China’s Diplomatic Philosophy and View of the International Order in the 21st Century

Satoshi AMAKO

Abstract
It is extremely important to understand the concept of “Wuxu Zhuyi” (務虚主義 ideologism) when discussing Chinese foreign policy. How are Xu (virtual) and Shi (actual) represented in Chinese foreign policy? Expressions and actions such as “saving face” (面子 mianzi), “high-handed diplomacy” and “arrogant attitude” are common in descriptions of China’s diplomatic behavior. These behaviors are based on this principle of Wuxu Zhuyi. Diplomacy directly connected to national interests should be understood as Wushi Zhuyi (務実主義) and includes securing resources and the enhancement of national power. In this article, by briefly reviewing the diplomatic history of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) since 1949, the author observes that China’s diplomatic style based on Wuxu Zhuyi is mainly concerned with a strategy of “positioning” relative to other nations without necessarily relating directly to practical benefits, and is another important element of foreign policy behavior.

Keywords
Chinese foreign policy, diplomatic style, Wuxu Zhuyi (ideologism), Asian international order

Introduction
One Chinese expert in foreign policy said, “one of the major characteristics of China’s foreign policy is mutual collaboration between “Wushi Zhuyi” (Pragmatism) and principles of foreign policy.” However, in many cases it seems more

1 Tingbiao Hong and Zhirong Zhang, Dangdai zhongguo waijiao xinlun [New Discussion on Contemporary Chinese Diplomacy] (Lizhi Press, 2004), 65.
appropriate to call it “Wuxu Zhuyi” (ideologism) rather than Wushi Zhuyi when observing the diplomacy of Mao Zedong. First, let us define Wushi. “Shi” (actual) is used in comparison with “Xu” (virtual), or rather, it stands as the antithesis of Xu. Xu refers to substances that cannot be seen or physically touched but actually exist, including politics, philosophies, theories or styles (attitudes). On the other hand, Shi refers to substances that can be captured with the eye, including the economy and other phenomena seen in daily life such as GDP, the price of goods, trade, finance, profit and destruction of the environment. “Wu” means “to make an effort to deliver a work or to do a job.” Such terms as “Wuxuhui” (ideological meeting) and “Wushihui” (pragmatic meeting) are often used for meetings of the Communist Party of China. The former refers to meetings about theoretical works – politics, philosophies, and behaviors – while the latter refers to the meetings concerning more tangible matters – growth strategy, price policy and environmental issues.

It is extremely important to understand the concept of Xu when discussing Chinese politics. For example, Mao Zedong’s statements and articles had significant influence during his time but qualifying them as the matters of Shi would lead to serious misconceptions. One typical misunderstanding is the Cultural Revolution. Despite Mao’s claim that “The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is a great revolution that touches people to their very soul and constitutes a new stage in the development of the socialist revolution in our country, a deeper and more extensive stage” (The Sixteen Points: Guidelines for the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution), in reality it was but destruction rife with “starvation, fear and violence.” However, Mao devoted himself to the “Cultural Revolution as Xu” to impress and awe people within and outside of the country. In that sense, it had an objective significance. Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai orchestrated “China, Superpower as Xu” in pivotal phases such as the Sino-Soviet split and the Sino-US rapprochement.

Then, how are Xu and Shi represented in diplomatic actions? We often see behaviors such as “saving face” (mianzi), “high-handed diplomacy” and “arrogant attitude” in the descriptions of China’s diplomatic actions. The country even claims to economically support the “Third World” despite the fact that China itself is a poor nation. These diplomatic actions are based on the principle of Wuxu Zhuyi while the diplomacy that directly connects to national interests should be understood as Wushi Zhuyi. The latter includes securing resources and the enhancement of national power. Diplomatic behavior based on Wuxu Zhuyi is mainly about the act of “positioning” in relation to other nations and is not directly related to practical benefits, yet it is still an important element of diplomatic actions.
1. Principle of Diplomatic Action Philosophy

1) Criteria for Judgment in Diplomatic Actions: Form and Benefit
Through my past studies on China, I came to consider that their basic criteria for judgment are “form (型)” and “benefit (利),” and it is necessary to understand their essence and relationship to understand the behavior of Chinese people. First, the relationship between “form” and “Xu,” as well as that between “benefit” and “Shi” should be explained. I believe that the goal of practicing Xu is to realize “form.” Therefore, the diplomacy of Wuxu should be seen as “the diplomacy of form” whose goal is to achieve a desirable form by directly interfering with diplomatic principles, positioning and the attitude of the country. On the other hand, the goal of practicing Shi is the realization of “benefit.” The diplomacy of Wushi should be understood as “the diplomacy of benefit,” the diplomacy closely related to national interests including economic benefit, maritime interests such as energy and cooperation for security.

The behavior of Japanese people may be similarly understood through these criteria of “form” and “benefit.” Move to the Western or Islamic worlds, though, and this form might equate to more religious “values” or ideologies. When comparing Chinese and Japanese, both have the same criteria of “form” and “benefit,” and even seem to have common behaviors at a glance. However, their essence differs. Chinese “form” is shaped by authority or authoritative relations and frameworks. Meanwhile, Japanese “form” is shaped by systems, norms, rules and procedures. Of course Japan was historically influenced by traditional Chinese culture, especially Confucian philosophy, so I would not say that this Chinese-style authoritarian concept is completely absent in Japan. However, there is a blend of multiple philosophies in Japan that incorporates the ancient Japanese view of nature, Buddhist philosophy and modern Western philosophy. In its development, Confucian philosophy was relativized, digested and absorbed. “Buke Shohatto” (Laws for the Military Houses) and “Kuge Shohatto” (Code for Emperor and Court Nobles) in the Edo period can be described as the institutionalization of relativized authority. Tamotsu Aoki’s theory is convincing in the sense that it claims Japan is a “super-flat” society based on “blended culture.”

Therefore, “form” is not an authoritative framework in a super-flat society, but systems, norms, rules and procedures have more significance.

On the other hand, recognition of authority and the consequential formation of

---

positions are prioritized in China, although systems and norms are not completely ignored. The relationship between the emperor and kings/retainers, Hua (China) and Yi (barbarians) and Huayi (華夷) order based on that are the typical examples of “form” based on an authoritative hierarchy. (The traditional view of order will be described later in this article.)

The tendency to build diplomatic relationships based upon such an authoritarian concept was observed even after the foundation of the People’s Republic of China. China started to insist on the “Three Worlds” theory in the 1970s, and defined itself as the leader of the Third World of Asia and Africa that would oppose the control of the First World (US and Soviet). They tried to take specific diplomatic actions based on this arrangement. Also, they decided to launch the Sino-Vietnamese war in February of 1979 on the grounds that it should “punish” Vietnam for damaging the long-standing authoritative relations and ideology. While the original purpose of war is to weaken a hostile country’s national interests or power, China’s objective differed in this case. In other words, its purpose was not based on the pursuit of actual personal benefit.

Let us move on to the comparison between Japan and China in terms of “benefit.” Japanese are said to have the tendency to position or recognize the self with a strong consciousness of others. One example of this trait is the way farmers plant rice, forming a line and planting rice while being mindful of the people next to them. It is also reflected in elementary and middle school education in which emphasis is placed on the group mentality; children are taught to value “doing something with others” and “playing a role in a big group.” Whether it is conscious or unconscious, Japanese people assume that there is a community or symbiotic space in which they can feel comfortable or find a sense of purpose. They are altruistic in the sense that any personal benefit is considered with a consciousness of others. Ruth Benedict once used the phrase “shame culture” in The Chrysanthemum and the Sword to refer to a code of conduct that defines the self within the existence of others.

Meanwhile, although village societies also existed in China, their basic characteristics differed from Japan’s. Local communities did not develop much

---

3 Ruth Benedict, Kiku to katana – Nihon bunka no kata [The Chrysanthemum and the Sword – Patterns of Japanese Culture], trans. Matsuharu Hasegawa (Tokyo: Gendai kyoyo bunko A501, 1967). Of course, Benedict’s point of view is not completely valid in discussing Japanese behavioral principles today since rural communities have already collapsed and personal relations have changed with the progress of industrialization, urbanization and informatization. However, it remained an important reference at least until the 1970s or 1980s.

in North China and South China because of repeated wars in the North and an outflow of people abroad in the South. Instead, communities were created in the form of personal networks through connections of families, relatives and other close relationships. They still exist as mutual cooperative “Quanzi” (圏子, social circles) to this day.5

Then, what are the relationships between “form” and “benefit” in these two countries? In China, elites and ordinary people see them in a different balance. The former put more emphasis on “form” and the latter finds “benefit” more important. Confucius wrote in The Analects that “a gentleman does not think how he is going to make a living,” and this is an example of the former. Of course it is only a general propensity, and the elements of both form and benefit exist in both groups. Basically, “benefit” should be obtained through individual efforts, but it is also important to establish a special “relationship” with people in power as a means to obtain “benefit.” Abiding by rules and regulations does not assure one will gain benefits.

On the other hand, in Japan, rules and procedures are basic principles although it is not meaningless to establish relationships with authority to realize benefits. For example, if a student wants to enter a famous university in order to realize his/her personal benefit, he/she must take an entrance exam – symbolic of a procedure based on a rule – and having a relationship with the president of the university would not necessarily do him/her a favor. (Rather, there is a risk of being considered a fraud.) Through such a process, he/she eventually joins a normative community of the university. The above discussion is represented in the following diagram.

**Figure 1: Comparison between Japan and China**

Source: Author

---

2) Diplomatic Actions from the Perspective of “Form and Benefit” and “Xu and Shi”

How should we see the relationships between “form” and Xu, and “benefit” and Shi? I already explained the concept for each, and would like to repeat that Xu is abstract and invisible (philosophies, theories, laws, styles) and the ultimate goal of Xu is “form.” For example, it is “style” at the individual level, and the political system at the state level. Meanwhile, the goal of practicing Shi, which is visible and concrete (economy, living, discrepancy, military), is to gain or obtain something. The goal of Shi is benefit. For example, the goal of economic Shi is to realize benefits such as economic growth (rise in GDP). Increased armaments would realize the enhancement of military power and active diplomacy would bring the benefit of energy resource acquisition.

With regard to the relationship between “form and “benefit,” “benefit” affects “form” in the sense that enhanced national power as a result of increased benefit could change the positioning of a country. With rapid emergence and enhanced national power, China’s diplomacy today has changed dramatically from that of the Deng Xiaoping period when the country positioned itself as a “small country” and maintained the policy of “Taoguang Yanghui” (韜光養晦, hiding one’s brilliance and biding one’s time). China’s “diplomacy of form” is vastly different in today’s Xi Jinping period when it has significantly gained national power and is pressing the “G2” dynamic. However, form does not simply correlate with national power but should be formulated by objective domestic/international situational recognition and subjective self-recognition including visions of the future, the ideal state of the nation, historical experiences and traditional philosophies.

Based on the above discussion, I would like to illustrate characteristics of diplomatic actions of the leaders of the People’s Republic of China with regard to form and benefit in the chart below. However, first I would like to make some comments on the period of the Republic of China. The period of the Republic of China can be regarded as the time when both form and benefit were downplayed because of the long-term internal turmoil and repeated invasions by superpowers. In Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek)’s China’s Destiny, published in March 1943 and republished in January 1944 with revisions and additions, he described the modern history after the Opium War as the period of “national shame,” stating, “In this nearly one hundred years, China’s national power weakened and the people were dispirited. Such emergency is unprecedented in the past 5,000 years. The fields necessary for the survival of the people were greatly damaged, and the vitality of the nation and people was lost because of the suppression and binding of unequal treaties. The foundation of revival was destroyed in many areas and the root of
reconstruction was about to be eradicated.”6 This is the very situation in which Chen Qimao (former director, the Shanghai Institute for International Studies), who was once considered the senior advisor of Deng Xiaoping in diplomacy, articulated, “weak countries do not have diplomacy.”7

As discussed above, “diplomacy of benefit” aims to prioritize and realize concrete national interests including security, economic development and the securement of energy resources in a realistic manner, in some cases by force. On the other hand, “diplomacy of form” is concerned with establishing a country’s position in relation to other countries by exploiting certain diplomatic attitudes or behaviors, or forcing other countries to do so in some cases. How can China’s historical diplomatic practices be explained from this angle?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit—Light</th>
<th>Form—Light</th>
<th>Form—Heavy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period of the Republic of China (Theory of “Small countries do not have diplomacy”)</td>
<td>Mao Zedong Period (Diplomacy of Revolution)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit—Heavy</td>
<td>Period of Deng Xiaoping (Taoguangyanghui)</td>
<td>Period of Xi Jinping (Superpower Oriented)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Patterns of Chinese Foreign Policy Behaviors
Source: Author

3) “Diplomacy of Form and Benefit” of Mao Zedong

Since the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, China’s diplomacy was controlled by Mao Zedong and supported by Zhou Enlai until 1976. In retrospect, while under Mao’s control until the late 1970s, China had been an extremely poor country, maintaining or dropping below the economic standard of the early 1950s. Its military was obsolete with rare exceptions of the successful atomic bomb test in 1964 and hydrogen bomb test in 1967.

Given this, why was China able to enjoy such spectacular diplomacy that garnered attention from all over the world? It would be difficult to find the answer looking only at the “actual power” of the country. What China did was play the role of a superpower based on Xu while in an extremely fragile situation in terms of Shi. In other words, it executed “diplomacy of form” in favor of the practical “diplomacy of benefit.” Of course, the presence of excellent “actors” like Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai was the biggest contributor to the success of

the “diplomacy of form.” However, it should be noted that such diplomatic action of China was the manifestation of its traditional philosophy which distinguishes “form” from “benefit” and Xu from Shi.

Let us consider the so-called Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. In February 1950, the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance was concluded, and China set “Xiangsu Yibiandao” (learn everything from the Soviet Union) as its basic foreign policy until the launch of the Great Leap Forward, as is widely known. The country’s most imminent issue was how the newborn People’s Republic of China would survive in a severe international environment. Mao Zedong decided to side with the Soviet Union although he did not truly trust Stalin. This was the result of protecting “benefit,” which was national security. However, China made it clear that the country regarded itself as superior to other socialist countries including those in Eastern Europe, as was discussed above. China tried to give the impression that it directly followed the Soviet Union by calling them “Laodage (老大哥)” (respectable eldest son), and itself “Laoer” (second eldest son). This diplomatic attitude implies the country’s obsession with “form.”

In 1954, Socialist China and Capitalist India agreed on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence in the talk between Zhou Enlai and Nehru. In the following year of 1955, this idea was further developed in the first Asian-African Conference, also known as the Bandung Conference. Zhou reportedly grabbed the spotlight in the conference. The movement of the Bandung Conference eventually developed into the Non-Aligned Movement, which avoided taking either side of the United States or Soviet Union. Why did China’s leadership take such an action in this time of seeming harmony within the Sino-Soviet relationship? Oddly, this question has gone mostly overlooked in the past. However, according to a study of recent years, Mao said to the party’s leadership that the achievement of the Bandung Conference was the development of the Intermediate Zone Theory.8 Mao revisited the Intermediate Zone Theory in 1959 during the Great Leap Forward amidst aggravation of the Sino-Soviet split. In 1964, when the Sino-Soviet split had reached a point of inevitability, he proposed the theory to the world again, taking on a new, flamboyant tone in an editorial in People’s Daily. This marked a clear change in his attitude.

Mao did not want to recognize the Cold-War framework – which highlighted the United States and the Soviet Union – when he started advocating the Intermediate Zone Theory in 1946. However, with no choice but to depend on the Soviet Union in matters of national security, and unable to challenge Socialist

---

leader Stalin, he accepted the framework. He secretly ranked himself and China second. However, after Stalin passed, Khrushchev took power and started to seek out a route to peaceful coexistence with the United States. In this climate Mao sought an opportunity to sell China as a supporter of a World Revolution with himself as the leader, replacing Khrushchev who had given up on the revolution and was less experienced with it. He probably saw the memorial ceremony to mark the 40th anniversary of the Russian Revolution in November of 1957 as the perfect stage, as it was there that Mao made the famous speech “Dongfeng Yadao Xifeng” (the Eastern socialist regimes prevails over the Western capitalist regimes). It was as if he was deriding Khrushchev for being inclined toward peaceful coexistence of the US and the Soviet Union. In this regard, the Great Leap Forward was a policy designed to achieve his ambition by enhancing wealth and military power.

While the Soviet Union “gave in to the US and sought for coexistence,” Mao concluded that China had to be the center of Asian, African and Latin American nations that would advocate anti-US imperialism and the People’s Liberation Movement. On January 20, 1965, right before the Cultural Revolution, he called for the creation of the “foundation of the second United Nations.” Furthermore, in July 1967 amidst the Cultural Revolution, he clarified his position as “the center of World Revolution” by insisting, “Our country should become not only the political center of World Revolution, but also the military center of the revolution…the arsenal of World Revolution.” He actively supported struggles in Indochina including the Vietnam War, struggles in Africa including those in the Congo and Algeria and struggles in Latin America during the Cultural Revolution, and invited leaders of those countries to Beijing to showcase himself as the leader of the People’s Movement around the world. It was the epitome of “diplomacy of form,” and the opposite of “diplomacy of benefit.”

Mao’s “diplomacy of form” was systematized as the Three Worlds Theory presented in the meeting with Zambian President Kaunda in February 1974. He argued that the most revolutionary world power was the group of Asia, Africa and Latin America (the Third World), which stood against the superpowers of the US and the Soviet Union (the First World) that were virtually controlling the world. He positioned China as the leader of the Third World of developing countries. Deng Xiaoping officially announced the Three Worlds Theory to the world in the Sixth Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly in April of the same year. This means that Mao Zedong and China voluntarily discarded the Cold War structure that had come to be commonly accepted in international society.

---

after World War II. At the same time, he made it clear that China should stand as the center of the anti-hegemonism struggle (struggle against the superpowers of the US and the Soviet Union) initiated by the Third World. In other words, he practiced “diplomacy of form.”

However, of course Mao did not practice “diplomacy of form” alone. The most significant events during this time were Nixon Shock, the visit of US President Nixon to Beijing and subsequent Sino-US rapprochement in a meeting with Mao Zedong that took the world by surprise. It was certain that the Sino-Soviet relationship only worsened following the Sino-Soviet military clashes at Zhenbao Island in March 1969, and China even accused the Soviet Union of “social imperialism.” Still, many were shocked when socialist China joined hands with the US, the leader of capitalist nations and the greatest enemy of the country, and tried to topple the socialist Soviets. This event took place in 1972 when there was no prospect of the end of the Vietnam War, the symbol of anti-US imperialism and the People’s Liberation Movement. Amidst this, Mao invited President Nixon to Beijing and Sino-US rapprochement was under way.

What explains this behavior? It signified “diplomacy of benefit.” China wanted to confront the Soviet Union, the superpower directly threatening its security and standing as the “center of the revolution” of the Third World. It seems as if “diplomacy of benefit” is based on all-out realism. As has often been discussed, Mao’s diplomacy at the time followed the logic “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.” It was thorough realism, caring not whether both countries supported socialism or whether they had an “alliance” in form.

However, it would be misleading to rule that Mao Zedong’s diplomacy had little or no ideological element based on the conclusions above. As was pointed out in the beginning of this article, Chinese and Japanese did not have strong ideological values based on the Western definition. However, replace the word “ideology” with Xu or “form” and it would be clear that China’s diplomatic actions cannot be simply explained by realism. Let it be repeated again that the above diplomatic action of Mao was actually the practice of “diplomacy of form,” and its all-out realism was based on its positioning, which is form, defined by the Intermediate Zone Theory and Three Worlds Theory.

4) Deng Xiaoping’s Diplomatic Actions from the Perspective of Form and Benefit

How should we see the diplomacy of Deng Xiaoping in comparison with that of Mao? He was also obsessed with form. Deng Xiaoping made his intentions to preserve Mao’s policies in diplomacy clear by proudly making a speech on the Three Worlds Theory in the UN meeting in 1974 directly following his comeback. In the late 1980s, he called for the establishment of a “new international political
and economic order” and advocated the theory of “Dasanjiao” (大三角 grand triangle) in which China, the US and the Soviet Union were the three biggest and most influential countries that would promote the new order. However, talk of this Dasanjiao theory disappeared in time.

Deng Xiaoping’s subsequent remarks and actions suggest that he took up the practice of Shi with the “diplomacy of benefit.” His remarks right after the Tiananmen Square Protests of 1989 clearly represent his beliefs, which eventually became the basic attitude of Chinese diplomacy. Deng did not directly confront or argue against developed Western countries that harshly condemned him for the “suppression of democracy and human rights” and imposed economic sanctions. He showed the attitude of “Taoguang Yanghui,” which would become the key word of his diplomacy, by saying, “I will not change the route of reform and openness” and “Peace and development are diplomatic policies to stick to.” However, he expressed a sense of humiliation at the same time in remembering the treatment after the Boxer Rebellion, saying, “members of the countries that joined the economic sanction are the same ones as the eight allied countries of Boxer Protocol with the only changes from the Netherlands to Canada and Austria-Hungary to Australia.” It is clear that he perceived the reactions of those developed countries with a strong sense of nationalism as a Chinese citizen.

Deng clearly changed his positioning during the rapid changes in international politics from 1989 to 1991 when the end of the Cold War, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Iraq War took place. This change of positioning was articulated in a “24-character” guideline and represented the diplomacy of Taoguang Yanghui. Around the same time, he further clarified his positioning with the “12-character” guideline (Bing Lin Cheng Xia, Di Qiang Wo Ruo, Yi Shou Wei Zhu , 兵臨城下、敵強我弱、以守為主, as the castle was besieged by the enemy which is far more stronger than us, we need to adopt a defense-oriented strategy). He recognized that he was in a “weak” position and decided to adopt the “diplomacy of benefit” by thoroughly practicing Taoguang Yanghui. The “benefit” he sought was economic development and modernization, and he promoted the reform and opening policies in order to pursue them.

In the 1990s when it became more and more obvious that the Cold War was over, China started to emphasize a so-called “Multipolar Theory” that laid out the characteristics of the international structure and a guideline for future international affairs. In parallel with that, it often put forward the diplomacy guideline that “All nations are fair, reasonable and equal. It does not matter if they are big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor.” Another practice of multipolarization is the

partnership diplomacy among superpowers that China actively insisted upon and practiced from the mid to late 1990s. Both of these diplomatic guidelines were devised to position the country as “weak” and confront the United States, which was seeking hegemony.

Let us review some cases. In 1995, Taiwan was experiencing dramatic economic growth and rapidly gaining presence in international society under the leadership of Lee Teng-hui, who became the president of the Republic of China (ROC), and was the first native Taiwanese to do so. In the same year, Lee made an unofficial visit to the US that turned out to be beneficial to both parties. This infuriated Chinese authorities. China repeatedly and intensely attacked Lee Teng-hui in People’s Daily and other media from the end of July, saying Lee “agitated the separation” (July 24) and is a “criminal who destructed cross-strait relations” (July 27).

Subsequently, Taiwan experienced its first direct presidential election campaign from that fall to March of the following year of 1996. The Chinese military continued large-scale military exercises near the Taiwan Strait during that time. Of course its primary objective was to intimidate those who advocated the independence of Taiwan under Lee Teng-hui, but it also signified a warning to international society including the US and Japan. However, in response the US deployed the USS Independence and Nimitz of the US seventh fleet to the Taiwan Strait after the People’s Liberation Army severely threatened Taiwan by force, thus containing China. It was the first time since the diplomatic normalization that military tensions between the US and China escalated to the point of risk of a military clash. This showed the world the significance of the “Taiwan issue,” capable of affecting the relationship between China and the US.

After facing the US’ hardline stance and Taiwan’s all-out rejection, China tried to proactively improve its relationship with the US rather than confronting them with a harder stance. Progress was apparent in the July visit to China by Lake, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, and later in the realization of ARF, a foreign ministerial meeting between China and the US. As China made clear its effort to actively improve the relationship, President Clinton, who had shown a swaying diplomatic attitude toward China in his first term, responded positively. In his second term, he gathered strategists who prioritize engagement over containment, and responded to China’s call for improvement of their relationship. The two countries agreed on “enhancing a cooperative relationship.” Considering the unstable situation in March, it was a rapid restoration. At the end of October 1997, Jiang Zemin visited the US. There, the leaders of the two countries called themselves “constructive and strategic partners” for the first time, and started to seriously work on the development of such a framework.

In June of the following year of 1998, Clinton visited China to reaffirm the
partnership. His lecture enchanted the students in the overcrowded hall of Beijing University and was widely reported on television. Furthermore, Clinton mentioned the so-called “Three Don’ts Principles” (denial of the independence of Taiwan, of “two Chinas / one China and one Taiwan,” and of Taiwan’s participation in international institutes involving sovereign states) in his last stop of Shanghai, at the delight of China. The US-China summit symbolized their relationship in these two years and seemed to show the sign of a “new age of the collaboration between the US and China toward the 21st century.” However, US-China relations would not be so simple. In the latter half of 1998, Chinese authorities cracked down on and contained movements of democratization, including the foundation of the Democracy Party of China, in response to which the US expressed discomfort.

In 1999, China criticized the US in turn when NATO’s military operation in Yugoslavia was decided upon under US initiative. Yugoslavia was complicated by the Kosovo Conflict and other factors: US bombs hit the embassy of China in Yugoslavia killing several people. Meanwhile, anti-Chinese sentiment in the US intensified after a case of alleged theft of US missile technology by Chinese was revealed in the US. However, Chinese authorities tried to contain public anti-US sentiments in order to settle the situation once again. This signified the practice of “diplomacy of benefit” based on the policy of Taoguang Yanghui.

The US-China relationship further deteriorated after George W. Bush took office. Bush criticized Clinton’s “partnership with China” during his presidential campaign in 2000, declaring that “China is a competitor.” In response, China practiced increased caution, appointing Yang Jiechi who had known Bush’s father as Chinese Ambassador to the US in January 2001, right after the inauguration of Bush. In March, China had Vice Prime Minister Qian Qichen visit the US to actively seek the establishment of collaborative relations. However, in April, a US reconnaissance aircraft and a Chinese fighter jet collided above Hainan Island and caused the death of a Chinese pilot and forced detention of American crew members. It heightened tensions between the US and China. China tried to maintain its “mianzi” (face) by demanding an apology from the US, but the US did not respond right away. However, the US, whose crew members were detained as hostages, eventually expressed that it was “very sorry” for the death of the Chinese pilot, and the incident was closed without further discussion about the course or compensation. It was a core issue extremely important for China as it dealt with “Taiwan” and “security,” and though China could have taken a hardline stance, their actions were extremely low-key. Again, they were following the practice of Taoguang Yanghui with the US.

This attitude can be clearly observed in Hu Jintao period activity as well, though there are some contextual differences. For example, in November 2003, Zheng Bijian, a diplomatic brain of Hu Jintao, expressed that the development
of China embodied “Peaceful Rise” (Heping Jueqi) as the rest of the world felt a heightened sense of alert and caution toward China for their expansion in economy and military power.\(^\text{11}\) Of course, Zheng’s intention was to appease their wariness. However, developed Western countries such as the US recognized that the use of the word “rise” implied a change to the current international order, and thus regarded China as a danger to challenge it. Aware of this, China removed this expression from official diplomatic documents without showing any special attachment to the use of the term “Peaceful Rise” and announced it would embrace the long-used term “Peace and Development.” Had China been prioritizing “diplomacy of form” and been fixated on its mianzi, it would not have backed off.

5) Shift in Taoguang Yanghui Policy and the Emergence of the “G2 Theory”

Today, China is showing significant changes in its diplomatic positioning, especially since surpassing Japan in GDP to become the world’s second largest economy through the success of the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008 and Shanghai Expo in 2010.

The current leader Xi Jinping seems to be emphasizing “form” once again. Wang Yizhou, Deputy Dean of the School of International Studies at Beijing University who has a certain influence on foreign policies of the current regime, argues about the “dignity of superpower diplomacy” as follows: “First, the diplomacy with the dignity of a superpower is definitely not the same as mere iron-fist politics in reality...Second, the diplomacy with the dignity of a superpower is not about being overly assertive...the dignity of a true superpower is created by internal solidity, powerful system, extraordinary and comprehensive national power, reputation from outside and the interaction of these elements.” He is harsh on his own country saying China does not have the dignity of a true superpower yet.\(^\text{12}\) Although his analysis was made in the early 2000s when China started to see itself as a superpower, this represents the country’s obsession with “form” regarding superpower diplomacy.

China’s “form” based on its recent self-awareness as a superpower is represented in the G2 theory. In the past, China explained the ideal post-Cold War international order based on the multipolar theory. However, it started to advocate the G2 theory which focuses on two nations of the US and China. Yan

---

\(^{11}\) Bijian Zheng, “Zhongguo heping jueqi xin daolu he yazhou de weilai” [Emergence of China’s New Peace Road and Asia’s Future], paper presented in the main hall of Boao Forum at the Asia Annual Conference, Wenhui bao [Wenhui Daily] (March 21, 2004).

Xuetong became an active proponent of this theory. In an interview with the Nihon Keizai Shimbun in September 2011, he said, “Today’s international society can be represented in one character, ‘Luan’ (chaos). Clashes are continuing not only in developed countries but in the Middle East, too...However, the trend of international society is not multipolarization but bipolarization of China and the US.”\textsuperscript{13} Also, in December 2012, he compared the diplomacy of Xi Jinping with that of Hu Jintao: “In the next two years, the foreign policies will be completely different. In the past, the US maintained unipolar domination, but the world will shift to the bipolarization of China and the US. China will face the issue of national security more than ever...It will prioritize security interests over economic interests.”\textsuperscript{14} This is clearly different from the world order based on the “multipolar theory” that China consistently supported after the Cold War.

Yan Xuetong was one of the Chinese members of the Japan-China Friendship Committee for the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, but has become a representative figure of hardliners in diplomatic policy today.

Such a change in diplomatic attitude can be interpreted as a subtle yet significant shift in Deng Xiaoping’s Taoguang Yanghui route. Following the increase of economic and military power and the elevation of self-awareness as a superpower among political leaders, brains, scholars and young people, some started to voice that Taoguang Yanghui should be abandoned. Against this backdrop, the Eleventh Diplomatic Envoy Conference was called in July 2009, and Hu Jintao gave the direction “Jianchi ‘Taoguang Yanghui,’ Jiji Yousuo Zuowei” (堅持韜光養晦、積極有所作為, firmly maintain Taoguang Yanghui and aggressively deliver the results). This implied that China would maintain Deng Xiaoping’s policy while taking a more aggressive diplomatic attitude. The US-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue was held around the same time, and the Obama administration seemed even more proactive to energize China and create the atmosphere for the arrival of “the US-China period.”

Also, China insisted on “core interests” in the territorial disputes with countries in the South China Sea, and strongly opposed them. In Japan-China relations, China showed an extremely hardline diplomatic attitude over the incident in September 2010 in which a Chinese trawler collided with Japanese Coast Guard patrol boats; it summoned the Japanese Ambassador to Beijing at midnight, and communication and tourism was discontinued in all fields. Wang Jisi, Dean of the School of International Studies at Beijing University and one of the top brains of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a moderate realist, maintained that Taoguang Yanghui is still valid in a sense that it means “things should be proceeded with

\textsuperscript{13} Nihon Keizai Shimbun, September 4, 2011.
\textsuperscript{14} Asahi Shimbun, December 12, 2012.
in a discreet manner” in his paper in early 2011. However, he changed the tone to a more aggressive one after Japan’s nationalization of the Senkaku Islands in September of the following year of 2012, saying, “Now, the occasion to use Taoguang Yanghui is only limited to when we refer to the attitude toward the US.” Considering his position as a diplomatic brain, one can assume that this interpretation of Taoguang Yanghui originated from a basic decision of the Chinese government.

Yan Xuetong, a hardliner on foreign policy, insisted in the above interview with the Nihon Keizai Shimbun that China should behave as a superpower in a dignified manner when it deals with other countries including Japan, and those countries have to accept it. He then added, “superpowers and small countries have different rights and responsibilities depending upon their national power. The leadership of leading countries dictates the direction of internalization of international norms and its speed. Therefore, conflicts should be prevented (the order should be maintained) by moderate hierarchy...The future international order is the bipolarization of China and the US. The US will be China’s competitor, while Japan will be inferior to China in terms of national power. Thus, if Japan identifies itself as a member of Western countries, it will be the enemy of China. If it regards itself as a member of Asia, it should accept the hierarchy topped by China and behave accordingly.”

At the end of 2012, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Zhang Zhijun, who was supposed to be the next Minister of Foreign Affairs back then, called for “establishing a new and creative superpower relationship of the 21st century with the US” when he shared the outlook on China’s diplomacy for 2013. On the other hand, with regard to the relationship with Japan, he said only, “I hope Japan will seriously work on the improvement and development of the bilateral relationship with concrete actions...based on three historical documents.” He did not make any suggestion as to what kind of relationship should be constructed as in past discussions with the use of phrases such as “the establishment of partnership with friendly cooperation” or “reestablishment of mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests.”

Zhang Zhijun’s comments represented the character of the party leadership’s global strategy after the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. They consistently refused to engage in dialogue with Japan to compromise on the

16 Asahi Shim bun, October 5, 2012.
“Senkaku Islands Dispute.” Meanwhile, they proposed to the US that it “construct a new and creative relationship of superpowers” in the meeting between Obama and Xi Jinping in June 2013. Despite this, China sent Vice Foreign Minister Li Baodong to attend the Foreign Ministers’ Conference of Japan, China and Korea in APEC held in October of the same year. China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi did not attend the meeting, but Japanese and Korean foreign ministers did. This might have marked the practice of “abandoning Taoguang Yanghui” amid the growing distrust between Japan and China. China, which increased its influence in international society with increasing national power, is trying to show its presence to the world as a superpower that wields both Xu and Shi by putting emphasis on both form and benefit.

2. The 21st Century International Order as Envisioned by China

1) Basic Philosophy of China’s Foreign Strategy under Xi Jinping

On November 15, 2012, after the close of the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the press conference to announce the new national and party leaders was held. Xi Jinping, who assumed the supreme leadership position of general secretary of the Communist Party of China, repeatedly talked about the “Chinese Dream” and “The Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.” These would become Xi’s catch phrases. On November 29th of the same year, he passionately declared that “the greatest Chinese dream of the modern Chinese nation is to realize the renaissance of the Chinese nation.” Furthermore, he argued in the closing speech of the National People’s Congress on March 19, 2013 that “it is essential to realize the enrichment and enhancement of the country, advancement of the Chinese nation and happiness of the people” to realize the Chinese Dream.

From the perspective of diplomacy and international strategy, these statements suggest his desire to clarify China’s positioning as a “super” superpower. It overlaps with Zhang Zhijun’s argument on the above-mentioned “outlook of China’s diplomacy for 2013” at the end of 2012, which said that “China and the US should create a new mutually respectful, cooperative, win-win relationship of superpowers. This is a creative undertaking that will enrich both countries and benefit the world.” The same argument was made by Yang Jiechi, a new member of the State Council, in a press conference on March 9, 2013 where he remarked that “the US is hoping that they will create a new relationship of superpowers
together with China.” Xi officially proposed such a relationship of superpowers (G2) at the talk between Obama and Xi Jinping in June of the same year, and started to demand that the US recognize their relationship as the only relationship of superpowers. President Obama did not make any comment on this, but China would repeatedly demand it going forward.

In this meeting between Obama and Xi Jinping, Xi stated, “In the Asia-Pacific region, there remains broad space that China and the US can share.” In March 2007, when Keating, Commander of US Pacific Command visited China, a high-ranking official of the People’s Liberation Army proposed that they split the Pacific Ocean, with the US administering the east of Hawaii while China administers the west. This motion created controversy among related nations and experts. Although there exists a scheme to split the world into the West and Asia-Africa, China seems to strategically see it as an important step in creating a fait accompli of “two super superpowers.”

The way China treated the relationship with Japan is quite a contrast to the one with the US. In October 2013, Japanese elder statesmen including former Prime Minister Fukuda gathered in Beijing and had a meeting with Chinese senior officials in order to break the stalemate in the bilateral relationship. In the meeting, Tang Jiaxuan, chairman of the China-Japan Friendship Association (and a former member of State Council) insisted that “Japan should clarify whether it stands on the Western world or Asia.” This is in line with the above comment by Yan Xuetong and is related to the idea of a “Greater China Zone” that China has been promoting as it extends its influence in economics, politics, culture and the military. This idea elucidates China’s vision for the new order of the Asian world (to be discussed in the last section of this article.) Meanwhile, many remarks made by Chinese leaders, especially Xi Jinping, seem to emphasize the uniqueness of China by including expressions and terms from Chinese classic literature about governance, order and relationship. “Xiaokang Shehui” (小康社会 moderately prosperous society) and “Hexie Shijie” (和諧世界 harmonious world) are some examples. For a fuller understanding, next will follow a discussion on how current Chinese leaders view order, governance and international relationships from the context of traditional Chinese philosophy.

2) Traditional Concept of Order

First, it is important to define “order.” According to the authoritative Encyclopedia of Political Science (Seijigaku Jiten) (Akira Nakamura, Masao Maruyama and

---

20 Yomiuri Shimbun, March 12, 2008.
21 Asahi Shimbun, October 31, 2013.
Kiyoaki Tsuji, eds., Heibonsha) in Japan, the definition of “order” is as follows. “Statically, it refers to a certain balance in which people in a society and various social, cultural elements have relationships and positions with certain regularity in the relationship with the whole society or between each other. Dynamically, it refers to a situation in which the behavior of people in a society is almost fixed based on experience. In other words, it refers to a situation where certain regularity and formality of social behavior exist.” In simpler words, it means a situation in which stability is maintained by certain relationships, functions and norms among people both statically and dynamically.

How Chinese people have traditionally perceived such order can be summarized in the expression of “Xiushen Qijia Zhiguo Pingtianxia” (修身齊家治國平天下, cultivate one’s moral character, then regulate the family, rule the state, and create a prosperous and peaceful country). This is an expression from Daxue (The Great Learning), one of the four Confucius Classics, which also wrote “Wuge erhou zhizhi, zhizhi erhou xinzheng, xinzheng erhou shenxiu, shenxiu erhou jiaqi, jiaqi erhou guozhi, guozhi erhou tianxiapiing” (物格而後知至、知至而後意誠、意誠而後心正、心正而後身修、身修而後家齊、家齊而後國治、國治而後天下平). It means if one understands principles, perfects the knowledge, has the sense to tell good from evil, behaves with integrity and lives in a respectable manner, his families and organizations can be in order. The philosophies behind this are the following: 1) Order pertains to policymakers. If they cultivate themselves, nurture insights and master the mind frame to deal with their families and subordinates, they can govern the country and create a peaceful world; 2) the way of governance does not differ due to spatial or territorial differences including families, regions, countries and worlds but they are all connected as a homogeneous body.

The Doctrine of the Mean has almost the same description as to the formation of order which maintains a stable family relationship and society, but it also includes more detailed laws: “Fanwei Tianxia Guojiayou Jiujing, Yi, Xiushenyue, Zunxianye, Qinginye, Jing Dachenye, Ti Quchenye, Zi Shuminye, Lai Baigongye, Rou Yuanrenye, Huai Zhuhouye” (凡為天下國家有九經曰、修身也、尊賢也、親親也、敬大臣也、體群臣也、子庶民也、來百工也、柔遠人也、懷諸侯也 All who rule the nation should follow nine standard rules: 1) cultivate their own characters; 2) honor men of virtue and talents; 3) have affection toward their relatives; 4) respect great ministers; 5) consider the feelings of all officers; 6) love their people as their own children; 7) encourage the resort of all classes of artisans; 8) treat travelers and merchants from afar kindly; 9) cherish the princes of the states. If they follow these rules, the world will be peaceful and well-governed). Again, the root of

---

22 Daigaku Chuyo [The Great Learning and the Doctrine of the Mean] (Tokyo: Iwanami
governance is policymakers, or the rule of men.

The following is a summary of the characteristics of the governance described in those Chinese classics. First, the core element of good governance is that the leader (ruler) masters and executes proper behavior, mindset and relationships with his people. This governance follows a so-called “rule of virtue.” Second, to realize effective governance all decisions are concentrated on the ruler. In the direct democracy of ancient Greek city-states, although participants were limited, policies were decided upon with the participation of the general population. There were decision-making mechanisms that involved the public and the ruled in other areas as well. In South East Asia, decision-making systems through traditional discussions used to exist in mutual assistant mechanisms, and “Gotong Royong” in Indonesia is one of them. China and Japan had systems of “Yoriai” (gathering) in agricultural communities. On the other hand, in Confucian governance, the citizenry were not considered as participants in the decision-making process although they were the subject of consideration and love. In that sense, the mechanism of this governance was completely different from that of other governance types. Third, its theory of order was based on human feelings, emotions and reason, and did not put much focus on methods of creating rules and systems. It assumed that the ruled naturally follow the ruler by showing loyalty, integrity and justice because of the ruler’s virtue, compassion and integrity.

In that sense, it deviated from the philosophies and thoughts about systems of governance in ancient Greece and Rome. In Europe, discussions about nation, order and governance blossomed around the time of the Renaissance, and the theory of governance as a system was remarkably advanced by Machiavelli’s The Prince, the “social contract theory” by Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, the theory of “separation of powers” developed by Montesquieu and “Perpetual Peace” by Kant and others. However, in China, the above discussed pre-Christian classic concept of governance – the rule of men with centralized power – remained in the dynasty system without much change, and its core philosophy still exists in China even today.

As is widely known, the original form of a centralized bureaucratic system was created in between the Spring and Autumn period and the Qin period in order to maintain order and realize effective governance. However, the period of Qin was very short, and it is said that a “bureaucratic state” was actually formed during the former Han period. This “bureaucratic system” went through various reforms. In the period of Six Dynasties that started with the Wei Dynasty, the civil-service nomination system of “Jiupin Zhongzheng” (九品中正, nine-rank system) was implemented, its purpose being to clarify the positions, authorities and

Shoten, 1998).
responsibilities of bureaucrats. However, the system did not achieve this original purpose, and local ruling families started to take on the roles of central government officers and nobles. To replace this system, the civil service examination system of “Keju Zhidu” (科挙制度) was introduced in the Sui period. After this, the bureaucratic system was refined and systematized in the periods of Tang and Song, and became the biggest governing structure to support the Emperor.  

However, bureaucrats were directly appointed by the Emperor based on personal relationships with him and were asked to show absolute obedience. Huang Zongyi, a philosopher of the late Ming and early Qing periods, wrote in “Mingyi Daifanglu” that China’s traditional bureaucratic system is founded upon “Tianxia Buneng Yirenerzhi, Jishe Guanyi Zhizhi, Shiguanzhe Fenshen Zhijunye” (天下不能一人而治、即設官以治之、是官者分身之君也), The country cannot be governed only by one person. Therefore officers were created who govern the country. The officers are the alter ego of the ruler). He also argued that “Subjects exist for the Emperor” on another occasion.

Let us look back on the history of the People’s Republic of China. Liu Shaoqi, who was deemed the successor of Mao Zedong in the party, wrote the famous “On the Self-Cultivation of Communists.” Of course it was full of Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, but the concept of “the self-cultivation as a party member” is based on the above-discussed idea of the traditional Confucian ruler. Also, during the Cultural Revolution, Mao’s political enemies were criticized for their classic philosophies and arguments, the biggest target being Confucius and Confucianism. After Lin Biao fell from power, he was condemned for hanging the calligraphy of “Keji Fuli” (克己复礼, exercising self-restraint and conforming to the rules of etiquette and formality), the words of Mencius. Also, the “Gang of Four” chose Zhou Enlai as the target of attack after Linbiao, and they initiated the movement of “Pilin Pikong” (批林批孔, Zhou Enlai is a modern Confucius). Meanwhile, Mao Zedong reappraised Shi Huangdi, the first Qing emperor, conducting himself as an “emperor,” making final decisions autocratically with little heed to the hierarchy, rules and guidelines accepted by the Communist Party.

3) View of Order in Relations with the World outside China

The framework to create and maintain order was secured by a government of men and a government of bureaucrats. The former refers to the relationship between the Emperor, who provides compassion and virtue to subjects, and his subjects who serve him with loyalty and justice. The latter was a system

---

23 Chuyo [The Doctrine of the Mean] (Tokyo: Kodansha), 125-126.
of bureaucrats specializing in operations to govern the country and officers dispatched by the central government. However, this framework was limited to a central area ruled by central officers (内臣 Neichen) subject to the Emperor, and its peripheral areas governed by local officers (外臣 Waichen). The dynasty system was limited to the region subject to direct control, and this framework did not apply to the relationship with so-called “Yidi” (夷地 ethnic tribes). This is understandable, however, as a Yidi consists of people in “Huawai,” (華夷) areas not influenced by Chinese culture. The relationship between Yidi and the Chinese Emperor was a tributary relationship in which peripheral countries pay tribute to the Emperor for his virtue and the Emperor gives them imperial gifts in return. The gifts were worth several times as much as the tributes, and greatly benefitted peripheral countries. However, tributary relationships do not necessarily require lord-vassal relationships, and they existed even under equal relationships (such as the relationship between Japan and Sui/Tang during the Nara and Heian periods.)

Other than tributary relationships, there were relationships of “Jarlig” in which the Emperor awards the leaders of peripheral countries with titles, nomination letters and seals while the peripheral countries show submission to the Emperor to establish nominal lord-vassal relationships. Jarlig, or “sakuhoutaisei” (冊封体制) in Japanese (coined by Sadao Nishijima) refers to the relationship between suzerain states and tributary states as well as to traditional orders in East Asia created by such a relationship. Under Jarlig, there was an obvious hierarchy of authority between suzerain states and tributary states as represented by the kowtow in meetings with the Emperor. Tributary states were assured a peaceful relationship with the Chinese dynasty by clarifying their positions in the hierarchy. It also served as a method of security because this relationship sent a message to external parties that these countries were under the protection of the Emperor.

The relationship between Yidi of peripheral countries and the Emperor was fundamentally different from the governance within China in regards to such notions as the rule of virtue and rule of bureaucrats. However, its psychological and formal structure was an extension of those of China because it was based on the Emperor’s authoritative hierarchy, and Yidi received the Emperors’ favor by showing their submission to him. The governance spread in a manner of concentric circles when viewing from above, and conical shape from the side. Such structure is expressed as “Dayitong” (大一統 respect for unity). However, the Qing Dynasty did not directly control Mongolia, Xinjiang, Tibet and Qinghai when they were put under control. It controlled them indirectly by creating a supervising agency of the central government called “Lifan Yuan” (理藩院). Of course it was out of the Emperor’s direct control, but it differed from the relationship between the Emperor and Yidi. This governance style was somewhere in between those two. Regardless, including this indirect control, the Chinese dynasty’s hierarchical
and authoritative order follows “the order of the king.” while some other Chinese scholars including Wang Ke indicate that China’s current conception of the nation is “Tianxia Guojia” (天下国家, state under heaven) as opposed to “Guomin Guojia” (nation state).

Certainly it would be a mistake to understand China’s current view of the international order on the basis of the above traditional framework. China has an extremely strong sense of national sovereignty, territory and nationalism because its sovereignty and territory have been threatened, especially in modern history after the Opium War. Therefore, it proactively defends the current international order based on the system of nation states. A typical example is the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence concluded between China and India in 1954, which was mentioned in Chapter One. The establishment of this does not mean that China fully supports the framework of the current international order. In 2009, Wang Jisi insisted, “The current international regime basically favors China…However, it is also true that there are some disadvantages. We have to demand for changes in those areas.” We can infer that China started drafting a vision for its future by itself while it was gaining power.

For example, Chinese leaders have been plying traditional Chinese words and expressions in comments and writings for the past dozen years or so, as was already discussed. What might this mean? Meng Jianjun took note that Deng Xiaoping used the word “Xiaokang” (basically well-off) to describe the goal of the reform and open policies. Xiaokang is derived from Liji; Liyun (Book of Rites; Chapter of the Conveyance of Rites), a Confucian classic, and refers to the social phase prior to achieving the ideal state of “Datong” (Great Unity). Meng wrote, “The word Xiaokang appears more than 40 times in Volume II and III of Deng Xiaoping Wenxuan (Selected Writings of Deng Xiaoping) and he often used expressions such as ‘Xiaokang Zhijia’ (home), ‘Xiaokang Shuizhun’ (standard), ‘Xiaokang Shehui’ (society) and ‘Xiaokang Guojia’ (nation). China put forward the concept of ‘Xiaokang Shehui.’ I see it as a milestone that China finally cast off the curse of the Western ideology that tormented Chinese people throughout the 20th century and it has an important significance for the future development of China.” He candidly confesses that the Western ideology was a “curse” for Chinese elites. From this, it can be observed that he has a strong desire to return to original Chinese ideology going forward.

27 “Chugoku gaiko burein ga kataru kokusai senryaku to nihon” [International Strategy and Japan as told by the Brain of China’s Diplomacy] China Net (March 30, 2009).
4) Theory of the Modern World Order based on Traditional Concepts

China has gone through the world of the Cold-War structure and the post Cold-War structure since the founding of the nation. China’s own world vision has been presented in the Intermediate Zone Theory of Mao Zedong and its enhanced version of the Three Worlds Theory, the theory of the New International Political and Economic Order (hereinafter referred to as the Theory of New International Order) during the Deng Xiaoping period and the theory of Harmonious (Hexie) World proposed by Hu Jintao. Although the details of the Three Worlds Theory have already been discussed in some sections of this article, Sun Longji made a noteworthy argument as follows in the context of traditional philosophies: “The framework of the theory of Three Worlds is not necessarily based on analysis of the national characteristics and world affairs from a Marxist perspective. It is rather a concept to incorporate all other countries into the centric zone with China in its center based on the closeness of relationships. The framework of the Three Worlds does not play a significant role in World Revolution or People’s Liberation Movement of the Third World. It turned out to be the criteria to determine the treatment when China greets foreign visitors.”

Sun also made an appropriate and insightful argument about China’s way of recognizing international society, saying, “When a big circle called China faces the outside world, it tends to put itself in the center and categorize others in a hierarchical manner based on the proximity with itself. This hierarchy creates the order of ‘grades’ and serves for the process of ‘classifications.’”

This article has already mentioned the theory of the New International Order presented by Deng Xiaoping and later advocated by Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao. It is based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence agreed upon in the talk between Zhou Enlai and Nehru in 1955 and confirmed in the first Asian-African Conference in the following year. However, it might be possible to say that the theory of the New International Order put special emphasis on “creating fair, reasonable and equal relationships regardless of the country’s size, wealth or power” as an extension of the Three Worlds Theory which positioned China as a “weak” country and implied solidarity with poor and weak Asian-African countries. This notion is also supported by the fact that China started to advocate “Taoguang Yanghui” around the same time.

The theory of Harmonious (Hexie) World, first proposed by Hu Jintao in the


29 Longji Sun, _Zhongguo wenhua de “ shenceng jiegou”_ [The “Deep Structure” of China’s Culture], 364.
Asian African summit held in Jakarta in April 2005, uses a traditional expression in a more direct manner. Hu also made a speech titled “Making Great Efforts to Build a Harmonious World with Long-lasting Peace and Common Prosperity” at the summit on the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations held on September 15th of the same year. The original meaning of Hexie is to create a harmony with different melodies that produce beautiful sounds. “Harmonious World” explained in Hu Jintao’s speech covers four points: He called for 1) realizing common security by maintaining polycentrism; 2) maintaining mutually beneficial cooperation to realize common prosperity; 3) working together to build a Harmonious World by maintaining the spirit of engagement; and 4) maintaining proactive and stable policies to promote United Nations reform. Furthermore, Hu Jintao described Harmonious World thusly in the “Zhengzhi Baogao” (political report) on the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China on October 15, 2007: Harmonious World covers politics, economy, culture, security and environment conservation. It is essential to “work together to promote mutual respect, equal cooperation and democratization of international relations in the area of politics,” “realize equal benefits, balanced global economy, strong countries’ support for weak countries and mutual cooperation in the area of economy,” “learn from each other, seek big commonalities while keeping small differences, respect the diversity of the world and work together to advance and bring prosperity to human civilizations in the area of culture” and “realize international peace through mutual respect, and enhancement of cooperation not by war but by peaceful means in the area of security.” Hu insists that in order to realize that “it is necessary to treat all countries as equal regardless of size, power or wealth, respect the right of people to voluntarily choose the path for the development of their own countries, not interfere with other countries’ internal affairs and not force one’s purpose on others.” It was an ambitious proposal to create a harmonious world by leveraging the uniqueness of diverse actors. However, this argument itself was not totally novel and shared quite a few similarities with conventional idealism such as principles of international cooperation and self-determination developed by Wilson.

However, around 2010, the academic society of international studies in China took up active discussion on the necessity and rise of a new international system in the 21st century, one vastly different from the conventional one, to react to China’s gross domestic product overtaking that of Japan, and Xi Jinping’s coming to power with his “Chinese Dream” ideology. In this dialogue, the current international structure is regarded as a force to be overcome, with China positioned as a leader to build a new international system while discussing a more desirable international society built upon a Chinese traditional framework and philosophies. Examples of this academic discussion include “Post-Western International System and the
Rise of the East”30 by Professor Zhang Jianxin of Fudan University, “International Principles of Confucius and Construction of Modern International Relations”31 by Yu Li and Dong Wenbo of Zhengzhou University, and “Balance, Integration and Leadership – China’s Role in the Construction of the New World Order.”32 by Wang Shuang of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences.

Zhang Jianxin maintains that the Western international system in place since the 1600s will gradually decline with the end of the 20th century as powers of the eastern world rise and grow. He characterized the conventional international system as follows: 1) persistent hegemonic system; 2) unequal development among major actor states; 3) fierce competition among leadership nations over the allocation of power under a hegemonic system; and 4) Western countries’ overwhelming control of non-Western countries. In the 21st century, global power is obviously shifting east with the rise of emerging powers such as BRICS and stagnating economies of the US and Europe as represented by the Lehman Brothers’ bankruptcy and subsequent financial crisis. Meanwhile, China has already gained global power and insists this fact is supported by a number of factors: its social political system that ensures domestic stability and economic growth, a unique development model, the world's number two economy, third largest territory and biggest population in the world, as well as its permanent seat in the UN Security Council, possession of nuclear power, a traditional culture with a 5,000 year history and cohesive power. China even claims that its mission to shift to a post-Western international system is of an historically unprecedented scale.

An article by Yu Li and Dong Wenbo also emphasizes that the international system since the Peace of Westphalia did not completely abolish hegemonism, iron-fist politics or wars of aggression although it did give rise to the international order that put emphasis on sovereign equality, conflict prevention and humanitarianism. With this in mind, they discuss the significance of Confucius’ view. In the Warring States period, Confucius spread the concept of “Li” (courtesy) to restore order by preaching “Junshichenyili, Chenshijunyizhong” (The monarch should rule his vassals with courtesy, and vassals should serve their monarch with loyalty), and discussed the importance of harmony. Yu and Dong argue that the Confucian philosophy of “respecting morals and disregarding interests” is the

30 Ibid., 263.
dominant view of today’s international order, effectively containing hegemonism and addressing today’s global issues such as worsening environment, terrorism and the polarization of rich and poor, as many similarities are observed between today’s multipolar international system and the world during the Warring States period, despite the environmental differences between modern and ancient times.

It is not difficult to understand the feelings of many Chinese elites who make such statements considering that China is now overwhelming other countries at a furious speed, even after being humiliated by the invasion of superpowers in modern history. However, their arguments are self-righteous and baseless claims as they fail to explain whether traditional Chinese philosophies indeed possess the merits outlined above. Modern China originally started with the May Fourth movement which criticized Confucius and labeled Confucianism as the cause of long stagnation during the dynasty era. Deng Xiaoping tried to create a “wealthy China” by studying modernization and industrialization in advanced countries and overcoming Mao Zedong’s traditional peasant revolution. It is inappropriate to discuss China’s economic development by conflating or confusing the “China model” with traditional Confucianism. Such an argument betrays the fact that China itself practiced universal industrialization and modernization while Chinese elements were simply mixed in. If they believe that Confucianism is the very philosophy to solve all issues in modern society, China should take the opportunity to effect a reformed version of Confucianism in its own country, where environmental destruction, the rich-poor gap and corruption are prevalent.

Even if there were Chinese scholars who accept this counterargument, some would say that “creative thinking” of Confucianism in international society should not be denied. Many Chinese intellectuals interpret the Western view of the international order as “Badao” (霸道 hegemonic way) and counter it with Chinese-style international order based on “Wangdao” (王道 king’s way) of Confucianism, which they idealize. In 1995, the “Japan-China Academic Exchange Conference” hosted by the Japan Association for Asian Studies and Institute of Japanese Studies of CASS was held in Beijing while the China Threat Theory was gaining momentum following an increase of military power and a daring nuclear test. In the meeting, Feng Zhaokui, Vice Director of the Institute of Japanese Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences who was known to be well-versed on Japan, asserted that “China does not take Badao, but it will take Wangdao. Therefore, other countries should rest assured.” Against this, I argue, “It concerns us because the idea of Wangdao itself assumes hierarchical authority.” Today, China has a stronger sense of superpower and more Chinese intellectuals insist that China should take Wangdao by positioning itself as the supreme power in the world.

Then, what is the picture of the new international order drawn by today’s
Chinese elites besides the theory of Wangdao? Wang Shuang made some interesting observations in the aforementioned “Balance, Integration and Leadership – China’s Role in the Construction of the New World Order.” He argues that important concepts for the new world order in the future are 1) balance, 2) integration, and 3) leadership. Balance refers to the coordination of relations among superpowers. Fusion means the creation of regional mechanisms. Leadership serves to provide new models and ideas to establish future order.

It is certain that the leadership under Xi Jinping repeatedly calls for “a new type of creative relationship of superpowers” between the US and China, and they seem to aim at striking a “balance” through mutual coordination. However, Wang’s article also includes the relations with Russia and Japan in “the relations of superpowers.” At the time of the paper’s conception in 2010, the rise of Xi Jinping, who clearly seeks to achieve G2 was not yet definite.

As for “fusion,” Xi Jinping made the following statement in the above-mentioned “Round-Table Talk on Neighboring Diplomacy” held in October 2013: “The strategic goals of neighboring diplomacy are to meet the target of “two one hundred years” (100th anniversary of the foundation of the Communist Party in 2021 and 100th anniversary of the foundation of the People’s Republic of China) and to serve to realize the great restoration of the Chinese race…The principle of neighboring diplomacy is to improve the relations with neighboring countries, treat them as partners, enrich them and focus on the philosophies of intimacy, integrity, beneficence and tolerance.” Intimacy, integrity, beneficence and tolerance are the very words used in Daxue, and “Mulin, Anlin, Banlin” (睦隣、安隣、伴隣) be friendly, appease, and partner with neighbors) are the expressions the Chinese Dynasty used as principles of relationships with neighboring countries. Therefore, such neighboring diplomacy implies the strategy to expand China’s sphere of influence and create a “Greater China” zone. In a workshop

between Japanese and Korean scholars held in November 2013, a Korean scholar of modern China shared with me that he had mixed feelings when Chinese participants told him that “The traditional tributary relation between Korea and China was not bad.” China obviously developed a view of future relations with neighboring countries by putting traditional philosophies in a positive light.

The idea of this Greater China zone assumes not only the participation of neighboring countries attracted by the economic prosperity of China but also neighboring countries’ increasing dependency on China in the areas of politics, security and culture. It is certain that China is the largest trading partner for all of its neighboring countries and the conversion of Chinese yuan between China and currencies of those countries has been promoted. A Chinese Yuan Zone is now being formed. In the area of security, China is trying to expand its control in airspace and the waters of the East and South China Sea backed by rapidly increasing military power. Cooperation with Central Asian countries is expanding, especially in the fields of energy and counterterrorism. Moreover, China concluded an agreement with Ukraine to become Ukraine’s “nuclear umbrella” in December 2013 as Ukraine abandoned nuclear weapons. It might take similar approaches to other neighboring countries in the future.

In order to realize China’s vision of the “Great Restoration of the Chinese Race,” the country needs to increase the influence of soft power. In the 21st century, Confucius Institutes were set up in many countries around the world to promote Chinese language and culture. Also, expressions such as “China model” in contrast with Western model, “China’s unique development” and “Beijing consensus” are frequently used in Chinese academia. Furthermore, the Center for China Development Model Research was established within Fudan University in 2013 as a research institute sponsored by Wang Huning, a Fudan University professor who rose to become a member of the Central Politburo of the Communist Party of China.

**Conclusion**

All things considered, there seems to be a paradox here. The more China emphasizes the “China Model” and the theory of “China’s uniqueness,” the more it conflicts with the universal, widely accepted concept in international society. If this is the case, the world will not accept this “China model” or the theory of “China’s uniqueness” even if China does catch up with the US in an economic and military sense. As was emphasized earlier, the basic framework of China’s

---

34 *China Watch*, November 6, 2013, 29.
development is the path of modernization and industrialization which man, especially in currently developed nations, took. China took the same path by fully leveraging the advantages of developing countries. Professor Wu Jianlian, an elder of Chinese economic science, and many other Chinese scholars are well aware of this fact.35

If China accepts the reality as it is, appreciates the importance of man’s universal values and framework, and contributes to a new symbiotic international order required by all members in international society by succeeding and further developing the current international order, rather than creating a new international order to replace the current one, international society would welcome it. Actually, China itself has expressed the need for such a framework rather consistently.

An enhanced version of such a model can be observed in Hu Jintao’s “Zhengzhi Baogao” (political report) from the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in November 2012. He said, “there is only one earth for human beings, and many countries coexist in one world. The history explicitly shows us that the law of the jungle does not lead to human coexistence, and that injudicious use of force does not create a beautiful world.”36 This statement positions China’s path of survival in the current international order. Hu Jintao continued: “We advocate the spirit of equality, mutual trust, tolerance, mutual learning, cooperation and ‘win-win’…Equality and mutual trust mean to maintain equality regardless of the size, strength and wealth of the nation and protect world peace and order by following the principles and philosophy of the UN Charter. Tolerance and mutual learning mean to respect the diversity of civilizations and development paths, support the rights of people to choose the path of development and social systems by themselves in any country, learn from each other, and promote the advancement of human civilization. Cooperation and ‘win-win’ mean to advocate the idea that all humans share the same destiny, pay attention to other countries’ legal rights while pursuing his/her own country’s interests, work together to overcome difficulties, share rights and responsibilities, and increase common benefits.” This is in line with the claim China has been making since the end of the Cold War while more emphasis was put on the principle of international collaboration. In this argument, he actively advocates an international strategy to which China should contribute from the universal perspective, not from the perspective of the theory of “China’s uniqueness.”

It is essential that Chinese leaders and intellectuals fully reflect on the former Chairman’s last official speech and practice it with integrity and establish a new international order accepted and respected by other countries. If China can lead

35 People’s Daily, December 6, 2013.
that movement, it would fulfill the first criterion to becoming a true world leader.

About the Author

Satoshi AMAKO has been a professor in the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies (GSAPS) at Waseda University since April 2002. Currently, he is also Director of the Contemporary Chinese Area Studies Program of National Institutes for the Humanities (NIHU) and the Waseda Institute of Contemporary Chinese Studies (WICCS). He earned his PhD in International Relations from the Graduate School of Social Sciences, Hitotsubashi University. His specialties include Contemporary China and Asian International Relations. Prior to working at Waseda University, he served as an Assistant Professor at Ryukyu University and as a Professor in the Faculty of International Culture, Kyoritsu Women’s Educational Institution, and in the Department of International Politics and Economics, Aoyama Gakuin University. He was invited to American University as a visiting professor in 1999. His major publications include Sino-Japanese Rivalry (Chikuma Shobo, 2013) (In Japanese), The Road toward Asian Union: The Design for Theory and Personnel Training (Chikuma Shobo, 2010) (In Japanese), The History of People’s Republic of China, New Edition (Iwanami, 1999) (in Japanese), Life-Size China (Keiso Shobo, 2003) (in Japanese), How to Associate with China (NHK Book, 2003) (in Japanese), and The History of China, Vol. 11: Mao Zedong vs. Deng Xiaoping (Kodansha, 2004) (in Japanese).