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Ancient Chinese Power, Modern Chinese Thought†

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Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power is the latest publication to come from Yan Xuetong's ongoing research project that explores the inter-state political philosophy of China's pre-Qin era.[1] This book is interesting on many levels, and has already drawn attention from public intellectuals and scholars in the West.[2] This essay thus first will examine the scholarly issue of how Yan and his colleagues are employing pre-Qin thought to make philosophical and political arguments about how China will rise. It will consider the relation of the 'kingly way' (*wang* 王) and the 'hegemonic way' (*ba* 霸) to critically analyze Yan's argument that China should create a new kind of world leadership by pursuing political power, rather than economic and/or military power. While the book translates *wang* loosely as 'humane authority', we will argue that the literal translation 'kingly way' better reflects Yan's arguments for a new world order that is determined by the moral leadership of China's political elite. Building on this detailed textual analysis, the essay then will locate the book's arguments in wider academic debates about international relations theory, the role of the public intellectual in China, and the politics of translation. Lastly, the essay argues that the book is geared towards two audiences beyond the academy, to advise China's political leaders and reassure the West. The goal is to

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1 Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

2 See, for example, 'Banyan: Nothing New Under Heaven', *The Economist*, June 16, 2011, http://www.economist.com/node/18836024?story_id=18836024; Gideon Rachman, 'A Test of Will', *Financial Times*, July 29, 2011.

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see how *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power* revives—and re-interprets—traditional ideals to chart China's future as the world's future.

The Pre-Qin Project

This volume presents a small selection of what Cunningham-Cross elsewhere calls Yan's 'pre-Qin project'.[3] It opens with three chapters by Yan himself,[4] followed by critical commentaries from three other Chinese scholars, and then Yan's response. The book also contains an instructive interview with Yan, which provides the reader with key insights into Yan's personality and the motivations behind his pioneering work. The opening three chapters give a flavour of the wider project Yan and his colleagues have been working on over the past few years. Nevertheless, it is important to see these chapters within the wider context of the pre-Qin project.

Yan began his research into the philosophies of pre-Qin China in 2005 alongside his colleague and contributor to this volume Xu Jin. The purpose, which will be examined in more detail below, was to learn from the experience of ancient China and its political philosophers in order to enrich and improve current understandings of international politics. Yan believes that texts originating from the period prior to China's unification under the Qin dynasty (221 BC) are particularly useful to scholars today, because interstate relations during that era share many similarities with contemporary international politics.[5] In addition, this period is often viewed as the apex of Chinese philosophy; pre-Qin texts are thus significant because of the sustained influence they have had on politics in the Chinese empire over the past two millennia.[6]

The project's first publication was a reader of pre-Qin thought for students of international politics that Yan and Xu published in 2008.[7] It features original pre-Qin texts with introductory notes, translations into modern Chinese and questions for discussion. Its stated aim is to 'allow readers to gain inspiration from pre-Qin thinkers and thereby deepen their understanding of contemporary international politics'.[8] Yan and Xu have also produced an edited volume, *Thoughts on World Leadership and Their*

[3] Linsay Cunningham-Cross, 'Using the Past to (Re-)write the Future', presented at 'China's Future and the World's Future' workshop, University of Manchester, February 11, 2011.

[4] Chapter 3 is co-authored by Huang Yuxing, then a student of Yan's at Tsinghua University.

[5] Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin, eds., *Zhongguo xianqin guojiajian zhengzhi sixiang xuandu* (*Pre-Qin Chinese Thought on Foreign Relations*) (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2008), p. 3.

[6] Christopher A. Ford, *The Mind of Empire: China's History and Modern Foreign Relations* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010).

[7] Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin, eds., *Pre-Qin Chinese Thought on Foreign Relations*.

[8] *Ibid*., front jacket.

Implications (2009), which employs a more analytical approach to survey many of the same pre-Qin thinkers and texts.[9] This book brings together commentaries on a wide array of pre-Qin works, including the seven key thinkers identified by Yan—Guanzi, Laozi, Confucius, Mencius, Mozi, Xunzi and Hanfeizi—as well as many other important texts from the period, including: *The Chronicle of Zuo*, *Strategies of the Warring States*, *Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals*, and the *Book of Rites*. Each of the essays includes the author's reflections on the relevance of pre-Qin thought for contemporary China and the study of IR. Yan and others have also published widely on the topic in some of the leading Chinese-language IR journals. Each of Yan's chapters in this current volume (Chapters 1–3) is a translation from his edited volume *World Leadership*. The commentaries and Yan's response (Chapters 4–6 and 7) are translated from a special issue of a journal that Yan edits, the *Quarterly Journal of International Politics*.[10]

Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power, however, is significant because it brings Yan's pre-Qin project to a new audience by presenting these selected works in English for the first time. With the exception of Chapter 2 on Xunzi, a version of which was published in the *Chinese Journal of International Politics* in 2008, the chapters in this volume have previously been available only in Chinese. In addition to pioneering work that uses pre-Qin thought to enrich contemporary IR theory, Yan is also a key strategist and public intellectual, influential both with China's policy-makers and its opinion-makers in the mass media. In this way, the book advances the Princeton-China book series' goal of 'understanding China on its own terms'.

Why Pre-Qin Thought?

Yan's commitment to Realist understandings of IR, which he passionately defends in his interview with Lu Xin in this volume,[11] shape his views about

[9] Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin, eds., *Wangba tianxia sixiang ji qidi* (*Thoughts on World Leadership and Their Implications*) (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 2009).

[10] Yang Qianru, 'Dui xianqin guojiajian zhengzhi sixiang de sikao – jianping "xianqin guojiajian zhengzhi sixiang de yitong jiqi qishi"' ('Reflections on Pre-Qin Inter-state Political Thought Discussing "Pre-Qin Thought on Inter-state Relations: Similarities, Differences and Inspiration"'), pp. 140–149; Xu Jin, 'Zai Rujia de liangduan – jianping "xunzi de guoji zhengzhi sixiang ji qishi"' ('The Two Poles of Confucianism – Discussing "Xunzi's Thoughts on International Politics and Their Implications"'), pp. 125–139; Wang Rihua, 'Gudai Zhongguo de zhengzhi baquanlun – jianping "'zhanguoce' de baquan sixiang ji qidi"' ('The Theory of Political Hegemony in Ancient China – Discussing "Hegemony in *The Stratagems of the Warring States*"'), pp. 112–124; Yan Xuetong, 'Jiejian xianqin sixiang chuangxin guoji guanxi lilun' ('Drawing on Pre-Qin Thought To Create International Relations Theory'), pp. 150–165; all in *Guoji zhengzhi kexue* (*Quarterly Journal of International Politics*), No. 3 (2009).

[11] Lu Xin, 'Yan Xuetong: A Realist Scholar Clinging to Scientific Prediction', in Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, pp. 240–46.

the purpose of studying pre-Qin thought as well as his selection of materials to include in the research. In Chapter 7 of *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, Yan sets out, in response to his critics, three reasons for studying pre-Qin thought. Firstly, Yan believes that insights gained from pre-Qin texts can make a contribution to international relations theory. Yan's belief in the universality of science sees him consistently argue against the need for a distinct 'Chinese school' of IR theory (more on this below).[12] Instead, Yan hopes his project can allow scholars to draw lessons from China's past that can 'enrich' existing theories of international politics.[13] As a Realist scholar, Yan sees theory as a tool that can be used to understand the 'real world'. This tool can be revised and improved to produce better results in terms of explanation or even prediction. According to Yan, China's ancient philosophy can provide insights that might refine existing theories of international relations, which have until now been largely founded on European concepts and experiences.[14] This will allow Chinese scholars to make a contribution to what has arguably been until now a Western social science.

Second, Yan believes that the study of pre-Qin thought can deepen our understandings of contemporary 'realities'. He argues that highlighting continuities between the past and the present demonstrates the enduring aspects of international politics. Yet, once again, Yan views these pre-Qin texts through the lens of Realist IR. He believes that there are universal laws applicable to the international system that simply need to be discovered. This view, however, permits Yan to include certain aspects of pre-Qin philosophy that fit his view of the international system and to exclude others as irrelevant or unhelpful. According to Yan, some pre-Qin thought reflects enduring laws of human nature, providing insights into unchanging aspects of interstate relations. Other elements of pre-Qin thought, however, are not relevant and should be seen as 'a particular understanding applicable to a particular international system'.[15] Yan's approach is therefore to cherry-pick those elements of pre-Qin thought that fit contemporary 'realities'; those that do not fit with his understanding of the nature of international politics are simply excluded. For example, Yan rules out the use of Mencius's theory of the goodness of human nature because it is 'unscientific'.[16] This is because it does not fit with Yan's views on the role of 'human nature' in decision-making processes or with Realist assumptions about

[12] This is also reiterated in the article included as Appendix 3, where Yan directly addresses the question: 'Why Is There No Chinese School of International Relations Theory?' in Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, pp. 252–59.

[13] Yan Xuetong, 'Bianzhe de hua'('Editors Introduction'), in Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin, eds., *Thoughts on World Leadership and Their Implications*, p. 1.

[14] Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, pp. 202–3.

[15] *Ibid*., p. 202.

[16] *Ibid*., p. 208.

human behaviour. Yan also discounts theories or insights that he considers not to be useful. For example, he warns other scholars against incorporating Laozi's concept of *wuwei* (无为 translated here as 'non-action') because it is unhelpful in achieving the goal of China's rise.[17] Yan selects and reinterprets pre-Qin philosophies according to his existing understandings about the nature of international politics,[18] but he never reflects upon the process by which he makes these selections. Yet, as we argue below, Yan's choices of what to include—and what to exclude—are significant in shaping the specific narrative that emerges from his pre-Qin project.

Finally, Yan is looking to ancient Chinese thought to direct contemporary policy and in particular to draw lessons for 'the great task of China's rise'.[19] Pre-Qin thought, according to Yan, can help answer specific questions about how to manage China's changing role in contemporary international politics. This third goal is perhaps most significant because it drives the rest of the project and plays a key role in shaping Yan's approach to the ancient texts he chooses to study. The question of China's rise and future role in world politics is seen by Yan as the most important issue facing China today. Therefore, any insights Yan hopes to gain from studying pre-Qin thought must be able to answer this question in some way. The pre-Qin texts included in Yan's work are therefore selected because they have something to say about the specific problems that a rising power faces in international politics. For example, in Chapter 1 Yan highlights the main differences between the traditions of seven key philosophers: Guanzi, Laozi, Confucius, Mencius, Mozi, Xunzi, and Hanfeizi. He draws on a number of examples to illustrate the different analytical approaches of each of the thinkers, all of which highlight issues of the rise and fall of states in world politics.[20] Likewise, Yan argues for the inclusion of the *Strategies of the Warring States* in his project. While others frequently discount this text as philosophically weak, Yan argues it is worthy of further study because its views on gaining hegemony remain relevant to rising powers today.[21] Throughout Yan's work he selects passages of pre-Qin thought that address in some way the problematic of rising powers and of gaining hegemony or 'leadership' in the world.

[17] *Ibid*., p. 217.

[18] We are told in his interview with Lu Xin that Yan's views about the nature and scope of international relations were largely formed during his time as a PhD student at the University of California, Berkeley in the late 1980s. Yan writes that prior to that time he did not really know what IR was about but after the first year he had learnt the 'language' of the discipline and was able to make a contribution. His Realist stance and preference for the 'scientific method' was established during this time and continues to strongly influence his approach to the ancient texts he now studies (Lu Xin, 'Yan Xuetong: A Realist Scholar Clinging to Scientific Prediction').

[19] Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, p. 203.

[20] *Ibid*., pp. 26–29.

[21] *Ibid*., pp. 107, 112.

By focusing in particular on the theme of hegemony and world leadership, Yan is discursively linking pre-Qin thought to China's future rise (and thus ancient Chinese thought to modern Chinese power). Despite the differences amongst the different philosophers consistently highlighted by Yan, taken together his study of pre-Qin thought reveals a distinct narrative about China's future rise and what it means for the world. Through his reading of pre-Qin philosophy, Yan contends that China's rise, while now inevitable, will also be peaceful.[22] This is because China will follow a different model of leadership in the world from that of hegemony as currently understood. Instead of becoming a US-style hegemon, China will embrace a model of 'humane authority' in the world, relying on political power that is moral rather than the material power of economic growth and/or military strength. China's presence as a 'humane authority' thus will help to bring about a new, harmonious world order.

China as a New Kind of World Leader

Yan, and many of the pre-Qin texts from which he draws, sees the rise and fall of powers in world politics as zero-sum in nature: the rise of one state requires the relative decline of another. Nevertheless, he argues that by borrowing ideas from pre-Qin thought a state can rise in the interstate system without the use of violence and without threatening the stability of the system. This is because, unlike Western theories of IR, pre-Qin philosophy distinguishes between different types of leading state in international politics. While Western theories speak only of hegemony (*ba* 霸), pre-Qin thought introduces the possibility of a different model of world leadership, that of 'true kingship' or 'humane authority' (*wang* 王).[23] This concept is central to Yan's work on pre-Qin philosophy and appears countless times in the book.[24] In this volume, however, the editors have departed from the standard translation of 'true kingship' or 'sage king', choosing instead to translate it as 'humane authority'. This, they argue, is because: '*obviously*, Yan is not arguing for the reestablishment of a monarchical system led by

[22] Despite the decline in the term's use since 2005, Yan continues to explicitly link the theories of certain pre-Qin thinkers with the concept of China's 'peaceful rise'. This is noteworthy because Yan was one of the few IR scholars to criticize this term when it was introduced as state policy. (See Yan Xuetong in 'Zhongguo heping jueqide guoji huanjing yu duiwai zhanlue' ('The International Environment and Foreign Strategy of China's Peaceful Rise'), *Jiaoxue yu yanjiu* (*Teaching and Research*), No. 4 (2004), pp. 5–20.)

[23] Liu Jiangyong, 'Guanzi de baye sixiang' ('Guanzi's Thinking on Hegemony'), in Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin, eds., *Thoughts on World Leadership and Their Implications*, p. 44.

[24] The *wang*/*ba* distinction is also key in other current analyses of China's past and future. See Liu Mingfu, *Zhongguo meng: hou meiguo shidai de daguo siwei zhanlue dingwei* (*The China Dream: The Great Power Thinking and Strategic Positioning of China in the Post-American Age*)(Beijing: Zhongguo youyi chuban gongsi, 2010), pp. 101–36; Wang Hui, *The Politics of Imagining Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 31–33.

one sage who would save the world with his moral goodness'.[25] Throughout this article, we will predominantly use either the common translation 'true kingship' or the original Chinese term because we are reluctant to agree with the editors' assertions about Yan's work. As we argue later, Yan's narrative of China's rise, and the new world order it will bring about, is in many ways reflective of the 'true kingship' definition the editors wish to avoid.

According to Yan, 'pre-Qin thinkers generally believed that there were two kinds of interstate leadership, humane authority and hegemonic authority'.[26] Even in his chapter on the *Strategies of the Warring States*, where the concept of 'humane authority' tends not to appear, Yan frequently draws the readers' attention to the different types or qualities of hegemon described by the writers: 'The root difference between humane authority and hegemonic authority is that the former relies on morality and the latter on material power to uphold interstate order.'[27] 'Even Hanfeizi, the most sceptical of all the pre-Qin thinkers, believed that in the past benevolence and virtue were key to *wang* leadership; it is just that they have become less useful over time.'[28]

'True kingship', or 'humane authority', is therefore seen as a beneficial form of governance and contrasted against the negative value of 'hegemony', which Yan largely associates with the US and experiences of American unilateralism in the post-Cold War period. What sets true kingship apart is the moral requirement necessary for its attainment. Yan draws on a number of pre-Qin texts to demonstrate that this type of world leadership cannot be attained by force,[29] but begins instead with winning the hearts of the people.[30] To achieve the status of true kingship in the world, therefore, a state should not rely exclusively on military force, or even on other forms of material power; instead, true kingship relies on the political power that emerges from a state's morality.

Once again, Yan transposes his Realist understandings of world politics onto the pre-Qin texts he studies. Yan's understanding of power in the international system is that of any Realist scholar: power is the function of economic, military, political, and possibly cultural power that is possessed

25 'A Note on the Translation', in Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, p. ix, our emphasis.
26 Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, p. 47.
27 *Ibid*., p. 49.
28 *Ibid*., p. 65.
29 Liu Jiangyong, 'Guanzi's Thinking on Hegemony', p. 46; Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin, eds., *Pre-Qin Chinese Thought on Foreign Relations*, pp. 17, 64–5; and Xu Jin, 'Mengzi de renzheng zhi tianxia sixiang' ('Mencius' Thoughts on Benevolent Governance of the World'), in Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin, eds., *Thoughts on World Leadership and Their Implications*, p. 128.
30 Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin, eds., *Pre-Qin Chinese Thought on Foreign Relations*, pp. 7, 47; Xu Jin, 'Xianqin guojiajian zhengzhi sixiang liupai gaishu' ('Summary of Main Schools of Pre-Qin Thought on Inter-state Politics'), in Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin, eds., *Thoughts on World Leadership and Their Implications*, p. 4.

by a nation-state in the international system. His use of pre-Qin thought allows for some variation of that function, notably, political power becomes the decisive element in what Chinese call 'comprehensive national power'.[31] Yet Yan's underlying assumptions about the nature of power, as an entity that can be possessed, increased, lost or gained, remain unchallenged. Within this Realist framework, Yan uses pre-Qin thought to challenge mainstream assumptions that political power comes from economic and/or military strength; he argues that China will strive to become a true kingship state by relying on political power rather than economic or military might.

Political power for the pre-Qin thinkers differs somewhat from how it tends to be understood in contemporary international politics. Yan argues that it cannot simply be equated with contemporary understandings of soft power, which do not distinguish between cultural and political elements.[32] For the pre-Qin thinkers it is the political elements that are decisive. The source of all political power is the leader of a state.[33] For Confucius, all politics are the king's politics,[34] and Xunzi argues that 'what makes a country secure or endangered, good or bad, is determined exclusively by its ruler and not by others'.[35] Some of the pre-Qin texts also highlight the importance of the implementation of correct (just) policies by the leader,[36] as well as the procedures for the recruitment of officials.[37] For example, Guanzi argues that 'a good ruler selects competent ministers; a ruler without morals will lead his country to ruin'.[38] Here, as elsewhere in Yan's analyses of pre-Qin texts, competence is equated with moral piety rather than technical ability. Political power thus emanates from the personal morality of a state's leader,[39] the ministers he appoints and the policies they pursue together, which in turn determines the ruler's state's ability to become a true kingship power in the world. In order to become a *wang* state, therefore, a rising China will rely on the moral leadership of the Party-State in appointing officials with an equally high moral standing who will implement just

31 Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, p. 53.
32 *Ibid*., p. 101.
33 Wang Haibin, '"Lushi chunqiu" de guojiajian zhengzhi sixiang' ('Inter-state Political Thought in the Lu Spring and Autumn Annals'), *Guoji zhengzhi kexue* (*Quarterly Journal of International Politics*), No. 1 (2009), p. 69; Xu Jin, 'Summary of Main Schools of Pre-Qin Thought on Inter-state Politics', p. 2; and Yan Xuetong, 'Xianqin guojiajian zhengzhi sixiang de yitong ji qi qishi' ('Pre-Qin Thought on Inter-state Relations: Similarities, Differences and Inspiration'), *Zhongguo shehui kexue* (*Social Sciences in China*), No. 3 (2009), p. 102.
34 Xu Jin, 'Summary of Main Schools of Pre-Qin Thought on Inter-state Politics', p. 5.
35 Yan Xuetong, 'Xun Zi's Thoughts on International Politics and Their Implications', *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2008), p. 139.
36 Yan Xuetong, 'Pre-Qin Thought on Inter-state Relations', p. 102.
37 Yan Xuetong and Huang Yuxing, '"Zhanguo ce" de baquan sixiang ji qishi' ('The Concept of Hegemony in "Strategies of the Warring States"'), *Guoji zhengzhi kexue* (*Quarterly Journal of International Politics*), No. 4 (2008), p. 86.
38 Xu Jin, 'Summary of Main Schools of Pre-Qin Thought on Inter-state Politics', p. 2.
39 Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, p. 53.

policies. Here Yan agrees with other commentators in China who feel that political legitimacy relies, in part, on the morality of both leaders in Beijing and rank-and-file cadres throughout the country; 'Cadre training', which includes moral instruction, thus is a growing and well-funded activity in the communist party.[40]

The most important aspect of the story Yan tells through his interpretation of pre-Qin thought is the pre-Qin belief that a *wang* state was beneficial not just for its own people but for the health of the whole interstate system. According to many pre-Qin sources, the superior moral quality of a sage king could reach beyond his own territory to ensure the stability of the system as a whole.[41] Yan argues that contemporary hegemonic stability theory has overlooked the relationship between the nature of hegemonic power and the stability of the interstate system. He uses examples from Xunzi to show how a *wang* state can bring about a stable international environment, while a state reliant solely on military might will alienate others and create enemies with potentially destabilizing effects for the international system.[42] Yan writes that, according to the pre-Qin way of thinking, 'we can suppose that the level of morality of the hegemon is related to the degree of stability in the international system and the length of time of its endurance'.[43] The lesson Yan therefore wants us to draw from his study of pre-Qin thought is that 'morality and the interstate order are directly related, especially at the level of the personal morality of the leader and its role in determining the stability of interstate order'.[44] Therefore, if China is to become a true kingship power in the world then the Chinese leadership has a vital role to play in terms of providing moral leadership not just for the Chinese people but for the whole world.

The future Yan narrates is one whereby the influence of a morally superior Chinese state will radiate outwards thus bringing about a more stable and harmonious world order. Such a 'harmonious world' is achieved through demonstrating the superiority of the Chinese way and actively encouraging others to imitate it. Yan's 'true kingship' is therefore not so far away from the definition the editors of *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*

[40] See Frank Pieke, *The Good Communist: Elite Training and State Building in Today's China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); for an entertaining social commentary on corrupt officials, see Han Han, 'Han Feng shi ge hao ganbu' ('Han Feng Is a Good Cadre'), TwoCold blog, March 4, 2010.

[41] Yang Chuanhui, 'Kongzi de rende qu tianxia sixiang' ('Confucian Thought on Obtaining the World Through Benevolence'), in Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin, eds., *Thoughts on World Leadership and Their Implications*, p. 82; Xu Jin, 'Summary of Main Schools of Pre-Qin Thought on Inter-state Politics', p. 9; and Yan Xuetong, 'Pre-Qin Thought on Inter-state Relations', p. 95.

[42] The potential outcomes of different types of leading state are set out diagrammatically in table 2.1, see Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, p. 72.

[43] *Ibid*., p. 65.

[44] *Ibid*., p. 39.

have tried to avoid: 'of a monarchical system led by one sage who would save the world with his moral goodness'.

In this way, perhaps *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power* can tell us about Beijing's next generation of leadership, who are often described as 'princelings', and the 'red culture' moral campaigns that some of them are promoting.

Broader Academic Contexts

As our textual analysis of *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power* shows, this fascinating discussion among Yan and his colleagues raises issues of how we should properly understand the Chinese classics both in their own context and in relation to China's rise in the twenty-first century. Still, the volume's discussion is largely limited to the 'true believers' who are already convinced that there is a link between 'ancient Chinese thought' and 'modern Chinese power'. This section, however, will place the book in three broader academic contexts: international relations theory, the role of the public intellectual in China, and translation politics.

International Relations Theory

Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power was conceived in 2007 and published in 2011 as part of broader trends in international relations theory. Owing to a combination of widespread criticism of George W. Bush's unilateral foreign policy and the rise of new economies (i.e. the BRICs: Brazil, Russia, India, and China), the first decade of the twenty-first century produced a critique of American dominance of international politics and Western dominance of international relations theory. Critical IR theorists in both the West and the non-West thus noted how international relations theory is Eurocentric, based on European history and European philosophy. They argue that it is necessary to both provincialize Western values, and look for transnational norms outside of Euro-America. Thus now many people are discussing what India, Russia, Islam, and South America have to say about global norms and world order.[45] Chinese-style IR theory is attracting the most attention, in part because China has its own long history of global politics and a rich philosophical tradition. In 1998, Ole Wæver's

[45] Two special journal issues are indicative of this multicultural trend in international studies, see J. Ann Tickner and Andre P. Tsyganov, 'Responsible Scholarship in International Relations: A Symposium', *International Studies Review*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (2008), pp. 661–66; Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, 'Preface: Why Is There No Non-Western IR Theory: Reflections on and from Asia', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (2007), pp. 285–86. The second project was published as a book, as was another multicultural IR theory project: Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, eds., *Non-Western International Relations Theory: Perspectives On and Beyond Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Arlene Tickner and Ole Wæver, eds., *International Relations Scholarship Around the World* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

survey of alternative sources of IR theory concluded that '[t]he most obvious candidate for an independent IR tradition based on a unique philosophical tradition is China, though very little independent theorizing has taken place'.[46] In the 2000s, many writers responded to this and other calls to propose a Chinese school of IR theory. Qin Yaqing of the China Foreign Affairs University is the most prominent proponent of the Chinese school, which also includes other scholars such as Ren Xiao, Wang Yiwei, and Shi Bin.[47]

Because Yan very directly both promotes Chinese ideas to enrich IR theory and at the same time opposes the formation of a Chinese school of IR theory, a chapter in *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power* from someone like Qin responding to Yan's two arguments would have been helpful.[48] Qin argues that a Chinese School is not only possible, but is 'inevitable', and is the best possible solution to the world's problems.[49] There is a feeling among many in China, and some in the West, that Chinese IR theory is a natural extension of Beijing's growing global political influence. In other words, to be a great power, a state has to have its own theory for world order.[50] According to this view, since the US promotes ideas like 'democratic peace' and the UK talks about 'international society', it is

46 Ole Wæver, 'The Sociology of a Not So International Discipline: American and European Developments in International Relations', *International Organization*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (1998), p. 696. As Yan notes, there have been calls in China for a Chinese school since the 1980s.

47 Qin Yaqing, 'Why Is There No Chinese International Relations Theory?', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (2007), pp. 313–40; Wang Yiwei, 'China: Between Copying and Constructing', in Arlene Tickner and Ole Wæver, eds., *International Relations Scholarship Around the World*, pp. 103–19; Yiwei Wang, 'Between Science and Art: Questionable International Relations Theories', *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2007), pp. 191–208; Shi Bin, 'Guoji guanxi lilun 'Zhongguo shi tansuo' de jige jiben wenti' ('Chinese Explorations of International Relations Theory: Methods, Issues, Positions, and Discourse'), *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* (*World Economics and Politics*), No. 5 (2004), pp. 8–13; Ren Xiao, 'Zou zizhu fazhan zhi lu – zhenglun zhong de 'zhongguo xuepai' guoji guanxi xue' (Walking Our Own Development Path: Debating the 'Chinese School' of International Relations), *Guoji zhengzhi yanjiu* (*International Politics Quarterly*), No. 2 (2009). For an analysis of the Chinese school, see Cunningham-Cross, 'Re-imagining the World Through Chinese Eyes: the Search for a 'Chinese School' of International Relations Theory' presented at British International Studies Association Annual Conference, Manchester, April 27–29, 2011.

48 For an analysis of the Chinese school of IR theory that includes contributions by Yan, Qin and other key scholars, see William A. Callahan and Elena Barabantseva, eds., *China Orders the World: Normative Soft Power and Foreign Relations* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, forthcoming).

49 Qin Yaqing, 'Guoji guanxi lilun zhongguo xuepai shengcheng de keneng he biran' ('The Possibility and Necessity of a Chinese School of International Relations Theory'), *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* (*World Economics and Politics*), No. 3 (2006), pp. 7–13.

50 See Qin Yaqing, ed., *Zhongguo xuezhe kan shijie: guoji zhixu juan* (*Chinese Scholars View the World: International Order*)(Beijing: Xinshijie chubanshe, 2007); Tang Shiping, 'Coming Intellectual Power', *China Security*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2008), pp. 14–15.

only natural for China to promote ideas like 'Tianxia' and 'Harmonious World' as China's contribution to world civilization and global order.[51] The soft power of IR theory is thus seen as an outgrowth of hard power; China needs to cash in its new economic power for enduring political, cultural and normative power.

Yan's critique of this endeavor is that the Chinese school is placing the cart before the horse: rather than insist on the 'necessity' of a Chinese school, scholars should formulate interesting ideas that will attract global attention. Indeed, Yan notes that Thucydides's ancient dictum, 'the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must', is still very popular in international relations theory.[52] Qin took such criticism to heart. He considered ancient Chinese ideals like *Tianxia*, but ultimately felt that their hierarchical view of world order was problematic. Rather than look to imperial concepts, Qin went on to theorize that 'relationality' (*guanxi* 关系) is China's contribution to international relation theory.[53] Yan would disagree with both of these moves. As we have seen, Yan thinks that a proper hierarchical order will solve the world's problems. As for 'relationality', Yang Qianru mooted a similar approach when she argued that we should think of *wang* and hegemony as joined together in a relation. Yet Yan insists that they are separate and opposite.[54] More to the point, 'relationality' is neither new to IR theory nor unique to China—it has been a dominant theme in critical IR theory since the 1980s.[55]

The question thus is: what do the pre-Qin ideals of *wang* and hegemony have to offer contemporary IR theory? The way Yan reads it, *wang* entails focusing on political power rather than economic or military power. This political power is accumulated through the personal morals of sage kings who promote interstate hierarchy that then leads to order and peace. Yan argues these pre-Qin norms are universalizable when we use scientific theory to formulate them. Here, the 'pre-Qin project' very deliberately mixes the high humanities of ancient Chinese literature with the high social science of Realist IR theory as a way to replace 'American hegemony' with China's benevolent world leadership.

Although the book is directed, in part, at an external audience (more later), we are not sure how successful this grand project will be among IR scholars outside China. Rationalists are generally wary of such culturalist

[51] See William A. Callahan, 'Nationalizing International Theory: Race, Class and the English School', *Global Society*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (2004), pp. 305–23.
[52] Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, p. 202.
[53] Qin Yaqing, 'Guanxi benwei yu guocheng jian'gou: jiang Zhongguo linian zhiru guoji guanxi lilun' ('Relationality and Processual Construction: Bringing Chinese Ideas into International Relations Theory'), *Social Sciences in China*, No. 4 (2009), pp. 5–20.
[54] Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, p. 208.
[55] See Michael J. Shapiro and James Der Derian, eds., *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1989).

arguments. For example, Yuan-Kang Wang, a Realist who studies Chinese history, has concluded that Chinese culture is largely irrelevant to questions of war and peace. Wang's detailed examination of Song and Ming dynastic history confirms the Structural Realist position: a strong China, like any strong state, will expand, while a weak China will accommodate other powers.[56] If this is the case, it will be hard to convince social scientists to learn classical Chinese. This is not just a problem for non-Chinese scholars. As Yan admits, most IR scholars in China also lack the classical Chinese skills necessary for reading pre-Qin texts.[57]

On the other side of the positivist/post-positivist divide, the people mentioned above who are interested in pluralizing IR theory are generally critical of social science methodology. While Yan employs a Realist epistemology that uses scientific method to search for singular and stable notions of Truth, Morality and Power, critical IR theorists are not looking for a new universal—rather they are suspicious of the positivist epistemology of universals.[58] As Edward Said argued in *Orientalism*, morality is an important method of control in imperialist discourse. Since each imperial regime has promoted its own cultural ideas as the moral standard—Britain's 'white man's burden', France's '*mission civilisatrice*', China's 'civilization/barbarism distinction' (*huayi zhi bian* 华夷之辨)—many are wary of large states making moralistic arguments. Chinese ideas thus are interesting to critical IR theorists as one of many pluralistic 'alternatives'—but not if Eurocentrism is simply to be replaced by the singular notion of Chinese piety, or if the dominance of the US is replaced by the new hegemony of China.[59]

While Yan and others often cite George W. Bush's unilateralism as 'immoral' and thus hegemonic, Bush's own statements framed US foreign policy in the very moral terms of a virtuous America fighting the Axis of Evil. The problem here is not a lack of morality—but an excess of morality that is expressed in singular terms that do not allow for much discussion. Chinese appeals for moral order (and against things like the 'Three Evils')

[56] Yuan-Kang Wang, *Harmony and War: Confucian Culture and Chinese Power Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). For another sophisticated analysis of history and IR, see Victoria Tin-bor Hui, *War and State Formation in Ancient China and Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[57] Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, p. 245.

[58] Universal morality has been questioned in the West since Friedrich Nietzsche wrote *On The Genealogy of Morals* (1887), which argues that morality is a contingent cultural product rather than a religious universal. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. and edited by Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1996). In China, the *Zhuangzi* questions the universal morality of Confucianism in the entertaining story of the Robber Zhi. *Chuang-tzu*, trans. and edited by A.C. Graham (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), pp. 207–10, 233–242. For a discussion of this Zhuangzi story and IR theory, see William A. Callahan, *Contingent States: Greater China and Transnational Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. 22–23.

[59] See William A. Callahan, 'Chinese Visions of World Order: Post-Hegemonic or a New Hegemony?', *International Studies Review*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (2008), pp. 749–61.

are similarly problematic because they characteristically code China as fundamentally moral, and all other ways as immoral.

To have an ethical conversation, on the other hand, participants first need to respect the plurality of values and the multiplicity of alternative understandings of politics. Chinese ideas enter this IR theory discussion, then, not as the singular solution, but as one of many options. The epistemology here appeals to post-positivist inter-subjective interpretation, rather than the positivist discovery of the singular truth.

Lastly, Yan's appeal to hierarchical order is likely to be a hard-sell not only in the liberal West, but also among China's Asian neighbours and developing states worldwide. Equality in domestic society among individuals and in international society among nation-states is still a popular goal, even if it has not been universally achieved. Yan's proposal of 'voluntary submission' for lower/smaller states in a China-led hierarchy is not likely to be welcome in East Asia. In a similar way to Yan, David C. Kang concluded that in the twenty-first century East Asian nations are not balancing against China due to memories of Beijing as a benevolent hegemon: 'East Asian states view China's re-emergence as the gravitational centre of East Asia as natural.'[60] Such arguments were popular in the mid-2000s when China was engaged in a 'charm offensive' to woo its neighbours.[61] Yet Kang's thesis was proven wrong in 2009-11: after Beijing's provocative acts in the East and South China Seas, many East Asian states are actually balancing China's growing power by, among other things, strengthening their military ties with the United States. Or would Yan say that this confirms his thesis that political power is moral rather than military?

Public Intellectuals and Patriotic Worrying

The pre-Qin project's combination of interpretive humanities studies and rationalist social science risks alienating both sides of the positivist/post-positivist divide in the West. Yet, this mixing of cultural norms and scientific method is common in China. In their discussion of Chinese intellectual discourse, Thomas Metzger and Gloria Davies both note its strong normative character. 'China' is seen as a 'problem' that needs to be solved: 'Worrying about the problems that prevent China from attaining perfection, not only as a nation but also as an enduring civilization, is the kind of patriotic sentiment that one commonly encounters in the essays of Chinese intellectuals.'[62] This 'patriotic worrying' (*youhuan* 忧患) gives

[60] David C. Kang, *China Rising: Peace, Power and Order in East Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 4; also see David C. Kang, *East Asia Before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

[61] Joshua Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power Is Transforming the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

[62] Gloria Davies, *Worrying About China: The Language of Chinese Critical Inquiry* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 1.

intellectuals the moral obligation to frame problems and solutions in terms of China's national and civilizational perfection. It is not strange, then, that Yan closely ties antiquarian studies with public policy—it is actually his duty as a Chinese public intellectual to aid China's rise as a moral power.

Debates about Chinese culture and politics thus characteristically discuss what China can and should be, rather than what it is. This quest to perfect China entails what Metzger calls an 'epistemological optimism' that sees the world in terms of grand systems that evolve according to internal structures that have inherent laws. If worrying intellectuals can find the correct theory and method for understanding the world's logic of development, then all of China's problems will be solved, once and for all.[63] In this way, critical inquiry in China is both normative and positivistic, with a 'linguistic certitude' that the Truth is Out There. The moral obligation of intellectuals is to discover this Truth, save China from its imperfections, and thus re-establish China as the moral centre of the world. Davies points out that patriotic worrying's sharp focus on China as 'the problem' means that intellectuals rarely frame their considerations in terms of wider issues of humanity.[64] But the discussions in *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power* show how the horizons of patriotic worrying are expanding: the perfection of China is now closely linked to China's perfection of the world. Here the pre-Qin project's *wang*/*ba* explanation of the rise of great powers provides the correct reading of history, and thus the correct formula to guide China's rise, which thus ensures that it provides the greatest benefit to the rest of the world.

Likewise, the sharp focus on methodology in discussions of pre-Qin thought reflects this epistemological optimism. One of the pioneers of Chinese-style IR theory concluded that Chinese scholars needed to work harder on methodological issues;[65] Yan and others spend much time discussing the proper scientific method for building theory and analyzing texts. This is not simply a traditional Chinese research style that is completely different from the West; rather it combines the patriotic worrying of Confucian scholar-officials with the high modernist positivism that China's social scientists learned from their training in Marxian scientific socialism (and then their social science training in America).

The pre-Qin project thus fits well into Chinese intellectual debates. Yan is one of many public intellectuals who patriotically worry about China's

[63] Thomas Metzger, *Clouds Across the Pacific: Essays on the Clash between Chinese and Western Political Theories Today* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2005), pp. 21–31, 295; Gloria Davies, *Worrying About China*, p. 23.
[64] Gloria Davies, *Worrying About China*, p. 7; also see Liu Mingfu, *The China Dream*, p. 284.
[65] Song Xinning, 'Building International Relations Theory with Chinese Characteristics', *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 10, No. 26 (2001), pp. 61–74.

future direction. He is concerned that Beijing's stress on the material factors of economic development is warping Chinese values and the PRC's prospects for global success. Other public intellectuals ranging from liberals like Xu Jilin to military officers like Sen. Col. Liu Mingfu are likewise concerned about the rise of 'money-worship' in China's reform era.[66] But in analyzing this situation, Yan, Xu and Liu come to quite different conclusions. Liu, the author of *The China Dream: The Great Power Thinking and Strategic Positioning of China in the Post-American Age* (2010), warns that striving to be an economic superpower is a mistake; as a trading state, China risks being gobbled up like a 'plump lamb' by other military powers. To be a strong nation, Liu argues, a wealthy country needs to convert its economic success into military power. Rather than follow Deng Xiaoping's 'peace and development' policy to beat swords into ploughshares, Liu tells us that China needs to 'turn some ''money bags'' into ''ammunition belts''.'[67] By stressing that civilian economic development must serve military development, Liu is reviving the 'wealthy country, strong military' (*fuguo qiangbing* 富国强兵) mode of modernization mooted by Yan Fu at the turn of the twentieth century.[68] Liu's solution that focuses on military power thus could not be more different from the pre-Qin project; yet in other ways they are similar. As noted above, Yan thinks that a good state is run by talented ministers who are chosen by a moral leader; Liu likewise sees China's problems as a 'leadership crisis' of civilian cadres who are corrupt, mediocre and inflexible. After a detailed discussion of how civilian corruption brought down the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Liu proposes that Beijing solve its leadership crisis through better cadre training.[69] Hence although they get there on different paths, Yan and Liu come to the same policy-oriented conclusion that stresses the moral rectitude of the leadership.

Like Yan, Xu Jilin is concerned with problems of economic policy and the discourse of 'wealthy country, strong military'. Yet while Yan's job is to aid China's rise, Xu feels that China already has arrived as an economic power. But Xu wonders what Beijing should do with this new power: 'Since the rise of China is already recognized as a fact by the world, where will China go

[66] For a discussion of the role of public intellectuals in China, see Timothy Creek, 'Xu Jilin and the Thought Work of China's Public Intellectuals', *China Quarterly*, No. 186 (2006), pp. 401–20.

[67] Liu Mingfu, *The China Dream*, p. 244.

[68] See Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964). *Fuguo qiangbing* also is tied to the pre-Qin school of Legalism, which is largely absent from discussions in Yan Xuetong's *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*.

[69] Liu Mingfu, *The China Dream*, pp. 292–96; also see Frank Pieke, *The Good Communist*.

from here? As a world power, what kind of civilizational values will it show the world?'[70] While Liu seeks to rebalance (economic) wealth and (military) power, Xu thinks that the real choice is between promoting 'wealth and power' or 'civilization'. He chooses 'civilization'; but unlike historicists who look to the exceptionalism of China's ancient values, Xu looks to the future. He argues that China needs to pursue the global mainstream universal values of liberal democracy, human rights and social justice.

Like Xu (but unlike Liu), Yan is also interested in universal values. But rather than promote mainstream global values, which he would see as 'Western', Yan seeks to universalize Chinese values. Unfortunately, Yan is not very clear about which values he seeks to promote. At times he talks about the kingly way in terms of the global values of UN-style multilateralism and democracy (albeit a Chinese-style democracy dominated by the communist party). But generally, Yan seeks to universalize pre-Qin morality, without making clear what this morality entails other than saying that it does not involve military coercion or economic enticement. There is a similar vagueness in what Yan means by another of his key values: politics. In their discussion of the *Strategies of the Warring States*, Yan and Huang provide their clearest definition of political power: 'The term political power is modern; its corresponding terms in the ancient period are virtue, benevolence, the Way, justice, law, worthies, and sages.'[71] Unfortunately, this list of classical terms—which includes nearly all of China's ancient values—does not clearly distinguish political power from other forms of power and influence. Later, in his response to colleagues' comments, Yan states that the moral principles of China's 'foreign strategy should be different from those the United States stresses'.[72] This combination of vague positive statements of Chinese values and clear negative statements of what they are not, suggests that here political morality is a moving target, rather than a clearly defined value.

The negative formulation of political morality parallels the pre-Qin project's approach to being a public intellectual. For example, one of the goals of Liu's *The China Dream* is to promote the military as an interest group; as Christopher R. Hughes notes, 'Liu might have hit even more headlines around the world if he had given his book the title *Unhappy PLA*.'[73] And

[70] Xu Jilin, 'Pushi wenming, haishi Zhongguo jiazhi? Jin shinian zhongguo lishi zhuyi sichao zhi pipan' ('Universal Civilization, or Chinese Values? A Critique of the Chinese Historicism Trend over the Past Decade), *Kaifang shidai* (*Open Times*), No. 5 (2010), http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_702fad0c0100rcd2.html; Xu Jilin, 'Jueqi hou de Zhongguo jiang zouxiang hefang: cong Mading Yake de *Dang Zhongguo tongzhi shijie* tanqi' ('Which Direction Will a Post-rise China Go?: Discussing Martin Jacques's *When China Rules the World*), May 23, 2010, http://www.chinaelections.org/newsinfo.asp?newsid=188285.

[71] Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, p. 115.

[72] *Ibid*., p. 219.

[73] Christopher R. Hughes, 'In Case You Missed It: China Dream', *The China Beat*, April 5, 2010, http://www.thechinabeat.org/?cat=7.

indeed, in 2011 China's military budget increased by 12.7%, after rising only 7.4% the previous year. Rather than pursuing narrow sectoral interests like Liu, Xu uses his position as public intellectual to address big issues on behalf of what is best for the Chinese people—and for the people of the world. Xu thus offers a nuanced view of current discussions of China's future possibilities that are self-critical of many of Beijing's assumptions of greatness. Yan, however, takes for granted the moral goodness of China's rise and seeks to help policy-makers universalize these largely unexamined values. Hence these public intellectuals are addressing quite different publics: special interests (Liu), human interest (Xu), and national interest (Yan).

This instrumental view of political thought accords well with Yan's interest in working in a think thank that would advise the Chinese leadership. Curiously, Yan does not mention that he worked for a decade in CICIR (the China Institutes for Contemporary International Relations), the think tank for the Ministry of State Security, China's main intelligence organization. Perhaps he now wants to work in a think tank that is 'independent' of the state; but experience in the West shows that 'independent' think tanks are rarely independent in a broader sense: they are beholden to the views of their funders, who are often conservative. Yan probably hopes that independent think tanks would allow public intellectuals to better advise the government and shape policy.

Lastly, Yan's focus on external problems, rather than internal ones, may work among IR audiences in China; but for Yan's broader goal of pre-Qin thought gaining a wider global acceptance to be successful Chinese scholars need to use it to analyze their country's own challenges and problems.

Lost in Translation

Making the correct political and moral distinction between *wang* and *ba* is the main theme of this volume's collection of essays. Indeed, one of the main tasks of the book was to make these popular—but unwieldy—terms understandable to an Anglophone IR audience. While the authors employ the scientific method to analyze these technical terms, they are both highly moral. In this argument, *wang* is unquestionably *good*, while *ba* is thoroughly evil. The only time in the twentieth century that 'hegemon' has been used in a positive way in China was during the Cultural Revolution when Mao favourably compared his own ruthlessness to that of Qin Shihuang.

Since good and evil are self-evident here, it probably did not present much of an ethical problem when the editors changed the English translation of *wang* from 'the kingly way' to 'humane authority'. But this analytical distinction appears more like a propaganda formulation when Yan and his colleagues attach countries to these constants: China is always *wang*, while America is characteristically *ba*.

Having already pointed out the problems with translating *wang* as 'humane authority', it is necessary to note that translating *ba* as 'hegemony' also leads to confusion. While *ba* is thoroughly immoral in modern Chinese—involving the humiliation of a state and a people, according to Xu Jin[74]—hegemony means a number of things in English. Often it is descriptive, to neutrally identify the dominant power. Liberals think that this power determines and enforces the rules of the game, while the Gramscian notion of hegemony actually highlights how this dominance is always incomplete. Thus, when you say the United States is the 'hegemonic power', English-speakers probably think that it is big and powerful, while Chinese-speakers definitely think that it is immoral and evil. When the Chinese state tells us that it will never be 'hegemonic', it is not saying that it will not dominate; it is merely saying that it will never see itself as immoral—which, as experience shows, few states do.

Yan's method of distinguishing between *wang* and *ba* as complete opposites also has problems.[75] He quotes Mencius: 'Using force and pretending to benevolence is hegemon. . . . Using virtue and practicing benevolence is the sage king.'[76] But don't states characteristically present themselves as benevolent? And aren't there always others who think that such a state is not benevolent? Yan argues that 'The United States' policy of saying one thing and doing another is, in fact, seen by international society as hypocritical hegemony.'[77] Yet one could easily say the same thing about China: Beijing speaks of 'building a harmonious world', but its two closest allies—North Korea and Myanmar—are among the most morally problematic states in the world.[78] Because one person's moral certitude is another's hypocrisy, a mode of analysis that relies on a stable singular (and here Sinocentric) notion of morality does not take us very far. In other words, Yan's key *wang*/*ba* distinction begs more questions than it answers.

Actually, the politics of translation is a recurrent theme in China's engagement with other countries. In the nineteenth century, Southeast Asian countries often complained that Chinese officials repeatedly (mis)translated their missives of friendship into declarations of submission.[79] If China is truly looking for 'respect and admiration',[80] then texts by its top IR specialists should be more careful about the terms and distinctions that they employ.

74 Xu Jin, 'The Two Poles of Confucianism', p. 276.

75 As discussed below, at times Yan looks to a more complicated relation of *wang*, *ba* and *qiang*; but in general, and especially when discussing contemporary international relations, he presents *wang* and *ba* as opposites.

76 Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, p. 209.

77 *Ibid*., p. 219.

78 See Gilbert Rozman, *Chinese Strategic Thought Toward Asia* (New York: Palgrave, 2010), p. 124.

79 Anthony Reid, 'Introduction: Negotiating Asymmetry: Parents, Brothers, Friends and Enemies', in Anthony Reid and Yangwen Zheng, eds., *Negotiating Asymmetry: China's Place in Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010), p. 18.

80 Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, p. 180.

Frankly, we do not blame Yan and the other authors for such mistranslations. The conflicting understandings of hegemony are common throughout Chinese discourse, and the shift from 'kingly way' to 'humane authority' was likely instituted by the book's editors. If this is the case, they have done the book's authors a disservice. Rather than 'understanding China on its own terms', as the book series promises, this translation politics very literally—and deliberately—changes the 'terms of debate', and changes them in ways that do not encourage mutual understanding and trust—one of Beijing's core foreign policy objectives.

Audiences Beyond the Academy

The future Yan describes through his pre-Qin project is one whereby China will inevitably become a world power; but a 'true kingship' power, not a hegemonic one. In this tale, China's political power, based largely on the responsibility and moral virtue of its individual leaders, will peacefully bring about a new, and better, world order. In telling this story about China's future rise, Yan's pre-Qin project also addresses two key audiences beyond the academy. Yan is convinced that China's rise to superpower status is inevitable; yet there remain, for him, questions about how best to achieve this goal and, for many others, questions about what it will mean for the rest of the world. Thus, for Yan, the 'study of pre-Qin interstate political philosophy is an aid to reflecting on how to implement China's rise and to ask what kind of rising state it is to be'.[81]

First, Yan's pre-Qin project addresses the Chinese leadership, and how it can achieve China's 'national resurgence'. Yan states that the purpose of his work is 'to learn from pre-Qin thought so as to rethink the strategy of China's rise and avoid a Soviet style half-way collapse or a Japanese-style stagnation.'[82] It aims to provide a 'more effective strategy' for China's leaders to manage their country's 'peaceful rise'.[83] Second, and most notably in this English-language volume, Yan's pre-Qin project addresses the questions of many non-Chinese observers about what China's rise will mean for the world. Yan's project aims to justify China's rise and its future role in the world by painting a particularly rosy picture of the potential outcomes of that rise.[84] Yan argues that by studying pre-Qin thought 'we can reflect on *how China's rise can be of benefit* to the stability of the international order and the progress of international norms'.[85]

[81] *Ibid*., p. 216.
[82] *Ibid*., p. 218.
[83] *Ibid*., p. 69.
[84] *Ibid*., p. 23. Also see Hu Angang, *China in 2020: A New Type of Superpower* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2011).
[85] Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, p. 204, emphasis added.

Internal Audience: China's Leaders

For Yan, the views of pre-Qin thinkers on the nature of power in international politics is one of the key contributions pre-Qin thought can make to contemporary understandings of international politics, and should also have a major influence on the strategy used for China's rise. Yan draws on a number of pre-Qin texts to argue that political power must be taken more seriously by the Chinese leadership as the decisive element of a state's comprehensive power. Yan's main contention, however, is not with an overemphasis on military power but rather economic power. Encouraged by his Realist assumptions about international relations, he argues that a true kingship state must also be strong militarily, using a number of examples from pre-Qin history to justify his view.[86] Since, according to the *Strategies of the Warring States*, 'a state of single factor power cannot attain hegemony',[87] Yan is urging China's leaders to take a more balanced approach to building up China's power internationally. Yan is particularly concerned that China's foreign policy approach has until now been too focused on building up the country's material/economic power base, and has not focused enough on developing political power. Through this project, Yan aims to redress the balance in Chinese approaches to power; encouraging China's leaders to move beyond their narrow focus of securing a beneficial international environment for economic growth to now focus on actively increasing China's political power in the interstate system. Once again, Yan uses historical examples to 'prove Xunzi's theory that political power is more important than economic power in global diplomatic affairs'.[88]

Yan has made similar arguments elsewhere, consistently appealing to China's leaders to take more seriously the goal of improving political power. Yan argues that political power is increased through (i) establishing a harmonious society at home and (ii) improving China's international image: 'Resolving domestic social problems . . . is also the foundation of improving international influence. When other countries believe that a nation is heading in the right direction towards international progress and human justice, the country gains international status.'[89] Yan therefore highlights the importance of the current leadership's 'harmonious society' agenda for China's future rise. Yan suggests a number of other potential strategies for improving China's international image. According to pre-Qin thinking,

[86] *Ibid*., pp. 70–196.
[87] *Ibid*., p. 114.
[88] Yan Xuetong, 'Xun Zi's Thoughts on International Politics and Their Implications', p. 145; the same passage in the book has been reworded to say: '*help up to understand* Xun Zi's idea that in foreign affairs political strength is more useful than economic strength'. Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, p. 81.
[89] Yan Xuetong, 'The Path for China to Increase Its "Soft Power"', *Zhongguo yu shijie guancha* (*China and World Affairs*), Vol. 2, No. 1 (2006).

a true kingship state's power of attraction lies not in its wealth but in political ideas and in the model it can provide for societal development.[90] For China to become a true kingship state, therefore, its strategic goal must be 'to present to the world a better social role model'.[91] Yan and some of the other contributors to this project have highlighted the idea of a 'Chinese model' of development or a 'Beijing Consensus' that is beginning to become popular internationally.[92] Many argue that the 'Chinese model' already offers an alternative to the Western neo-liberal model of industrialization for developing countries today.[93] Nevertheless, Yan believes that discussions of the benefits of a 'Chinese model' are limited purely to economic aspects of development, and that the Party-State must more actively promote the social and political aspects of Chinese leadership in the world.[94] He argues for a greater role in improving China's image diplomatically.

Yan identifies the area of overseas aid as one example of China's benevolent approach to foreign policy that is helping to boost its political power internationally. This example also demonstrates the fundamental difference between China (as a *wang* state) and the West (*ba* states) in its approach to foreign policy. Yan argues that, while the total value of its aid to African nations is significantly less than that from the United States or Europe, the political capital that is gained through that aid is substantially higher. This is because China's aid is given freely which, Yan argues, demonstrates the greater benevolence of the Chinese state.[95] While Western aid discourse also employs moral arguments, they are part of a logic of conditionality that seeks to change the human rights and ecological behaviour of aid-receiving states.

External Audience: Reassure the West

The book itself, and its widespread promotion, can also be viewed as an attempt by Yan and his co-authors to increase China's political power internationally. By presenting the idea of China as a benevolent hegemon or 'humane authority' in the world, the book aims to reassure Western observers of China's good intentions. Yan believes that 'China's rise cannot avoid influencing the international security system';[96] the question is what kind of influence it will have. His research into pre-Qin thought claims to

[90] Xu Jin, 'Mencius' Thoughts on Benevolent Governance of the World', p. 128.
[91] Yan Xuetong, 'Xun Zi's Thoughts on International Politics and Their Implications', p. 159.
[92] See Pan Wei, ed., *Zhongguo moshi: jiedu renmin gongheguo de 60 nian* (*The China Model: Understanding 60 Years of the People's Republic*) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2010).
[93] Yang Chuanhui, 'Confucian Thought on Obtaining the World Through Benevolence', p. 84.
[94] In *The China Model*, Pan Wei actually discusses economic, social and political models.
[95] Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, p. 102.
[96] *Ibid*., p. 105.

demonstrate that China's rise will have a stabilizing rather than a destabilizing effect on the interstate system.

Yan writes that 'according to pre-Qin thought, China's rise may have two different strategic goals, namely, to establish either a humane authority or hegemony'.[97] This distinction between humane authority and hegemonic authority is evident in each of the chapters in this volume and comes across as a key theme of the project overall. The terms even feature in the title of the Chinese-language volume at the heart of the research project, *Thoughts of World Leadership and Their Implications*. Thus Yan is setting up a clear-cut choice between the bad model of leadership that the US has largely followed since the Second World War, and the good model of leadership that China will follow as it becomes more powerful (economically, politically and militarily too). Yan includes a number of examples of the two different leadership styles in action, arguing that China's historical legacy and ancient philosophy of world leadership ensure that it will follow the positive model of humane authority in the future and not the negative one of hegemonic authority.

This opposition, however, is not strictly accurate. As one of Yan's earlier volumes reveals, not all of the pre-Qin thinkers saw the two as completely opposing terms. Guanzi, for example, did not see hegemony and true kingship as complete opposites, but rather saw establishing hegemony as one step in the process towards the ultimate goal of establishing true kingship.[98] Adopting this view would imply that China may seek hegemony in the world if only as a stepping-stone to the ultimate prize of humane authority.

Yan's project also brings together a number of examples to demonstrate the opposition to the use of force for gaining hegemony found in ancient Chinese thinking. Pre-Qin thinking demonstrates that true kingship cannot be attained through strength or plotting, but also relies on the Mandate of Heaven (*tianming* 天命).[99] Many of the pre-Qin thinkers are opposed to expansionary war as a means of gaining world leadership, and they are highlighted in Yan's work on pre-Qin thought. Even in the early Spring and Autumn period when war was commonplace, Guanzi advised the rulers of the time to avoid over-reliance on force, urging them to rely instead on forming alliances and mutual support.[100] Yan argues that Chinese

[97] *Ibid.*, p. 204.
[98] Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin, eds., *Thoughts on World Leadership and Their Implications*, p. 2.
[99] Xu Jin, 'Summary of Main Schools of Pre-Qin Thought on Inter-state Politics', p. 11; Wang Haibin, 'Inter-state Political Thought in the Lu Spring and Autumn Annals', p. 69; Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin, *Pre-Qin Chinese Thought on Foreign Relations*, p. 64; Qi Haixia, 'Laozi de xiaoguo guamin sixiang' (Laozi's Thinking on 'Small State, Few People'), Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin, eds., *Thoughts on World Leadership and Their Implications*, p. 67.
[100] Liu Jiangyong, 'Guanzi's Thinking on Hegemony', p. 45.

leaders today will follow a similar model in international diplomacy, and therefore should not be considered a threat.

The opposition to offensive warfare is most evident in the writings of Mozi, which Yan highlights as an example for today's China to emulate. Mozi's philosophy is centred around ten key concepts, including *feigong* (非攻), which can be loosely translated as 'oppose aggression'. *Feigong* did not, however, signal opposition to all war, but rather to 'wars of conquest'. It permitted and even encouraged arming against 'aggressors'.[101] Likewise, although interventions were common during the Spring and Autumn period, they were justified by pre-Qin thinkers because they were largely motivated by a desire to maintain the status quo rather than encourage expansionary ambition.[102] Therefore, even in Yan's reading of pre-Qin thought, one *cannot* find a Chinese tradition of pacifism. Nevertheless, Yan argues that this longstanding tradition of opposing expansionary war or military action for the purposes of gaining a position of hegemony in the world demonstrates that today's rising China will be a force for peace and not disorder in the international system.

Beyond the narrative itself, the manner in which it is told is also reflective of Yan's goal of using the book to increase China's political power internationally. As mentioned above, in a departure from the standard definitions this volume introduces a new translation for the term *wang* (王) leadership; that of 'humane authority' and in the Translation Notes describes the term as the opposite of *ba* (霸) leadership or 'hegemonic authority'. This translation decision, highlighted at the beginning of the volume, is significant because it affects the tone of the entire text. Substituting 'humane authority' for 'kingship' gives the reader a somewhat different impression of what China's future rising might mean. This is not the only term to have been revised for the book's new (Anglophone) audience; a number of small linguistic changes can be found throughout. For example, there are a number of differences between the translations used in Yan's study of Xunzi in Chapter 2 and the version of the same essay that was published in this journal in 2008. The term 'king' has been removed and replaced with 'ruler';[103] likewise, 'kingship' becomes 'humane authority'.[104] The title of Xunzi's essays are also amended such that 'On the Regulations of a King' (*Wangzhi* 王制) becomes 'Humane governance', and 'Of Kings and

[101] Li Bin, 'Insights into the Mozi and their Implications for the Study of Contemporary International Relations', *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (2009), p. 449.

[102] Chen Qi and Huang Yuxing, '"Zuozhuan" zhong de guojiajian ganshe sixiang' ('Thoughts on Inter-state Intervention in the "Chronicle of Zuo"'), Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin, eds., *Thoughts on World Leadership and Their Implications*, p. 203.

[103] Yan Xuetong, 'Xun Zi's Thoughts on International Politics and Their Implications', p. 137; Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, p. 73.

[104] Yan Xuetong, 'Xun Zi's Thoughts on International Politics and Their Implications', p. 149; Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, p. 86.

Lords-Protector' (*Wangba* 王霸) becomes 'Humane Authority and Hegemony'.[105] Xunzi's third leadership type *qiang* (强) originally translated as 'might', is revised here to 'tyranny',[106] perhaps to make it seem even less desirable. Although these linguistic changes are small and some may argue merely semantic, their impact is significant because they influence the tone and overall impression of the book.

In addition to differences in translation, Yan also reinterprets a number of key pre-Qin concepts to make them more palatable to a Western audience. For example, Xunzi's belief in the necessity of hierarchy for stability in the international system is explored in some depth by Yan. Nevertheless, Yan is quick to reject the possibility of any sort of return to the tribute system in the future.[107] Yan argues instead that Xunzi's notion of hierarchy can be redefined in a modern context as differentiated responsibilities in the international system. Favouring equity over equality, Yan argues that a greater emphasis on allocating responsibility according to capability (in other words, larger and more powerful states taking on responsibility for smaller and less able ones) will lead to greater stability globally.[108] He looks to the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization as positive examples of a working hierarchical system;[109] but these international organizations are regularly criticized as unfair just because they are hierarchical and not egalitarian. Unfortunately, Yan does not explain how his new pre-Qin inspired system will avoid reproducing such inequitable patterns of interstate power.

Conclusion

Chinese voices are certainly enriching discussions of international relations theory in interesting ways. Reading the work of Yan and like-minded social scientists who recently have taken an interest in classical Chinese ideas makes one think of Yan Fu, the famous 'idea entrepreneur' from the turn of the twentieth century. Yan Fu, who translated key European philosophical, economic and sociological texts into Chinese, sought to discover the 'secret' of Western wealth and power. This quest eventually led to an important shift in Chinese intellectual politics from 'preserving tradition' (*baojiao* 保教)—i.e. Confucianism—to 'preserving the state' (*baoguo* 保国).[110]

Yan Xuetong's work, which values Chinese ideals, thus seems to be going in the opposite direction from Yan Fu's. Even so, Yan Xuetong and his

[105] Yan Xuetong, 'Xun Zi's Thoughts on International Politics and Their Implications', p. 135; Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, p. 70.
[106] Yan Xuetong, 'Xun Zi's Thoughts on International Politics and Their Implications', p. 151; Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, p. 89.
[107] Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, p. 204.
[108] *Ibid*., p. 105.
[109] *Ibid*., p. 96.
[110] See Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, pp. 17–19.

colleagues, who are all social scientists, now are dealing with classical Chinese texts that are almost as exotic to them as *The Wealth of Nations* was for Yan Fu. Indeed, both Yans take a complex approach that is critical of both European and Chinese texts. Moreover, they are both acting as public intellectuals – but not in the service of disinterested inquiry; rather, both are exploring exotic ideas for the instrumental goal of building China's state power. Ideas, whether they come from Adam Smith or the *Xunzi*, thus are a means to the end. But to what end? Yan Fu worked in an era when the break-up of China was a distinct possibility; Yan Xuetong, on the other hand, is working at a time of growing geopolitical power for Beijing. National interest in the two eras, thus, is very different. After reading *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power* the key question—What are Beijing's goals now?—remains unanswered.

The result of Yan Fu's long and productive career should give us pause. He concluded that social Darwinism was not just the best description of the struggle among societies in his time; he also took the 'survival of the fittest' of nation-states as his normative goal, making the strengthening of the Chinese state his primary objective. This was part of the sense that international politics was a 'race war' that was prevalent among Chinese intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth century.

The idea of a 'race war' has re-emerged in strategic and popular texts in the last decade.[111] It follows from arguments about China rising as a pure civilization-state that is completely different from Western nation-states. This discourse, which Callahan elsewhere calls 'Sino-speak', asserts China as a singular, unique, exceptional civilization that offers moral solutions to the world's political problems.[112] Although the pre-Qin project takes a slightly different tack, its similarly unified conception of political morality risks narrowing IR debates to a gross categorization of states as either *wang* or *ba*.

Instead of opening up new alternatives to 'build world harmony', the pre-Qin project thus appears to support the idea that it is the duty of a great power to 'harmonize the world'—whether the world likes it or not.

[111] Liu Mingfu, *The China Dream*, p. 22; Jiang Rong, *Lang tuzheng* (*Wolf Totem*)(Wuhan: Changjiang wenyi chubanshe, 2004). This point comes out most clearly in Jiang's appendix 'Rational Exploration: A Lecture and Dialogue on the Wolf Totem', pp. 364–408.

[112] See William A. Callahan, 'Sino-speak: Chinese Exceptionalism and the Politics of History', *Journal of Asian Studies* (forthcoming).