR terms, pursuit of a more inclusive neoliberal institutionalism is to China's advantage, both from a realist and an idealist point of view. A Chinese realist would see a legitimate leadership role emerging for China, and hence an accrual of the power of influence to pursue its great power interests. A Western realist would applaud the internal balancing afforded by the inclusion of the US and its allies. An idealist, whether Chinese or Western, would welcome the privileged role of diplomacy, institutions and international law as a genuine alternative to power politics. From a social constructivist perspective, the more that China engages the world, and the world engages China, the better the chances for an IR afterlife in which 'there is neither East nor West'. Buddhism would say they are empty of their own existence, contingent and co-dependent. Chinese dialectics might point to a West-in-East and East-in-West global phenomenon. IR theorists are likely to agree that it is both a question of interdependence and also one of balance. In other words, the yin supports the yang, but the yang conquers the yin at its own peril—and vice versa.

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**Notes**

[1]Kipling, 'The Ballad of East and West'. Written during the British Raj in the nineteenth century.

[2] 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', p. 41) 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).

[3] Bell, 'Seven Years to Get it Right', p. 45.

[4] Hall and Ames, *Anticipating China,* p. 11.

[5] Hall and Ames, *Thinking Though Confucius*, p. 238.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Wong, 'Comparative Philosophy', p. 2.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Goldstein, *International Relations*, pp. 106, 109.

[10] Ibid.

[11] See Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*.

[12] Qin, 'Interdependence, Cooperation, and Global Governance'.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Keohane and Nye, *Power and Interdependence,* p. 44.

[17] Keohane, 'Hegemony in the World Political Economy', p. 293.

[18] Weiss, 'What Happened to the Idea of World Government?', p. 257.

[19] Qin, 'Interdependence, Cooperation, and Global Governance'.

[20] Fang quoted in Solé-Farràs, 'Harmony in Contemporary New Confucianism and in Socialism with Chinese Characteristics', p. 16.

[21] See Solé-Farràs, 'Harmony in Contemporary New Confucianism and in Socialism with Chinese Characteristics'; Tian, *Chinese Dialectics*, p. 21.

[22] Tian, 'Culture and Foreign Policy'.

[23] Neville, 'Between Chaos and Totalization'.

[24] Bloom quoted in de Bary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, p. 78.

[25] See Ames, 'Putting the Te Back into Taoism', p. 134.

[26] Cleary, *Immortal Sisters,* p. 2.

[27] Leon Hurvitz and Tsai Heng-Ting quoted in de Bary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, p. 416.

[28] Reischauer and Fairbank, *Asia: The Great Tradition*, p. 108.

[29] Translation from Burton Watson in de Bary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, p. 70.

[30] Hansen, 'Mo Zi (Mo Tzu)', p. 7.

[31] Xinhua, 'President Hu Makes Four-Point Proposal for Building Harmonious World'

[32] Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, *China's National Defense in 2004* (*White Paper*), p. 1

[33] Yan, 'China's First Step Forward in Its 'Harmonious World-Oriented' Diplomacy', p. 1.

[34] Bresciani, *Reinventing Confucianism,* pp. 37–56; Solé-Farràs, 'Harmony in Contemporary New Confucianism and in Socialism with Chinese Characteristics,' p. 17.

[35] Solé-Farràs, ibid., p. 15, drawing on Bresciani, *Reinventing Confucianism.*

[36] Ibid.

[37] Buddhist Promoting Foundation, *The Teaching of Buddha,* p. 86.