



**Xi's Vision for a 'Just' Global Order: Is China
Seeking to Replace American Hegemony?**

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Abstract

The balance in the the distribution of wealth and economic power is dissipating towards the East. The new narrative is that Rising powers like China are seeking to reshape the prevailing international system that better serves its national values and interests and reflects its own worldview. Due to its growing material power, China under Xi is becoming more vocal about the discrimination in 'discourse power' by a West biased international order. Thus, diversity in historical experiences, cultural identity, and political thinking lies at the heart of the system crisis that the 'Liberal International Order' is currently confronting. Today, the complexities of Sino-US strategic competition are being realized more than ever before as the challenges to American centrism continue to grow due to Beijing's proliferating regional and global footprints. This has raised larger questions about how the western democracies will operate in this new geopolitical era to preserve the existing 'rule-based' democratic international order. The paper seeks to assess Xi's view of the world and his intentions for the prevailing US-led global order. The paper argues that Beijing has no intention of architecting a whole new framework altogether and seeks to shed light on the regime's approach toward the West-centric world order.

Keywords: Order, Power, Hegemony, Leadership, China Dream

Background of the Problem

China's evolution as one of the most influential powers of the 21st century accompanied by relative decline in the USA's hegemonic status as the supreme nation of the global hierarchy has fundamentally altered the course of regional and global geopolitical landscapes. The end of the Cold-War signalled a tremendous victory for the USA and placed it at the pinnacle of global hierarchy which enabled it to construct rules and norms of the existing world-order. The existing international system, established under US-leadership is perceived by the great powers of the West, as a framework that has been immensely beneficial for not only the US and its allies but for the entire globe. Whereas, a few newly independent states of the post-colonial world after emerging as the new actors in the spheres of global influence became highly dissatisfied with the existing system, which they identified as nothing but a reflection of West's social constructs and cultural identity. The two subsequent shifts in global politics resulting from re-emergence of Asian states, particularly China, at the core of world's economic and diplomatic activities followed by diffusion of power from the west to east due to relative decline in US's status as the sole guarantor of the prevailing 'rule-based' system precipitated the unravelling of the present-day international order. Hence, the current international political environment is driven by the exigency to illuminate on the implications of the new spectacle of geopolitical rivalry of this century i.e., Beijing's growing assertiveness contrary to American relative withdrawal from international politics on the future of prevailing international system.

The paper seeks to analyse Xi's vision for 'China' and the 'international order', as his country ascends the ladder of international primacy. In the first part, it explores concepts like 'order', 'power' and 'hegemony' and how they shape Xi Jinping's political behaviour and ambitions. The final part of the paper focuses on the implications of Xi's strategic intentions for the present global order.

Westphalian System: The Prevalent ‘Rule-Based Order’

The concept of an ‘order’ within the prevailing global system is a complex and contested one. Scholars have tried to deconstruct what is core to this concept through various theoretical lenses and in various ways. Steve Chan (1999), has defined Order as “de-facto patterns, normative ideals, and strategic conduct” (Foot and Walter, 2011: 3). It highlights certain aspects like structural arrangement within a system, principles or values that outlines preferred behaviours of political actors towards each other and policies or ways of conduct that determines countries relations with one another in the global forum. Andrew Hurrell (1998), emphasised that contestation is a constant phenomenon of our global system which is characterized by the “continuing ‘unhappy coexistence’ between traditional pluralism, including the unequal power that underpins it, and that of liberal solidarism (Foot and Walter, 2011: 4). An exponent of Liberal institutionalism Robert Keohane (1984), argued that the prevalent international system is primarily an economic arrangement and refers to it as liberal economic arrangements” and “liberal international political economy”, rather than “liberal international order” (Acharya, 2014). He asserts that the present set-up is primarily a product of Western hegemony, where the rules and norms are created and enforced into the system under US’s leadership, along with the assistance of US-led multilateral institutions and institutional-binding. The actual architect of the prevailing “order” has been the norms and institutions of the West, specifically the European inter-state system and advanced with some modifications by the United States (Acharya, 2021).

Philosophies of European Enlightenment thinkers like those of John Locke’s ‘Two Treatises of Government’ (1690) and Immanuel Kant’s ‘Perpetual Peace’ (1795) have paved the way for modern understandings on state-system and concepts like that of liberal internationalism (Vinah, 2016). Principles of human rights, sovereignty of one and other nations, right to individual property and that of non-interference from individuals as well as the state formed the foundation of the modern international system. Prioritising the utilitarian principle which involves maximisation of individual happiness over collective happiness of all and centring the legitimacy of political will on the consent of people by advocating for minimal state-governance under the rule of law have been the primary impetus behind endurance of the Westphalian system till the present time. Therefore, it can be argued that the current

arrangement of the modern-state system is nothing but a construct of the club of western democracies' liberal vision and ideals which has been dominated by the United States since the post-Cold War period. This Washington consensus popularly termed as Liberal International Order is international in sense of the term but never have been an all-inclusive global system (Scott, 2021).

The American unipolarity over the 'liberal-international order' was largely dependent on its financial capabilities (Huygens, 2017) and economic imperialism. Between later half of the 1990s and the end of the year, 2000 was a period of economic boom for the USA, marked by accelerated employment, productivity, wage growth, rapid investment, and consumption growth (Huygens, 2017). Despite this, the decade witnessed sluggish growth in per capita GDP in all major trading partner countries compared to that of the U.S., except China. A decline in the US economic monopoly began during the international financial crisis followed by the world economic recession, both originating from the United States itself. In 2008, the myth about the "unbreakable" US dollar empire was shattered by a massive financial earthquake. The financial crisis, originally initiated from the subprime mortgage crisis in America's investment banking sector which broke out during the latter half of 2007, contributed to the 2007-2008 global economic crisis (Chen, 2011). According to IMF estimations, the multinational financial calamity originating from the American banking sector triggered a financial crisis that resulted in the tremendous drop in the US's ratio to world GDP in 2008 whereas the share of the developing countries rose significantly during this time (Chen, 2011). Chen Dezao has argued that this gap between the developing and developed countries on an economic scale is expected to narrow up further in the future. This reduced gap between the developed and developing economies is considered to be the fundamental reason for the irreversible decline of the U.S. economic monopoly and of the gradual weakening of the present global economic order.

Moreover, widespread dissatisfaction combined with aspirations for diversity particularly within the non-western world who are of the view that their needs are never served by the West-biased system, only added to the problem. Nevertheless, in context of material benefits the liberal economic arrangement has delivered an overall stability and prosperity. But these benefits are often undermined due to a world of political and cultural diversity. The legitimacy of the current order is widely contested also because some of its ambiguous and outdated

features as well as growing challenges and dissension towards certain rules and exploitative approach of this liberal economic framework.

Chinese Understanding of the Prevailing World-Order

The United States has embedded the liberal principles in a universal order to further its own interests and preferences, especially for the continuance of democracy at home and abroad. China, who climbed the ladder of the global hierarchy within the existing US-led order, is now seeking to reshape elements of the prevalent order which would better reflect its own power and national interests in the international platform. Emerging power like China is supportive of globalization but wishes to pursue through its own nationalistic agenda and approach – which gives primacy to state-control, and state-owned enterprises, and operationalisation through policies such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Acharya, 2021). Thus, China does not oppose multilateralism but demands grave reforms in the decision-making process and leadership patterns, particularly with regard to granting developing nations more voice and control at the table of global powers. But the category of developing countries is a problematic one. The power differentials that exist among the developing countries make consensus difficult to attain among members of the Iglobalsouth on a range of issues pertaining to global governance. Even in theoretical terms, the Chinese understanding of global order markedly differs from that of countries like India, Brazil, South Africa, etc. Briefly discuss the Sino-centrism and the tributary system and how the Sino-centric vision has gained salience under the current regime.

Over the last decade, official speeches from Beijing have increasingly been an indication of dissatisfaction with the current global governance system and emphasis on the vulnerabilities of democratic form of governance (Morky, 2018). Highly coordinated official statements regarding Chinese perspective on the present arrangement of international framework has been very specific on what Beijing does not want, which is subscription to the existing US-led international framework (Morky, 2018). Chinese leaders are highly discontent with this US led alliance-based political arrangement, especially with that of the Asian regional order which they find as ‘Unfair’ and ‘Unreasonable’ (Nadège, 2020). The primary reason behind such claim is Chinese perception of the United States, who as the leader of the West continues to

enjoy great benefits from its established alliance system of politics and an enduring disproportionate preponderance over the world order. The pervasive character of the American hegemony continues to deny China's security concerns, despite the clear reflection of the shift in gravity of balance of power in favour of newly rising powers.

Further, current debates on world order among Chinese scholarship is dominated by the perception that Chinese thinking on world politics as a superior alternative to that of West's 'outdated' and 'dysfunctional' set-up (Morky, 2018). These narratives on world order features frequent references to traditional or ancient conceptual underpinnings. Prominent current Chinese discourses focuses on dissecting the incapability of western model in solving emerging global challenges by capitalizing on events like 2008 financial crisis, Brexit, unreliable nature of American leadership and even more recently inefficiency of the developed democracies in solving the Pandemic crisis to argue that western idea of Cosmopolitanism needs grave revision in the age of globalization (Morky, 2018). There is a growing interest within Chinese scholarship to promote a kind of 'global cosmopolitanism' with a very particular "communitarian spin, which is based on an all-encompassing notion of "mankind," and call for eliminating the "old, mainstream" cosmopolitanism centred on the individual's rights and duties (Morky, 2018).

Decoding Xi's Version of Governance and Global Leadership

Xi's present foreign policy is eminently characterised by two specific features – propagation and procurement of national interest and an outright desire towards shaping an alternative discourse on international diplomacy based on the Chinese version of fairness and justice. In Xi's 'new era', China no longer shies away from telling its stories to an international audience about what it finds as a more appropriate arrangement of the present system (Yu, 2017). His vision for China's inevitable rise is not just limited to elevation of Chinese people's confidence in themselves and their national pride but also aims at upgrading China's stature within the global hierarchy (Deng, 2017). Xi's current hard-line and proactive approach both in international and national politics can be interpreted through two schools of thought – *Firstly*, Machiavellian understanding of power and leadership states that politics is all about power and involves tough choices thus a leader who wishes to retain his power must be feared than loved,

if not both. His power is meaningless without the consent of the people and it is easier to maintain the consent of the people by instilling fear among them. In a vast and detailed report by France's Strategic Research Institute, Paul Cheron and Jean-Baptiste Jeangène Vilmer argue that today's China finds it "safer to be feared than to be loved" (Sukheja, 2021). The report entitled: "Chinese influence operations - a Machiavelli moment" illustrates about layers of institutions, designs and actions - from most benign public diplomacy to most clandestine malignant activities used by China to build a positive image around the world, arousing admiration about Chinese hegemony and to manipulate public opinion abroad, especially in the West (Made, 2021).

For instance, by making anti-corruption campaign his personal mission and tightening control over media, Xi made them his preferred tools to dismantle any form of dissent (Brar, 2021). By accusing local rulers for abuses of power and sending them to prison, Xi not only tried to earn the favour of common people but also attempted a dictatorial intimidating leadership tactics. This is exactly how Machiavelli's *Prince* would have manipulated public opinion to retain his position. After Mao's era, Xi has succeeded in consolidating unsurmountable amount of personal power. Bill Bishop, the publisher of the Sinocism newsletter on Chinese politics, has asserted that "Xi is effectively unassailable ... If you challenge Xi, you are challenging the party – and you never want to be against the party" (Philips, 2017). For Machiavelli power is an end in itself and a Prince has to be cunning and deceitful to retain his political power. This is the principal reason behind Xi's diversionary foreign policy approach. Most of Chinese diversionary aggressions in which it seeks to revise the strategic landscape of the prevalent regional order but evaporates with the resolution of China's domestic tensions, are international crises initiated by Chinese leadership to demonstrate their competence and instil an "us-versus-them" sentiment that bolster national solidarity and in turn domestic support (Carter, 2019).

Domestic support ensures Xi's legitimacy and authority against rival elites, who knows that toppling an uncontested leader would invite a backlash. In short, if Xi continues to stay in office beyond the anticipated decade, world must be prepared to face an even more "outward-looking, proactive, and probably rather an assertive China" in international politics.

Secondly, As Machiavelli and Hobbes both argue that fear is the source of political power and legitimacy of a ruler's sovereignty over people's life in a state. Foucault develops his theory

based on these ideas of power but goes beyond main-stream state-centred understanding of power (Kittipaisalsilpa, 2017). According to Foucault Fear is rather used and continually reproduced by the government to govern the population in the name of the disciplinary power over life. Foucault introduces the notions of governmentality and bio-political power which form the cornerstone of important techniques of social control by the state in a 21st century (Kittipaisalsilpa, 2017). Governmentality refers to process of governing, controlling and shaping individuals conduct and behaviour in a state through obligating laws, norms, the expectation of social policies, institutions, and ideologies without noticing the state enforcement (Kittipaisalsilpa, 2017). Foucault's concept opens up a new era of governance which entails govern with mentality through various new sources power in society such as knowledge and the collection of techniques instead of a single source of authority such as state or institutions to individually shape personal conduct among the populations. Biopower refers to an abstract form of power which is produced, exercised and realized through diverse of techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of entire populations (Kittipaisalsilpa, 2017). The concept biopolitics, in return, signifies the specific set of techniques and knowledge by which one aims to produce the biological in a specific form of the techniques where biopower is exercised in its many forms of applications. In this regard, detentions of Uighur Muslims in Xingjian province, was a demonstration before the world, of the consequences of going against the party's interests. China wants to shape not only national citizens but also a global community that comply with CCP's action and looks upon the regime with great admiration by instilling fear among the masses and accumulating unrivalled amount of power for the Party's leadership circle.

Xi's 'China Dream' vs 'The American Dream': Between Theory and Practice

Soon after being appointed as the leader of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in November 2012, Xi Jinping at the National Museum of China first spelled out that his 'China Dream' (zhongguo meng) is to achieve "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" (Callahan, 2014: 143). In March 2013, at the National People's Congress Xi illustrated that the dream of great rejuvenation can be achieved by the people of China through consistent efforts to push the great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics and by striving to achieve a rich and powerful country (BBC, 2013). Xi further elaborated upon his Chinese Dream which envisions a

modern, prosperous, and strong China by 2050, in the 19th National Party Congress held in 2017 (19th National Congress of the CCP, 2017). The desired timeline of China becoming a nation with “pioneering global influence coincided with realisation of the BRI. The central theme of this session was the need to “strive for the great success of socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era, and work tirelessly to realize the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation” (Grossman and Chase, 2017). In the 19th Congress Xi also stressed the importance of consolidation of power and building a ‘world-class’ military force for the fullest realization of ‘China Dream’ (Ranade, 2017).

The ideological essence of ‘China Dream’ carries a profound sense of patriotic and nationalist desires of Chinese people to recover China from the Century of Humiliation during which it was bullied, colonized, and brutalized by foreign powers and to reform the country into a strong dominant world power. The concept is deeply embedded in ancestry, cultural identity and history, especially the event of Chinese people’s long and difficult struggle against poverty, backwardness, feudalism, and imperialism (Pena, 2015). Nationalism being a predominant force in uniting the population, Xi is using political nostalgia to empower Chinese people to have these dreams and aspirations about achieving peaceful, sustainable development; common prosperity; and independence from foreign interference and domination through the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and a people’s democracy guided by the Communist Party of China.

Both the “Chinese” and “American” dreams are products of ideological constructs, historical lineages and cultural identities together which have led to the social evolution of People’s Republic of China and the United States of America, and the formation of the two different systems - socialism with Chinese characteristics and American capitalism (Pena, 2015). Chinese political perception is largely shaped by a strong sense of authority and collectivism and is fortified by a great number of traditional values like that of importance of order, reverence for authority, the virtue of rulers (Kai, 2014). The Chinese Dream represents a dream about common prosperity and happiness for the people of China. Whereas the concepts of individualism and personal liberalism have always predominated the Western societies. The American Dream represents the ideals of a society that allows maximum personal liberty for each individual to pursue their private interests and ambitions in order to achieve individual

material success and upward social mobility within a capitalist system of bourgeois democratic government (Pena, 2015). American Dream has always been encouraging about individual flair, creativity, zeal and financial success at such an unparalleled global scale that it has often been perceived as a “world dream” to some degree (Kai, 2014). The American dream is a 20th century idea which formally started taking shape during the early twentieth century when American capitalism was undergoing the most desperate economic crisis of modern history (Pena, 2015). At the depths of Great Depression, when chronic unemployment, poverty, hunger and homelessness shattered the American society, the idea of American dream was presented before the working class to protect the land against serious impingement of socialist ideas (Pena, 2015). Thus, born out of fear and insecurity at a time of crisis, the idea was moulded by the desperate advice of ‘every individual for himself’ mentality. An excessive individual centric focus of the American Dream contributed to the extreme version of individual responsibility which entails that individual must entirely rely on themselves for their success and failures. Neither they owe anything to the society for their success or failures nor the society owes anything to them regardless of their success or failures. Therefore, as argued by professor Jin Kai, that culturally China dream represents an “our dream” philosophy contrary to American Dream’s “my dream” characteristics (Kai, 2014).

Contrary to America’s many individual dreams, the Chinese Dream in practice is a single national dream shared by people of China yearning for the great rejuvenation of their nation. It emphasizes on the collective efforts of ordinary Chinese in navigating the accomplishment of independence, happiness, and common prosperity for all, along the path of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” with the Communist Party of China as the national helmsman (Callahan, 2014: 156). Whereas, American dream behind its progressive, non-ideological facade, in practice is an outright anti-communist, capitalist desire aimed at bourgeois liberation of the remaining socialist countries (Pena, 2015). It has always preached the world that if people adopt to the American way of life and stick by this capitalist model of economy, every individual will succeed in their desires and benefit in the end. Thus, Chinese dream is unique to the people of China and speak only to the members of Chinese nation as an alternative way among many (Kai, 2014). The American dream is a universal one and due to its global appeal, it is envisioned to be adopted by the whole world.

However, while majority of western scholars have interpreted China Dream as an endorsement of Xi's vision of strong state control which buttresses the already-existing ideology and structures of power and socio-economic transformation of the rest of the world to make it compatible with Chinese national security and prosperity, for many of China's citizen intellectuals, the idea of American Dream signifies a materialist pursuit of happiness. Nevertheless, the fundamental values like flourishing future, thriving lives and the greatest human desire of fullest realization of emancipation and genuine happiness are common to both dreams. Likewise, both dreams are facing similar challenges stemming from pursuit of respective dreams by encouraging capitalist growth model in order to achieve the necessary economic advancements. In this regard Colonel Liu Mingfu, famously known for his plan for China to replace the United States as the world's number one power has argued that in order to make Chinese rejuvenation a reality, China Dream alongside grand aspirations and national pride needs to include self-critical practice of patriotic worrying (Callahan, 2014: 154). For Liu, the greatest threat to the China Dream is not Westerners' criticism of China through "China Collapse Theory" but a lack of self-critical voices among the Chinese particularly in security and foreign affairs discourses (Callahan, 2014: 155). Whereas, the declinism dynamic which involves America's worrying mentality about possible national decline, is actually a critical tool that has always protected the American Dream against collapse.

Pax-Americana vs Pax-Sinica: is the Liberal Hegemony Under an Existential Threat?

Hegemony in international relations is not just a tool to achieve a nation's foreign policy objectives but is more akin to attainment of imperialism by extending political, economic, cultural influence over other countries through employment of both soft and hard power techniques. However, classical idea of hegemony as developed by neo-Marxist scholar Antonio Gramsci defines it as intellectual and moral leadership of bourgeois section of a capitalist society to gain consent of the general mass and having the power to persuade the subordinated ordinary section to accept and adopt its values as the values of the ordinary section (Varisco, 2013: 2). While Ernesto Laclau has argued that the concept involves a specific demand (a particularity) functioning as a symbol not only of a broad range of social demands but also of the (unattainable) ideal of a perfect, that is, fully constituted, society (the universal), in which

all demands are fulfilled (Stengel, 2019). World System theory, also termed as Systemic School of Thought, explains hegemony as a “single power's possession of simultaneous superior economic efficiency in production, trade and finance” (McCormick, 1990: 128). For Robert Cox (1981), a leading neo-Gramscian and the father of Critical Theory in IR the concept of hegemony “is based on a coherent conjunction or fit between a configuration of material power, the prevalent collective image of world order (including certain norms) and a set of institutions which administer the order with a certain semblance of universality” (Schmidt, 2018). Whereas, Realist School’s approach to hegemony in international relations primarily refers to overwhelming material power and ability to use this power to dominate others. Realists typically identify the most powerful state in the international system as the hegemon; a state that possesses vastly superior military and economic capabilities (Schmidt, 2018).

Thus, the perception that power maximisation and economic dominance are the most expedient ways to secure hegemony, fits well with traditional theories of International Relations (Skerritt, 2019). In the words of offensive realist scholar John Mearsheimer, the US in the past has never allowed and will never allow any rising power in the world to become its peer competitor and to replace its regional hegemony (Mearsheimer, 2006). In retrospect, the US always has been a status-quo power that has always defended its exalted stature and has never been tolerant towards its peer competitors whenever it felt that its position was being challenged. A brief look at the history of US interventions demonstrates that to meet this end, the US has always applied a formula that is considered to be a collective brainchild of Kissinger, Schelling, and Brzezinski and combines regime change, political instability, internal destabilisation, and regional destabilisation (Ahmad, 2018). But these strategies are largely ineffective against tampering with China’s internal and external political clout due to two reasons: firstly, the authoritarian regime’s monopoly on power, nationalist propaganda, and censorship of media (Ahmad, 2018). Secondly, regional destabilization is more problematic in the case of China due to relative political and economic stability in the East Asian theatre and Beijing’s influence in the web of regional organizations like that of BRICS, ASEAN, APEC etc. (Ahmad, 2018). Together these have obstructed the US from taking any significant lead. One of CCP’s recent banner rhetoric, which speaks about ‘building a community of common destiny for mankind has become a hallmark of Xi’s diplomacy and plays an important role in his foreign policy approach towards different global governance issues like trade, climate change, cyber

operations, and security cooperation (Tobin, 2018). This socialist vision of a shared future for all, in a nutshell, appears to illustrate Xi's long-term vision for transforming global governance to make it more compatible with China's governance model and emergence as the new global leader. Although it appears like a challenge to the prevalent liberal international order, it surely does not threaten its existence. China's action may appear on the surface to be one of a rising hegemon aiming to revise the norms and regulations constructed by the previous hegemon. But in reality, China can never intervene in the hegemonic actions of the US. What China can and does is disagree and criticise those actions diplomatically. There is a substantial difference between strong regional powers who have influence within this global order and that of the actual hegemon who directs the course of the system (Skerritt, 2019).

The pervasive nature of US hegemony lies in the process of globalisation itself, which has provoked an endless propagation of a system designed to support and protect the American regime even in its decline. One major outcome of this design is the universality of the English language (Skerritt, 2019). Making English language the main medium of knowledge for international students has made it easier for America to articulate knowledge in a certain way that has for decades prevented the interrelation of subjects and critical learning necessary to make the links between language, race, culture, ideology, and class (Skerritt, 2019). Whereas, to date, Chinese voices and narratives on history and the world are vastly limited to its oriental literature and texts. An oriental language and Knowledge do not possess the capability to surpass the pervading influence of a global language and its vastly accepted fragmented version of knowledge. Gramscian version of hegemony speaks of controlling the masses through consent, which entails convincing the ruled that their preferences and ways are synonymous with that of the ruler. This is the crux of the American design of hegemony (Skerritt, 2019). The commercialization of the World Wide Web followed by the advent of social media and the proliferation of Hollywood cinema, music, and dressing sense played a leading role in selling the American Dream and indistinguishably merging people from different nations (Skerritt, 2019). Thus, what actually has been a purposeful intrusion and Americanization of society and states, are being idolised, absorbed, and acknowledged at the societal level as inevitable consequences of modernization and globalisation. Apart from societal reconstruction as per American norms and ideals, international organisations and post-Cold War constructions like that of the United Nations (UN), International Monetary Fund (IMF), NATO alliances have

legitimized USA's economic and military imperialism (Skerritt, 2019). United Nations, to which the U.S. provides a quarter of the budget, buttresses the imperialist actions of the American government both economically and militarily. US exercises its military influence to a large extent through the UN, which is detrimental for those who defy it and are beneficial for those whose security interests align with that of the USA. Likewise, international financial institutions created during the post-war reconstruction conference at Bretton Woods, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, helped the USA in achieving and maintaining its economic hegemony across the globe (Skerritt, 2019). Till date, as the largest shareholder of the World Bank, America maintains its legacy of nominating an American citizen as the president of the largest global financial institution (Frankel, 2020). Moreover, quotas are building blocks of IMF's governance and if China wishes to attain a higher quota than the US, then as per Fund's agreement articles, China would have to move its headquarters from Washington to Beijing (Frankel, 2020). China's economic surplus has facilitated it to step into American boots of economic imperialism through engaging in initiatives and funding infrastructure projects across global south nations. This in fact has given China significant influence, access and temporary proprietorship over natural resources, strategic spaces and infrastructures of those indebted developing nations. These activities are simply part of Beijing's geopolitical strategy to garner the loyalty of those nations because China wants to ensure a greater voice and influence in the multilateral organizations to combat against NATO allies.

However, till date America enjoys much bigger economic and political clout at these multilateral institutions than China. With US surrendering of influence at these organizations under the Trump administration and Chinese efforts to fill in the vacuum created in global leadership there has been superficial claims about China posing threat to the sustenance of America's liberal hegemony. The main reason behind this claim is China's exponential economic and military growth in the past few decades which is accompanied by Xi's wolf warrior diplomacy and the grandeur of creating a shared destiny for mankind against American individualism. But the fact that China itself is a part of this neo-liberal system and has embraced the Bretton Woods economic arrangement cannot be obliterated. The imperial structure of the current order has been designed in such a fashion that states are bound to fundamentally forgo their traditional systems and outlook and become part of this capitalist,

neoliberal set-up. This is why not only China but other emerging powers as well instead of trying to flip the existing system in order to directly challenge U.S. supremacy, have always conformed to the values of liberal economic order for a sit at the table of global powers. Therefore, it can be argued that ‘Pax-Americana’ popularly identified as the liberal international order is anything but declining. Contrary to emerging discourse around American hegemony’s decline and the emergence of BRICS nations, the liberal system has persevered to ensure that the structure constructed at the post-war Bretton Woods conferences remains the de facto framework driving international relations over the next century, so that no new alternative to Pax-Americana can ever emerge. Grandly accredited as the provider of world security and thus vital to maintenance of international peace within the order, Pax-Americana is aided by systematic control and containment of anti-capitalist regimes, neo-liberal institutions and deterrence of nuclear weapons. The American hegemony has witnessed rise and fall of many dictatorial regimes but USA has always succeeded in evolving, transforming and effective building of structures which has always perpetuated its dominance and permeated through everyday functioning of our daily lives and political systems.

Conclusion:

China’s remarkable transition from a ‘quite achiever’ to an ‘assertive player’ in matters of diplomacy, under Xi’s leadership has not only made Beijing highly discontent with its present stature within the global hierarchy but also reproving of the Western monopoly in the existing world order. The constant emphasis on uniqueness of Chinese characteristics and quest for a non-Western global system concomitant with the desire to de-Westernize the current world order are in line with Communist Party leadership’s attempts to validate through its example that countries differ in their historical conditions, cultural heritage, and national identities and therefore there can never be a universal model that fits all (Nadège, 2020). Primarily used for domestic political gains and CCP’s legitimation purposes, instrumentalization of Chinese cultural and historical exceptionalism along with rejection of the universality of liberal democratic values, as endorsed by the current international order has become the key element of China’s discourse on global governance under Xi Jinping. China’s achievements are

presented before the world in a particular way to validate the path to development chosen by the country's leadership is more accurate and efficient compared to that of the West's, which it portrays as ineffective and chaotic. In Chinese view West-Centric international governance, concepts and models underpinned by outdated western norms and values are becoming increasingly insufficient to grasp with the emerging international situation and to keep up with changing times to the point of utter failure (Nadège, 2020). In fact, the relative success of the Chinese economic model vis-à-vis the global capitalist system is further validating Chinese propaganda aimed at interiorising West's liberal-democratic model. Thus, presenting before the unquestionable hegemony of the West, a challenge of historic significance.

Xi's vision to create a viable alternative for the prevalent world-order appears very ambitious in terms of Beijing's own diction on global governance and scale of effort deployed to achieve those goals. China's omnidirectionally expanding bilateral links to reassemble the supporting partners among its Asian neighbours, emerging developing countries and other nations along the BRI corridors are being interpreted as its path to global domination. Nevertheless, underlying this grand rhetoric on future of mankind and historical glorification is a very limited and myopic vision for a new world order. This vision is restricted to decry against the US-led order's preponderance which seems to be threatening for the CCP's survival and legitimacy regarding its intention to transform the world to make it supportive of China's inevitable rise under the party's helmsmanship. The hype over alteration of the current 'rule-based order' boils down to breaking down the discourse monopoly of the West on concepts like 'justice' and 'righteousness' and those related to human rights issues. Xi's China believes and relentlessly promotes, that Chinese should have their own interpretation on notions of 'fairness' and 'human-rights'. Xi's quest for accumulation of insurmountable amount of power is aimed towards securing China a greater voice and influence at the table of world powers in order to participate in crafting and determining the norms of global governance and business, which are beneficial for its national interests and comply with CCP's legitimacy at home and abroad. Therefore, Xi's China surely wants a greater influence within the current world but there is no observable signal from Beijing's about its intention to entirely displace the framework of the present international order. Afterall, being the biggest beneficiary of globalization, why would China get into the trouble of capsizing an entire system when it can influence its control over the current one (Gokhale, 2020). Previously, it has used Western-led institutions to advance its

national interests and influence and now it working from and within both old and newly created multilateral organizations and platforms to promote its own worldview and concepts in order to side-line the prevalent model of global governance. Nevertheless, Xi's view on a 'new-world order' is limited to the demand for certain sphere of influence instead of an ambition to exert absolute control over foreign territories. At least, CCP's outward facing foreign policy under Xi's revolves around importance of dialogue, and inclusivity, of win-win cooperation and shared benefits outruns any such assumption about China's longing for hegemony and headship (Gokhale, 2020). In fact, Xi's vision for a new order, in absence of any specific elucidation regarding the nature of management and execution of international affairs under his 'new era' represents a picture of a loose obscure form of hierarchical structure, in which China will be the hero of deprives in the system. This parallel system signals for a flexible hegemony which is not defined by universality of culture, ideology and human geography but on the degree of admiration and loyalty that those under its sphere of influence are willing to offer Beijing. Rather, it is willing to include all under this Sino-centric system which is largely purged from core western beliefs, as long as they recognize and respect the primacy of CCP's legitimacy, authority and national interests.

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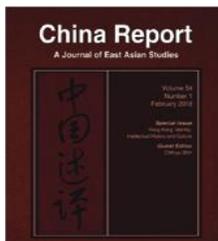


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