

Legalism sugar-coated with Confucianism – from Qin and Han dynasty – Has this tradition continued in CCP way of ruling?

Animesh Jain

Research Manager, MKAI – The Inclusive AI Community

animesh.jain@sciencespo.fr

Abstract

As an observer of contemporary China, it is easy to recognize the extent to which the current party- state under the leadership of Xi Jinping uses history to justify a vast range of its policies, from Tibet and Xinjiang, to Taiwan, South China Sea and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). As the People’s Republic of China (PRC) continues to rise on the global stage, its leadership and supporters have become increasingly prone to advocating the idea of a “China model” that links its political system to its long standing cultural traditions. In this paper, I will discuss how the PRC has continued the Qin-Han polity which is Legalism sugar-coated with Confucianism. In history, this system of polity started taking shape with the creation of the short-lived Qin Empire (221–207 BC), and then reconstructed, completed and legitimized during the Han Empire (202 BC–220 AD). The Han dynasty establish itself so thoroughly that it became the “Chinese culture” and thereafter “Han” became the Chinese word for denoting someone who is ethnically Chinese. The Han Empire adopted the highly centralized and effective form of Qin administrative structure. But unlike the Qin, the Han adopted a Confucius ideology that emphasized on moderation, virtue, and filial piety which helped them in masking the authoritarian policies of their regime, thus helping in longevity of their empire.

Keywords

Qin-Han Polity, Chinese Communist Party, Confucianism, Legalism, China order, Xi Jinping

The ICS is an interdisciplinary research institution, which has a leadership role in the promotion of Chinese and East Asian Studies in India. The ICS Analysis aims to encourage debate and provide informed and balanced inputs for policy formulation and is based on extensive research and interactions with a wide community of scholars, experts, diplomats and military personnel in India and abroad.

President Xi Jinping, in his speeches, has emphasized that “history is the foundation of all social sciences” and asked his cadres to “study history” for self-cultivation and for serving the country and world. Such powerful and sustained political motivations and spiritual needs of the people have combined to give China the world’s longest, continuously kept historical records and that too in the same written language. It is mostly edited and maintained in the same style and with the same guiding principles, value norms, started at least in the 5th century BC when Confucius edited the political chronology “The Annuals”.

The geographical isolation of the Chinese World over time became conceptual and ideal, mainstreaming an idea of a unified world empire: the “Qin-Han tianxia system” or the “China Order”.

The Geography of China has given it many deep and lasting characteristics and predispositions for its politics and worldviews. Mainland China, for centuries, was a world empire. Later for efficiency, comfort, and stability of governance, the rulers of China deliberately tried to self-isolate the people. Numerous Chinese rulers attempted ‘haijin’ - banning maritime contact with outsiders. This geographical isolation of the Chinese World over time became conceptual and ideal,

mainstreaming an idea of a unified world empire: the “Qin-Han tianxia system” or the “China Order”.

The barriers that isolated Chinese World is no longer meaningful but the ideology and tradition of “Centralia” and the “China Order” remain relevant for the Chinese political elites. Today, the ideology of “China Order” contrasts fundamentally with the “Westphalia System” or the “American World Order”.

In this paper, I will attempt to analyse the “China Order” - ideation and tradition of governance and world order that give the PRC its key characters. The China Order is based on Confucian-Legalism imperial state ideology and the Qin-Han polity justifies and defends its rule with the ‘Mandate of Heaven’ to unite, order, and govern the whole known world, the ‘tianxia’ or all under the heaven. Most ideologies from China originated in the pre-Qin Era (before 3rd century BC) which served as the core of Chinese culture till today. Two of those ideologies, Confucianism and Legalism, have served as the moral coating and the inner core of the political system for the Chinese World. Xun Zi a key figure in both Legalism and Confucianism - as his ideas on statecraft led to Confucianism becoming the synonym of the Chinese culture, with Legalism, constituting the essence and the framework of politics in the Chinese World. Through this, we will try to understand what the recent rise in power of the PRC really represents.

Formation of Qin-Han Polity

Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC)

Before the 3rd century BC, in the pre-Qin Era, Eastern Eurasia was under a Westphalia-like world order. Qin ended the Warring States Era aided by superior force and superb diplomacy and created the basic model and pattern of a lasting political system and governance for the subsequent Chinese rulers. The word ‘China’, taken from Qin has since been used to refer to this vast land. Qin reformed and empowered itself through drastic internal reforms based on Legalist prescriptions replacing feudalism with Machiavellian totalitarianism and militarism, tight control of people and their activities through household registration and liability networks, skillful use of bribery and propaganda, and successive wars of external expansion, gravitated to a great improvement of military technology, they managed to eventually conquer the whole known Chinese World.

Commerce and industry were completely state-monopolized and suppressed, the emperor was now above the religious and ideological competition through forceful subjugation of all religious leaders and organizations.

The rising power of Qin ended the pre-Qin Era politically, institutionally, socio-culturally as well as linguistically. The whole known “Chinese World” was formed into a single political unit by the highly skilled but infamously despotic Qin Shihuang (reign 247–210 BCE). Since then, it has become a political legacy for China that has lasted till today. Commerce and industry were completely state-monopolized and suppressed, the emperor was now above the religious and ideological competition through forceful subjugation of all religious leaders and organizations. The new, united Qin Empire was a world empire: the government of ‘tianxia’ (the whole known world). A well-constructed and carefully managed Legalist polity generated and concentrated extraordinary state capacity to practice totalitarian control of the people and resources, thus becoming capable of achieving grand imperial priorities like winning total wars and building the Great Wall, the Qin Shihuang Mausoleum with its now well-known terracotta army, and the Epang Palace. This led to the creation of a totalitarian Legalist state that sought to rule everyone for justification and power by the endless process of control and expansion. A Qin Legalist autocracy therefore can hardly be content, secure, and peaceful until there is a meaningful comparison or competition left outside its control. Therefore, Qin essentially became a vehicle for materializing this inner logic of totalitarian Legalism in Eastern Eurasia.

Legalism: It values strong governance by a centralized state, argues for an effective and efficient way of establishing political order and public authority through ruthless use of force and ruses to directly enforce imperial laws, decrees, and regulations, as opposed to the feudal and familiar political structures that rely on the indirect ruling, delegation of authority, and persuasion with moral codes of conducts and socialization. Also called School of Ruses and Gaming, Legalism advocates a polity based on the centralized supreme power of the imperial ruler. The blunt use of brutal force, cunning trickery, and harsh imperial laws to govern everyone, and vicious manipulation of human desires and weaknesses to achieve whatever state objectives, the kind of dark but “real” and practical statecraft later famously described by Niccolo Machiavelli (1532).

Qin Shihuang implemented series of policies unifying wagon road system and measurement units, standardizing the written Chinese language, burning non-Qin and “useless” books to control information and eliminate deviant scholars, confiscating all private weapons, slaughtering and detaining old aristocrats and rich merchants, and expanding further through military conquests.[7] Still, Qin’s totalitarian rule failed to sustain and internalize, Qin world empire order was brief due to its reliance on highly centralized martial law-like governance of the vast new world. A totalitarian rule of so many people by severe decrees based on the force with preindustrial technology proved to

be unsustainably exorbitant. An intense civil war exterminates the Qin royal family, and the first-ever Chinese tianxia world empire order ended in total devastation for its rulers and the people under it.

Han Empire thus restored the Qin-style imperial governance for the whole known world and soon faced the same challenge that toppled the Qin Empire.

Han Dynasty (202 BC – 220 AD)

Liu Bang, the King of the Han Kingdom, employed the Qin-style Legalist statecraft and followed its inner logic to quickly unite and rule the whole “Chinese World” by the end of the 3rd century BC. Han Empire thus restored the Qin-style imperial governance for the whole known world and soon faced the same challenge that toppled the Qin Empire - after a campaign to conquer the known world, the question of how to govern successfully with a Legalist polity with no worthier enemy left?

Qin’s Legalist totalitarianism proved its efficacy in conquering the world but also its deficiency in governing the world. The Han Empire tried various measures with much less haste and harshness than Qin Shihuang and also started an important imperial tradition for the later dynasties: the state-monopoly of the lucrative mining, coinage, salt, and other handicraft

industries. Yet the same problems of world government continued to plague and haunt the new empire. Finally, by the long reign of Emperor Han Wudi (141–87 BCE), a lasting solution was found to address the Qin puzzle: to supplement the Qin Legalist world empire order with a modified, monolithic ideology of Confucianism. Confucian scholar and official, Dong Zhongshu summarized and submitted to the emperor in 134 BC the idea of “banning all schools of thoughts other than the six classics of Confucianism”.

Confucian-coated-Legalism, justified the Qin-Han polity to be not just man-made but a heavenly mandated natural law.

The integrated control of people and their minds was justified by Dong’s interpretation of Confucian ideal, modified with the ideas from pre-Qin Taoist and Yin-yang schools - expressed in the classic, ‘Book of Change’. Dong rationalized the unified Qin-Han world empire: a hereditary imperial ruler ought to be a centralized power governing the whole known world, because as the world only have one heaven, sky only have one sun, humans only have one heavenly right way, and a family only have one father, so the world can only have one emperor. Hence, tianxia-ruling emperor derives his power and legitimacy from the unchallengeable, divine Mandate of Heaven as the son of heaven. Thus, this Confucian-coated-

Legalism, justified the Qin-Han polity to be not just man-made but a heavenly mandated natural law. The objective of such governance is idealized as stability, tranquillity, egalitarianism and fairness, prosperity, and security under an appropriate (like a paternal agrarian family) socio-political order for the people, classically described as ‘Great Unity’ or ‘Grand Harmony’ of “all under heaven for the public.” Since then, to rule the world as mandated by the heaven has been a moral facade of China Order based on Qin-Han polity, later invoked by all the emperors. Two millennia later, even Mao Zedong attempted in the same vein to misappropriate physics and cosmology to justify and promote his political power and ambitions as the ultimate truth of the universe: the Maoist Mandate of the People.

So, by the late 2nd century BC, Han Empire managed to complete the construction of the Qin-Han Confucian-coated Legalist polity as a world empire order, the “China Order”, to govern the whole known world: tianxia. It is based on ruthless use of force and ruses coated with family-modelled Confucian humanist rituals and values. Han Wudi, for instance, alongside the enshrining of Confucian ideals of loyalty and filial piety, legalized secret informants even on family members as a Chinese ruling craft for control and taxation. The Confucian-Legalism sanded off the sharp edges of the totalitarian Qin polity and ideologically justified an authoritarian regime. It reduced the governance cost by personifying

the imperial state as ‘family’, invoking the divine power of the heaven. The Han version of Qin Legalist polity was hence modelled after the most important and stable human organization ‘the family’. Confucius rules, metaphors and norms of authority, harmony, hierarchy, and succession coloured and diluted the totalitarian political dynamics of Qin-Han polity into a more stable, less costly, and an easier sell to the people, especially to elites.

So now the Qin-Han world rulers have to constantly expand or keep away the external world hence, Han Empire quickly became an expansionist imperial power, and drew the basic map of China Proper that has lasted till date. This “China Order” worked for a century until the Han Empire collapsed due to a royal family feud.

“China Order” therefore now had a tested and legitimate reputation for the Chinese as a possible and admirable world order.

After yet another brutal “worldwide” civil war, a new regime came to power in 25 AD, headed by a remote relative of the Han royal House of Liu to rule with a further fine-tuned Qin-Han polity of Confucian-Legalism as the Second (East or later) Han Dynasty that lasted for nearly two more centuries before it succumbed to palace coups, gross incompetent governance, mass rebellions, and the rise of warlords. The

two Han empires of the House of Liu had lots of problems of governance, yet they maintained the Qin-Han polity-based “China Order” for the whole known world in China proper for long time, delivering world unification and imperial peace. “China Order” therefore now had a tested and legitimate reputation for the Chinese as a possible and admirable world order. The teaching and writing of history have since been communicating the Han experience of the “China Order”. It has since been regarded as the ideal embodiment for the Chinese political tradition, norms and values.

Evolution of Qin-Han Polity

Sui and Tang Dynasty (581 - 907)

The Sui-Tang Empire lasted for three centuries and they deeply legitimized the “China Order” by further improving it with innovative measures to enshrine and cement it to be an essence of the Chinese tradition and ideation till this day. During its golden era, Tang politics was widely considered among the best of all Chinese imperial regimes as the imperial rulers behaved less totalitarian and more Confucian, bordering on an enlightened dictatorship of authoritarianism.

An elaborate network of well-institutionalized imperial bureaucracy effectively maintained internal peace and stability. Rule by law, a Legalist ideal, was generally followed and the state-society relationship were relaxed. The

Tang had the only bona fide Empress (Wu Zetian) in Chinese history. Tang rulers also expanded and built a world empire even larger than Qin-Han empires, due to the same logic of Qin-Han polity that requires to conquer/subjugate all known competitors. Tang inherited the Han policy of entangling, a feudal-confederation-like system to nominally rule the non-Han people outside the Centralia. Sui-Tang Empire instituted several lasting reforms that greatly improved the “China Order”. Continuing the Qin-Han imperial state ownership of all land, Sui-Tang enhanced the policy of periodic reallocation of land and administrative organization of peasants through the neighbourhood system to stabilize the population and taxation base while suppressing the politically challenging large landlords and internal migration. This system was later reemployed by many rulers and massively by the PRC during its Land Reform Campaign (1950–53).

The Tang also continued the Qin-Han state monopoly of the cash industries, while systematically suppressing private commerce that was deemed politically destabilizing. But the most famous Sui-Tang improvement of the Qin-Han polity and a major, innovative enhancement of the “China Order” was the ‘Imperial Examination System’. It shaped much of the Chinese governance and society, especially education. The system was used by all subsequent Chinese world empires, including today’s PRC that has heavily used

this system or its variants. To serve the China Order, the tests were tightly controlled by imperial rulers based on the imperial ideology of Confucian-Legalism. Chinese rulers from the Sui Dynasty to today’s PRC have all worked hard to control the process, especially the content of the imperial exam. The imperial exam system thus provided an excellent yet easy way to control people’s minds especially the worldwide educational curricula to chiefly promote the official narrative of history, ethics, and individual-society-state relationship.

Under the Yuan China Order, the despotic Qin-Han imperial power was enhanced to treat the people and even much of the ruling elite as slaves

Yuan Dynasty (1276 - 1368)

The Qin-Han world empire order returned with the brutally successful Mongol cavalry. Mongols restored the “China Order”, the Han-Chinese nation was for the first time completely conquered by a non-Han nation. The Mongol rulers adopted the essence of the Qin-Han Confucian-Legalism world empire order, while keeping many Mongol and Central Asian institutions, norms, and cultures. Yuan carried on many Sui-Tang-Song policies. Under the Yuan China Order, the despotic Qin-Han imperial power was enhanced to treat the people and even much of the ruling elite as slaves.

Beyond the Centralia, the Yuan used a Tang-style feudal and confederation-like governance structure for the whole known world to incorporate many nations and states in Eastern Eurasia.

During the Ming Dynasty rule, together with the extensive censorship of publications, secret police became an innovative and tested tradition of the “China Order” that has continued to this day.

Ming Dynasty (1368 - 1644)

Riding the tide of massive rebellions, the Ming Dynasty restored the Han-nation regime in the Centralia. The smallest world empire as it ruled the smallest portion of the known world. Internally, Ming world empire was harsh and intolerant and emperors were among the most despotic, brutal, and inept Chinese rulers on record. The use of both Confucian control of mind and body and Legalist axes of torture and execution was pushed to an extreme. Ming rulers created and relied heavily on systematic and elaborated multiple networks of secret police, and Brocade-clad Guards that were only responsible to the emperor to govern through fear and informants. Together with the extensive censorship of publications, secret police became an innovative and tested tradition of the “China Order” that has

continued to this day. The ban on maritime communications was systematically and lastingly employed. The policy was largely motivated by the logical desire of the “China Order” rulers to keep away the ungoverned and the ungovernable who, were becoming more known to the ruling elites.

Qing Dynasty (1644 - 1912)

The Manchu nation replaced the last Han-Chinese Empire. The Qing Empire, an intensified and perfected totalitarian rule of the “China Order”. Through bloody military campaigns and a host of effective policies, the Manchu Qin-Han world empire expanded westward to conquer and incorporate Xinjiang, Tibet, and Central Asia. Only selectively Sinicized and inheriting the Qin-Han-Tang-Ming style of governance, the Qing pushed the “China Order” to its peak during the reigns of three generations of emperors - Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong (1662–1796), creating the so-called Kang-Yong-Qian ‘Periods of Prosperity’. The Qing multinational empire was the foundation of the territorial claims made later by the PRC. The profusely praised and exaggerated Kang-Yong-Qian Period in the official history books has remained a major source of pride and nostalgia, ironically, even weirdly, among many nationalistic Han-Chinese whose ancestors were in fact straightforwardly slaughtered or enslaved by the Qing rulers. It has been a sensitive political imperative for the PRC today, while vehemently

pursuing and defending the contemporary nationalist objectives of claiming and ruling all of the vast land (more than half of today's PRC territory) that the Qing ruled far beyond the Centralia. The Qing ruled with a refined but same Qin-Han imperial polity. With its emperors carefully playing the Confucian-Legalist father-ruler role, the Qing was an ultimate and epitomized form of the Qin-Han China Order. It had a diligent and careful Legalist ruler assisted by a well-designed bureaucracy and a well-tailored Confucian ideological facade that placates and uses people well. Qing's trademark tight control of people and their minds, with the forced changes of culture and identity and the severe censorship, succeeded after generations. Later, those indoctrinated ideas and norms, were deeply internalized to become part of the Chinese culture by many Han Chinese.

With a crafty substitution of 'Mandate of Heaven' with 'Mandate of People', the foreign funded CCP under Mao Zedong became a powerful Qin-style totalitarian state during 2nd World War.

The Qing-style good management of the "China Order" was a near-perfect world order to the imperial elites, indeed an ideal form of governance for any aristocratic and autocratic rulers. If a mighty external force wouldn't have interfered in the late-nineteenth century, this

ultimate form of "China Order" might have lasted forever. But, the Qing empire with the China Order, started the intense collapse, starting a completely different era for the Chinese World.

Continuation of Qin-Han Polity Through Chinese Communist Party (CCP)

Qin-Han Reincarnation in CCP

With a crafty substitution of 'Mandate of Heaven' with 'Mandate of People', the foreign funded CCP under Mao Zedong became a powerful Qin-style totalitarian state during 2nd World War. With smart ruses, sheer force imported ideological phraseologies, and crucial external assistances, CCP unscrupulously won the Chinese Civil War and ended the Republic of China (ROC) in 1949, causing Chinese political system to take a 'giant leap backward'. The CCP took the banner of world communism from Russia and overhaul China structurally and culturally that conveniently fit the key attributes of authoritarianism and totalitarianism of China's Qin-Han polity. CCP's violent revolution restored the past Qin-Han polity with the wrap of imported European (Russian) ideology. Slogan "serve the people" replacing Confucian humanism. Ideologically and for propaganda purposes, the People became the surrogate for heaven and the CCP led by Mao self-declared and forcefully defended to be the sole representative of the People indefinitely.

The ideology of Confucianism was replaced by the more decorative Communism. Thus, Mao through CCP successfully restored the Qin-Han polity an autocratic governing system made up of new phraseology and imported ideology. CCP's political control of military, secret police and informants, monopoly of the economy and education, propaganda, class struggles, and manipulated nationalism and united front all seem to be copied from Lenin and Stalin, that was very much in harmony with recycled Chinese imperial statecraft such as the household registration. Hence, this new Leninist-Stalinist party-state and imperial China's Qin-Han polity seem to be a good match ideologically and practically.

Like past Qin-Han rulers, CCP heavily relies on secret police for control and governance.

Thus, the People's Republic of China (PRC) had essentially become a reincarnation of the Qin-Han polity, a "new Chinese empire" with some new coatings and trappings. Instead of the traditional Confucian-Legalism, Mao's PRC was pseudo-Communism coated Legalist despotism. After Mao's death, over the past four decades, the CCP-PRC has further evolved to become a fusion of pseudo-Communism-coated and pseudo-Confucianism-coated Legalist authoritarianism.

Post-Mao developments

Party-State evolved from being a one-man totalitarian dictatorship to an authoritarian regime led by a small group of appointed men. CCP has seemingly established new ways, but the PRC looks and functions fundamentally the same way as previous imperial regimes with some peculiarities. CCP as the world's largest and highly centralized ruling party has monopolized all political power, owns the armed forces, police, secret police, media, educational, cultural, financial, and industrial apparatuses, it is the sole owner of all the land and the vast majority of Chinese wealth. CCP's power is ensured by the People's Liberation Army (PLA), nationally financed and staffed but it pledges total allegiance to the CCP and is under tight and highly centralized control of the CCP's top leader. Like past Qin-Han rulers, CCP heavily relies on secret police for control and governance. Besides the 'Discipline Inspection Commissions' till the township levels, there are four more vertical systems of secret police in the PRC, each with extensive networks of secret agents and informants. CCP is further assisted by fully-equipped second military of People's Armed Police (renamed People's Armed Garrison Force in 2016) that comprise of at least 1.5 million people, a massive number of local police station, and regular police force that is largest per capita in the world. The CCP-PRC state has penetrated the society much deeper and further than any past Qin-Han rulers. The educated, able, ambitious, influential, and the rich who are

defiant, not controlled enough, are routinely exiled, jailed even executed with various excuses and often cooked-up charges. From 1999 to 2008, out of the list of China's richest people, 49 were rounded up by the government: 19 sentenced to jail or death, 17 investigated, 7 disappeared, 6 died "unnaturally," and many were exiled abroad. Chinese billionaires like Zhou Zhengyi, the Yuan Baojing brothers, and Yang Bin regardless of how submissive they might have been politically, often ends up in prison or executed and their assets being confiscated. Successful businessmen like Zeng Chengjie who tried to start private banks have been speedily executed to deter the lethal threat to CCP's vital state monopoly of the Chinese banking industry. Most recently similar things happened with Ali Baba chief Jack Ma. Therefore, both horizontally and vertically, the CCP Qin-Han polity is more encompassing than most Chinese empires of the past. Unrelenting and excessive power, control, and socioeconomic penetration of the CCP Qin-Han polity is logical given PRC's need to survive without "China Order" and its desire to rebuild the China Order with all the strength it can gather. As a tauter Qin-Han empire, the CCP-PRC has demonstrated its extraordinary ability of staying in power despite all odds for over seven decades. The CCP one-party polity of autocracy, as a reincarnation of the Qin-Han Confucian (and Marxian) coated Legalist empire, has been unabashed and unapologetic while its power is rising rapidly, thanks ironically to the Westphalia system.

Xi also ratified the inclusion of his own political philosophy – "Xi Jinping thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for the New Era" - in the constitution.

Xi Jinping: The "Core" of CCP

President and General Secretary of CCP Xi Jinping has made himself - China's most powerful leader since Deng Xiaoping, and on par with the founder Mao Zedong. Xi has completely destabilised the elite politics and power sharing norms that evolved since the 1980s in the PRC. He consolidated his political power by removing the term limit for President in 2018 and enshrining his name and political ideology in the party's constitution. Like any past Qin-Han ruler Xi Jinping has done more to elevate his status, ranging from his self-designation as the "core" of the CCP Central Committee in 2016 to the promulgation of the idea of "two safeguards" in 2019, which called for all party members to "safeguard" both Xi's status as the core and the unrivalled leadership of the party's Central Committee, an idea similar to the 'Son of Heaven' status of a Qin-Han emperor. Xi also ratified the inclusion of his own political philosophy – "Xi Jinping thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for the New Era" - in the constitution. Students and staff at state factories are supposed to study this, which the CCP is portraying as a new chapter for modern China.

For a more tighter control of the bureaucracy and establishing his authority over the system, an anti-corruption campaign was launched in 2013 by Xi by ratifying a law to set up a new powerful anti-corruption agency. This campaign increases his popular appeal along with side-lining his rivals and instilling fear up and down the bureaucratic hierarchy a core legalist idea shrouded in a morally right Confucianist way. Xi's efforts on the so-called "governance modernisation" have eroded the authority of the PRC State Council or the government in favour of more power to the CCP, under him, any division between party and government is disappearing. Also under him, new aggressive expansionist attitude of CCP around its borders further validates his "China Order", Xi Jinping has surely enhanced the governance in PRC, with himself well at the core of it and further perfecting the reincarnated Qin-Han state.

A grand China Dream has since been articulated to describe this open-ended mission to rejuvenate China's past power and glory.

CCP's Foreign Policy

The CCP-PRC has indeed been consistent regarding its core interest of regime survival and security. But Beijing has always awkwardly kept up its rhetoric of continued world revolution with different names ever since it made that great strategic retreat to save

itself, from anti-imperialism (West) and fighting socialist imperialism (Soviet) throughout the 1970s, then uniting with the West to defeat the Soviet Union in the 1980s. It then went on for supporting and leading the Third World nations against the First World and dreaming about leading an "international united front" to oppose hegemonies since the 1970s, "independently" striving for a new and fairer world order but keeping a deliberate low-profile to hide and dodge since 1989 especially since the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s. Now it is advancing the 'Chinese development model' and an "Asian spirit" and calling for Asian nations to take charge of Asian affairs in the 2010s. The current version of the CCP's struggle has been termed since the 1990s as "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation/civilization." Later in 1997, the goal was set "to realize great rejuvenation of Chinese nation based on socialism". This grand objective was repeated and elaborated in 2007 and 2012. Later in 2013, citing Deng Xiaoping's decree that, "consolidating socialism will take a very long time even many dozens of generations," Xi Jinping said that the CCP's rule is therefore for a very long time, comparable to the entire history of the China Order since "it has only been 70 some generations since Confucius." A grand China Dream has since been articulated to describe this open-ended mission to rejuvenate China's past power and glory. Later in 2015, the CCP's Politburo, met to discuss, how to "push for a more just and rational global governance" in order "to realize the Chinese dream of great

rejuvenation of the Chinese civilization”. This Chinese dream seemed to be more about on how to respond to global challenges, by making rules and setting the direction for the international relations system for constructing a human community of common destiny. This latest strategic vision indeed sounds like an echo of Mao’s wish to “better manage the planet earth” half a century ago.

By 2015, CCP under Xi Jinping had already pledged to spend 1.41 trillion USD to build and promote its “soft power” abroad.

Neo-China Order

The CCP-PRC has struggled harder than most Chinese empires to keep away the competing outside world and to ideally reorder the world its way. So, to enrich the state and strengthen the military, PRC has become an extractive state with little restrictions to accumulate unprecedented wealth to become now one of the richest governments in the world. Given the inescapable mandate for the China Order, the PRC has focused on spending its wealth to build a powerful state machine for internal control and a strong military with a huge cash chest for its ever-expanding overseas ventures. If the rise of China is still subject to debate and doubts, the rise of CCP’s power as a formidable international competitor is already clear and present. The Chinese military, the world’s

largest in size and second largest in budget, is having budget increase at the speed of twice as fast as the Chinese GDP growth for two decades now. By 2015, CCP under Xi Jinping had already pledged to spend 1.41 trillion USD to build and promote its “soft power” abroad. To strengthen its claims in the South China Sea, PRC has built seven artificial islands. This indicates PRC’s rise and expansion in its state power that has been among the most massive and speediest in the world. But the current Qin-Han empire is still without its China Order for now, but it has acquired enormous amount of gold and guns to build the mandated ‘China Order’.

But, as the CCP-PRC state itself has been created, rescued, and empowered by external factors and forces. PRC’s official ideology (Marxism-Leninism), key pillars of political legitimacy (nationalist rhetoric and state-led development programs), and main provision of technology are all externally sourced. The rapid growth of the Chinese economy and sociocultural changes over the past three decades have also been framed, facilitated, and financed by foreign capital and international trade. So, the PRC now seems to be integrating with the West-led world of the Westphalia system. Yet, the very logic of the Qin-Han polity that necessitates the China Order for Tianxia, is fundamentally incompatible with the reigning Westphalian world order. This cements the deep gap between China’s rewarding integration into the current world and CCP’s

struggle to stay away from and challenge the current world norms that are politically lethal to its Qin-Han polity. This structural tension thus has predestined CCP into endless strive for regime survival and security. And the rise of PRC's power has only made that struggle between Tianxia and Westphalia ever more potent and profound. Hence, the "real" Chinese challenge is not just "regional security challenges" but also "the global governance challenges".

In 2013, PRC's Foreign Minister openly wrote that, Beijing seeks a "new global governance system" to replace the current "U.S.-led" world order.

This "new and fairer world order" that PRC prescribes have now been the real core interests of its foreign policy for more than a decade now. In 2009, top PRC diplomat told his host, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, about China's three "core interests". First, is safeguarding PRC's political system and state security, second, to preserve its national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and third, to have a sustainable and stable socioeconomic development. Later in 2013, PRC's Foreign Minister openly wrote that, Beijing seeks a "new global governance system" to replace the current "U.S.-led" world order. CCP's standard official narrative however tends to describe PRC's foreign policy as loyal pursuit of the

"Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" – Pancha Shila first jointly proposed by India and the PRC in 1954. However, history of PRC diplomacy has shown that Beijing has made many total reversals in its alliance allegiance and international commitments motivated by its peculiar domestic political needs for "state formation and survival". A key "driver of Chinese diplomacy is hence, to support only the Chinese Communist Party and keep regime in power". So far, Beijing has been focusing on disabling and discrediting the current world order. PRC's real goal in foreign policy, therefore, has always been at fundamental odds with the existing world order, of national autonomy, sovereign equality, universal human rights, and political democracy. Thus, the PRC has always been a rebel, an insurgent that has always pursued a revolutionary change in the world's political order to ensure the security and power of CCP leadership.

Conclusion

The China Order, has been the basis of politics and policy preferences for all Chinese rulers for more two millennia. Perfected in many ways by the Qing Empire - the China Order has provided a long, familiar past and a lasting legacy to shape the narrative and the reference framework for today's China. The longevity of the practiced China Order, and the imperial monopoly over the historical narratives for over two millennia now has deeply legalized and internalized this form world order in the hearts

and minds of Chinese people. Thus, the inner logic of the Qin-Han polity has always guided Chinese foreign policy toward building a singular world governance in practice or in pretension. Hence, a Chinese world empire will always strive for ‘Tianxia’ and could never live well with equals, comparisons, and competitions in its known world. Today, the ideology of China Order remains a captivating cultural norm, a treasured tradition, a popular world outlook, and a top political virtue in the PRC. Therefore, it appears that the rising Chinese power will continue its struggle between ‘Tianxia’ and ‘Westphalia’ to pursue its ‘mandate for the China Order’. Because Chinese Communist Party will always feel discontent and insecure without its mandated “China Order”.

Also, now the mandate for China Order seems to be poised for capturing and guiding the rising Chinese power. As to reappropriate Confucianism, China has set up 500 Confucius Institutes in 125 countries by 2016 to serve its “going global” strategy. Beijing has made increasingly active moves to extend power in places like Africa and the East and South China seas with the aim of becoming a “maritime great power”. PRC leaders have spent money around the world to promote a “new, upgraded diplomacy” of China’s “global ambition and vision” for a “new type of great power relations” and “more Chinese voice” as well as a “new East Asian Order” and a global “human community of common destiny”. With its BRI

grand schemes of multinational investment programs and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the BRICS Bank, a China-led “great chess game” to make rules for a “new international economic order” is taking shape with a strong intent to oppose the US-led existing international financial and trade regimes. So far, PRC’s foreign policy has served its purpose of safeguarding and empowering the CCP-PRC Qin-Han polity quite well. Hence, the energy and motivation in PRC’s foreign policy for a revolutionary change of the existing world order for the China Order, remains real, potent, persistent, and ever larger and apparent as the PRC state power grows.

References

Asia for Educators. 2021. Principles of China's Foreign Policy, Columbia University, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china_1950_forpol_principles.htm#:~:text=Long%2Dstanding%20principles%20of%20Chinese,mutual%20benefit%2C%20and%20peaceful%20coexistence (accessed on 15 August 2021).

BBC News. 2014. China president speaks out on security ties in Asia, May 21, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-27498266> (accessed on 17 August 2021).

BBC News. 2018. China's Xi allowed to remain 'president for life' as term limits removed, 11 March, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-43361276> (accessed on 16 August 2021).

CFR. 2020. China’s Approach to Global Governance, <https://www.cfr.org/china-global-governance/> (accessed on 17 August 2021).

China File. 2013. How Much Is a Hardline Party Directive Shaping China's Current Political Climate? (CCP Central Document 2013), Nov 8, <https://www.chinafile.com/document-9-chinafile-translation> (accessed on 17 August 2021).

Chris Buckley. 2014. Leader Taps Into Chinese Classics in Seeking to Cement Power, Oct. 11, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/12/world/leader-taps-into-chinese-classics-in-seeking-to-cement-power.html> (accessed on 18 August 2021).

Clara Wing-chung Ho, Ricardo King Sang Mak and Yue-him Tam. 2018. Voyages, Migration, and the Maritime World, On China's Global Historical Role, De Gruyter Oldenbourg.

David Shambaugh. 2013. China Goes Global: The Partial Power, *China Review International* Vol. 20, No. 1/2 (2013), pp. 196-203.

David Shambaugh. 2015. China's Soft-Power Push: The Search for Respect, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2015-06-16/chinas-soft-power-push> (accessed on 17 August 2021).

Erwin Blaauw. 2013. The driving forces behind China's foreign policy - has China become more assertive?, October 23, <https://economics.rabobank.com/publications/2013/october/the-driving-forces-behind-chinas-foreign-policy-has-china-become-more-assertive/> (accessed on 17 August 2021).

Fei-Ling Wang. 2015. From Tianxia to Westphalia: The Evolving Chinese Conception of Sovereignty and World Order, *America, China, and the Struggle for World Order* pp 43-68.

Grant Hardy. 1999. *Worlds of Bronze and Bamboo: Sima Qian's Conquest of History*, Columbia University Press.

Gungwu Wang. 2006. 'Chapter 9 - End of Empire'. Book – *Nanyang: Essays on Heritage*. ISEAS, Yusof Ishak Institute.

Harish Chandola. 1976. Changing International Economic Order-The Chinese View. 17 January, Vol. 11, Issue No. 3, <https://www.epw.in/journal/1976/3/our-correspondent-columns/changing-international-economic-order-chinese-view.html> (accessed on 15 August 2021)

Henri Eyraud. 2003. Ross Terrill, *The New Chinese Empire - and what it means for the United States*.

Ikenberry G. John. 2015. 'The Future of Liberal World Order' September https://scholar.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/gji3/files/the_future_of_liberal_world_order-sept_2015.pdf (accessed on 19 August 2021).

Xuetong, Yan. 2008. 'Xun Zi's Thoughts on International Politics and Their Implications', *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 135-165.

Jae Ho Chung. 2016. *Centrifugal Empire: Central-Local Relations in China*, Columbia University Press.

Joel Wuthnow. 2019. *China's Other Army: The People's Armed Police in an Era of Reform*, April, Centre for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs Institute for National Strategic Studies *China Strategic Perspectives*, No. 14, <https://inss.ndu.edu/Portals/82/China%20SP%2014%20Final%20for%20Web.pdf> (accessed on 16 August 2021).

Joseph Anthony Arminio. 1994. *The Grand Strategy of the Han empire in the 2nd century B.C.*, MIT.

John W. Garver. 2016. *China's Quest: The History of the Foreign Relations of the PRC*, Oxford University Press.

Kaufman Alison. 2015. 'Xi Jinping as Historian: Marxist, Chinese, Nationalist, Global' October 15, (Xi Jinpings speeches in 2015 and 2011), <https://theasanforum.org/xi-jinping-as-historian-marxist-chinese-nationalist-global/> (accessed on 20 August 2021).

Lai-Ha Chan, Pak K. Lee & Gerald Chan. 2008. Rethinking global governance: a China model in the making?, April 14, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13569770801913355> (accessed on 15 August 2021).

Liqun Cao, Charles Hou. 2001. A Comparison of Confidence in the Police in China and the United States, March, *Journal of Criminal Justice*, pp. 87-99.

Liu Haifeng. 2006. 'Rehabilitation of the imperial examination system', 31 Jan, https://brill.com/view/journals/fedc/1/2/article-p300_9.xml?language=en (accessed on 20 August 2021).

Mark Stokes and Russell Hsiao. 2013. *The People's Liberation Army General Political Department: Political Warfare with Chinese Characteristics*, October 14, https://project2049.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/P2049_Stokes_Hsiao_PLA_General_Political_Department_Liaison_101413.pdf (accessed on 16 August 2021).

Michael D. Swaine. 2011. *China's Assertive Behavior, Part One: On "Core Interests"*, *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 34, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/CLM34MS_FINAL.pdf (accessed on 15 August 2021).

Michael S. Chase, Chun-i Chen, Tetsuo Kotani, Cheng-yi Lin, Chunhao Lou, Mira Rapp-Hooper, Yann-huei Song, Joanna Yu Taylor. 2016. *Maritime Issues in the East and South China Seas: Summary of a Conference Held January 12–13, 2016*, RAND Corporation, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/conf_proceedings/CF300/CF358/RAND_CF358.pdf (accessed on 15 August 2021).

Ming Wan. 2012. 'Discourses on Salt and Iron: A First Century B.C. Chinese Debate over the Political Economy of Empire', 26 February, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11366-012-9190-6> (accessed on 19 August 2021).

Mote Frederick W. 1999. *Imperial China: 900–1800*, Harvard University Press.

Nick Rosen. 2012. From rich list to death list, China's road to wealth, 23 November, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-20454207> (accessed on 16 August 2021).

Norman P. HO. 2019. 'A Look into Traditional Chinese Administrative Law and Bureaucracy: Feeding the Emperor in Tang Dynasty China', *Penn Law Journals*, Vol. 15 (2019-2020), Iss. 1 (2019), pp. 125-171.

Pamela Kyle Crossley. 2002. *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology*, University of California Press.
Gan Yang, Zhiyuan Cui, Wang Shaoguang and Wang Hui. 2001. *Whither China? Intellectual Politics in Contemporary China*, Duke University Press.

Peter Perdue. 2017. 'The Expansion of the Qing Dynasty of China and the Zunghar Mongol State', <https://oxfordre.com/asianhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277727-e-7> (accessed on 20 August 2021).

Rachel Lu. 2013. China's Bernie Madoff Was Executed for Fraud—and Nobody Told His Family, 15 July, <https://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/07/chinas-bernie-madoff-was-executed-for-fraud-and-nobody-told-his-family/277789/> (accessed on 16 August 2021).

Richard J. Smith. 2015. 'The Qing Dynasty and Traditional Chinese Culture', Rowman & Littlefield.

Richard McGregor, Jude Blanchette. 2021. After Xi: Future scenarios for leadership succession in post-Xi Jinping era, 22 April, https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/after-xi#_ftn20 (accessed on 17 August 2021).

Shih-shan Henry Tsai. 1996. 'Eunuchs in the Ming Dynasty', SUNNY press.

The Economist. 2003. Scandal in Shanghai, 21 August, <https://www.economist.com/news/2003/08/21/scandal-in-shanghai> (accessed on 16 August 2021).

Tompkins Elyse. 2011. 'The Fusion of Confucianism and the Qin Dynasty's Legalism in the People's Republic of China Today, 5 May, Roger Williams University, https://docs.rwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1007&context=honors_theses (accessed on 18 August 2021).

UNDP, CCIEE. 2012. – Reconfiguring Global Governance - Effectiveness, Inclusiveness, and

China's Global Role, 17 Dec, Report on High-level policy forum on global governance in Beijing China. (accessed on 15 August 2021).

Victoria Tin-Bor Hui. 2008. 'How China Was Ruled', <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2008/03/01/how-china-was-ruled/> (accessed on 18 August 2021).

WANG Xiang-hui, LI Yu-hua. 2009. 'A Tentative Study on Qin Shihuang's Culture Enlightened Policies', Tangdu Journal, 1001-0300, 2009 Issue 1, pp. 88-92

Yafeng Xia. 2008. The Cold War and Chinese Foreign Policy, Jul 16, <https://www.e-ir.info/2008/07/16/the-cold-war-and-china/> (accessed on 17 August 2021).

Yeh-Chien Wang. 1974. Land Taxation in Imperial China, 1750–1911, Harvard East Asian Series 73.

Zhao Dingxin. 2009. 'The Mandate of Heaven and Performance Legitimation in Historical and Contemporary China', 12 October, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0002764209338800> (accessed on 18 August 2021).

Zhao Dingxin. 2015. 'The Confucian-Legalist State: A New Theory of Chinese History: A New Theory', Oxford Scholarship Online.

Zhao Gang. 2006. 'Reinventing China: Imperial Qing Ideology and the Rise of Modern Chinese National Identity in the Early Twentieth Century', *Modern China*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Jan., 2006), pp. 3-30.

Zhang Jian. 2016. 'Manchu Sinicization: Doubts on the Ethnic Perspective of New Qing History', *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, Volume 47, Issue 1: Recent Additions to the New Qing History Debate, pp. 30-43.

Animesh Jain is a Research Manager at MKAI. He has completed his MA in international security with concentrations in China & East Asia and Diplomacy from Sciences Po, Paris. He has previously worked with organizations including Kubernein Initiative, Tianjin Intertech Corporation, AI Policy Labs, National Skill Development Corporation and Observers Research Foundation in different capacities.

The views expressed here are those of the author(s), and not necessarily of the mentor or the Institute of Chinese Studies or MKAI.

ICS ANALYSIS *Back Issues*

Issue No/ Month	Title	Author
No.142 November	Women in China: “Baby Makers” and “Bed Warmers”?	Hemant Adlakha
No. 141 November	China’s ‘Leading Small Groups’: Instruments of Governance and Control	Kishan S Rana
No.140 October	Examining China’s Position on Myanmar in the United Nations Security Council	Chandam Thareima
No. 139 October	China’s Vaccine Diplomacy: Soft Power, Hegemony and its Geopolitics	Swapneel Thakur
No.138 October	China Working 24x7 to Establish China-Pakistan-The Taliban “Troika” in Afghanistan to Make India “Inconsequential”	Hemant Adlakha
No.137 September	China’s Recent Tech Regulatory Measures	SharmilaKantha
No.136 September	Decoding the Myanmar Crisis: Domestic Factors Behind Coup, External Players Help Sustain it	Jelvin Jose
No.135 August	Beijing Thinks India is the ‘Weakling’ in Quad	Hemant Adlakha
No.134 July	Taiwan: The First and Oldest ‘Thorn’ between China and the West	Hemant Adlakha
No.133 June	Rising Xenophobia and Anti-Asian Racism amid COVID-19: A Theoretical Lens	Shamim Ahmed Khan, Masnun Mahi and Mohammad Zainuddin.
No.132 May	China’s Rise and the Future of Sino-US Relations: How Countervailing Strategies like the Quad are Defining Sino-US Competition in Asia	Biren Nanda

PRINCIPAL SUPPORTERS TO ICS RESEARCH FUND

TATA TRUSTS



MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



INDIAN COUNCIL OF
SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

GARGI AND VIDYA
PRAKASH DUTT FOUNDATION



JAMNALAL BAJAJ
FOUNDATION

PIROJSHA GODREJ FOUNDATION

ICS PUBLICATIONS



A short brief on a topic of contemporary interest with policy-related inputs



Platform for ongoing research of the ICS faculty and associates



Authored by the faculty, also emerging from research projects and international conferences



Draft paper of ongoing research

ICS JOURNAL



In its 57th year, *China Report* is a refereed journal in the field of social sciences and international relations. It welcomes and offers a platform for original research from a multi-disciplinary perspective, in new and emerging areas, by scholars and research students. It seeks to promote analysis and vigorous debate on all aspects of Sino-Indian relations, India-China comparative studies and multilateral and bilateral initiatives and collaborations across Asia.

China Report is brought out by Sage Publications Ltd, New Delhi.

Editor
Associate Editor
Assistant Editor
Book Review Editor

Sreemati Chakrabarti
G. Balachandirane
Rityusha Mari Tiwari
Vijay K Nambiar



INSTITUTE OF CHINESE STUDIES
B-371 (3rd floor), Chittaranjan Park,
Kalkaji, New Delhi - 110 019
Landline Telephone: +91-11-4056 4823