



Pre-Qin Philosophy and China's Rise Today

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Since 1978, when China implemented its policy of reform and opening, the field of international relations studies in China has made great progress in introducing international relations theory as developed by Western scholars. There has been no systematic international relations theory created by Chinese scholars, however. For this reason, in 2005 I began to read what the pre-Qin masters had to say about interstate relations and use this material to look for a way to develop a new theory. Although no systematic theory has yet been created, the few articles I have written about Chinese interstate political thought of the pre-Qin era have caught the attention of my colleagues. In this essay I wish to address five issues: (1) why I have studied this field, (2) how I summarize it, (3) how to understand it, (4) what lessons can be drawn from it, and (5) how these can be related to China's rise. I submit my views to the critique of my colleagues.

THE PURPOSE OF STUDYING PRE-QIN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Some international colleagues think that my purpose in reviving pre-Qin interstate philosophy is to create a Chinese theory of international relations. This is to misunderstand the reasons why I am involved in this field. Basic characteristics of science are objectivity, verifiability, and openness.

These features determine that a scientific theory must be universal. Because I believe that scientific international relations theory is also universal, ever since my first foray into the thought of the pre-Qin philosophers I have had no intention of creating a “Chinese school” of international relations theory. Rather I have three aims: to enrich current international relations theory, to deepen understanding of international political realities, and to draw lessons for policy today.

To Enrich Current International Relations Theory

Over the past quarter century, both the government and academia in China have been inspired by a strong desire to establish a Chinese international relations theory. In 1987, Chinese scholars meeting in Shanghai held the first international relations theory conference at which the goal of creating a Chinese international relations theory was mooted.¹ Given the lack of any important new theory from abroad, in 2004 at the third international relations theory conference, also in Shanghai, it was suggested that there was a duty to create a Chinese international relations theory. It was even said that “the creation of a Chinese school has already become our historic mission.”² After this, the number of articles dealing with the need to establish a “Chinese school” of international relations theory grew and the government’s attitude toward this goal became increasingly supportive. The vice-director of the Foreign Office of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, Qiu Yuanping, wrote an article about the necessity of constructing a Chinese international relations theory, in which she said, “As a rapidly rising major power, it is unacceptable that China does not have its own theory.”³

Faced with the mounting calls to establish a “Chinese school,” I had no choice but to ask a few questions myself: Why is it that in the twenty-five years or so since 1987, while the call for creating a Chinese international relations theory has been at a peak, there have been no Chinese scholars who have created any systematic theory? Even if now or in the future it were possible to create such a theory, would it be called the “Chinese school”? Why is it that the various schools of thought of the pre-Qin times, such as Confucianism, Daoism, Mohism, and Legalism, have not

been grouped under the name “Chinese school”? I wrote a number of articles discussing why it is not possible to produce a Chinese school of international relations theory.⁴ After several years spent in the study of pre-Qin interstate political philosophy, I am even more convinced that looking to pre-Qin thought to develop and enrich international relations theory is possible, but it is not possible to create a Chinese school of international relations theory. It is also possible to draw modern international relations theory and pre-Qin thought together to develop a new theory. But to view current international relations theory as Western and to keep a distance from it and set one's sights on establishing a different “Chinese school” of theory would be a waste of effort and a fruitless task.

The understandings of interstate politics of the pre-Qin philosophers and of people today are different, but this distinction is a reflection not of a difference of thought between East and West but rather a difference of understanding of international affairs. In other words, the interstate political philosophy of the pre-Qin era and contemporary international relations theory are both universal. The pre-Qin era is more than two thousand years in the past and some of the views of that time may still be used to explain today's realities, which goes to show that the views of that time were indeed strongly universal and very close to objective laws. Hence it is possible, by understanding pre-Qin thought from a universal angle, to fortify the explanatory force of current theory. Ever since I started to study pre-Qin interstate political philosophy I have sought to develop a new theory based on combining pre-Qin thought and contemporary international relations theory rather than to use pre-Qin thought as a basis for creating a new theory to replace contemporary international relations theory.

To Deepen Understanding of International Political Realities

Among the criticisms of the study of pre-Qin thought, two stand out: first, that the authenticity of the authors, text, and date of the pre-Qin works are disputed and, given these doubts about authenticity, any results based on them are unreliable; and second, that relations among the feudal lords of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods and relations

among nation-states are different, and hence the experience drawn from the former cannot be used in the world today. Neither of these criticisms, however, can deny, from a logical point of view, that research into pre-Qin thought may deepen our understanding of today's international politics.

First, the authenticity of these works has no bearing on our ability to draw lessons from them. Even if we grant that the works of the pre-Qin masters were rewritten in the early Han Dynasty, they would still have been written more than two thousand years ago and the ideas in them reflect what people thought about interstate politics at that time or what they thought of politics in the pre-Qin era. What in all this can serve to explain today's international political reality can be accepted wholly and seen as axioms or principles of international politics. This kind of understanding can help to deepen modern international relations theory. As Hans J. Morgenthau observed, "Human nature, in which the laws of politics have their roots, has not changed since the classical philosophies of China, India, and Greece endeavored to discover these laws."⁵ In other words, what is both ancient and suited to the present is the only sure foundation for creating a new theory. As for what in pre-Qin thought cannot be applied to explain today's international politics, we may see this as a particular understanding applicable to a particular international system. This kind of information can assist us in identifying the specific principles applicable to different international systems.

Second, the history of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods can provide us with many instructive examples. In fact, it is not just the relations among Chinese states in that period that were different from international relations today, but also relations among ancient European states. Yet no one raises any doubts about taking examples from the historical experience set out in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* to interpret events in contemporary international relations. That book records the wars between the ancient Greek city-states, yet contemporary realist theoreticians do indeed draw much of their thinking from it and they have created a theoretical system of thought. Thucydides' maxim "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must" has become the most frequently quoted saying in contemporary international relations theory.⁶ In fact, there are many similarities between Chinese

interstate politics of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods and contemporary international politics, such as: both are anarchical systems, each state has an independent military force, and at the level of the system no power has a monopoly on military force. By the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, the binding force of the norms of interstate conduct determined by the Zhou court was weaker than that of United Nations norms in the twenty-first century. Hence, whether considered from the viewpoint of the thoughts expressed in Chinese historical documents or of the similarities between the interstate system of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods and the contemporary international system, rediscovery of pre-Qin interstate thought can assist us in developing and enriching current international relations theory.

Furthermore, the differences among the interstate system of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, that of ancient Europe, and that of today's world provide us with new conditions for developing new theories. Contemporary international relations theory has developed from a basis in European history and European political philosophy. Comparisons of the differences among the three systems and the differences between pre-Qin thought and contemporary international relations theory can assist us in correcting the errors and filling in the lacunae of contemporary international relations theory. For instance, Barry Buzan and Richard Little created their theory of international systems by comparing international relations in different regions of the world.⁷

To Draw Lessons for Policy Today

As a political scientist, my purpose in studying pre-Qin interstate political thought is not to understand the past so much as to draw lessons for the present, especially for the great task of China's rise. Discussion of the authenticity of the pre-Qin works and the authenticity of the historical events they refer to is a task for historians, not the reason why political scientists study ancient documents. In the twenty-first century, China faces the historic test of success or failure in its rise to becoming a super-power, while the world is faced with the uncertainty that this might bring. A study of pre-Qin interstate political philosophy may provide guidance

for Chinese foreign policy as well as for the world. From China's point of view, we can draw on the experience of success or failure of rising powers from pre-Qin thought. From the point of view of the world as a whole, 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.

According to pre-Qin thought, China's rise may have two different strategic goals, namely, to establish either a humane authority or hegemony. The former is a comparatively harmonious international system; the latter is the more commonly seen international system. Similarly, the world is faced with two options during China's rise: either to establish a new type of international order or to repeat an American-style hegemonic order. The establishment of a new international order requires changing not only the international power structure but also international norms.

Drawing on the lessons of pre-Qin interstate political philosophy does not necessarily lead us to exalt or restore the tribute system that was once in place in East Asia. First, scientific progress has already meant that the tribute system has lost its material base. Contemporary international communications do not need to draw support from the tribute system. Air transportation enables the leaders of major powers to meet several times a year and modern transportation has led to international commerce becoming a daily business. Hence, the tribute system is obsolete. Second, the idea of sovereign equality among nations has become a universal norm of the contemporary world and it cannot be replaced with the hierarchical degrees of the tribute system. Third, each of the pre-Qin schools of thought had its own idea of the tribute system. There was no one common view. Hence, drawing lessons from pre-Qin thought does not necessarily mean moving in the direction of a tribute system.

A WAY OF UNDERSTANDING THE PRE-QIN PHILOSOPHERS

The classification of the levels of analysis to be applied to the pre-Qin masters is a powerful academic exercise, but one that has difficulty in reaching consensus. First, the pre-Qin masters all analyze a given problem

at each of the three levels of the system, the organization, and the individual. Second, their analyses of the cause of war and of how to make peace may be at two different levels. From a methodological angle this is a perfectly normal phenomenon because it is universally accepted that many causes may produce the same effect. Many different causes can lead to the same sickness and many kinds of therapeutic technique can heal the same illness. If in studying the analytical levels of the pre-Qin masters we use different kinds of standards, then our understandings may diverge. For example, analyzing the causes of war may lead to different results than analyzing the causes of peace.

Lack of uniformity in classification of levels of analysis can easily create different classifications. Yang Qianru and I differ in the analytical levels we apply to the masters. She classifies them into four categories, namely, the humane way (which is the starting point for Confucius and Mencius), the hegemonic way (which is the starting point for Guanzi and Xunzi), Laozi's and Hanfeizi's idea of the union of opposites, and Mozi's idea of transformation by virtue.⁸ The basic difference between Dr. Yang's classification and mine is that we use different standards. I rely on the three levels of analysis set forth by Kenneth J. Waltz. Currently, this standard of analysis is widely used by scholars of international studies. Dr. Yang creates her own new system of classification, which differs from Waltz's; hence, our classifications of the pre-Qin masters are different. Moreover, the principles of Dr. Yang's four levels of analysis are inconsistent. She differentiates Confucius, Mencius, Guanzi, Xunzi, and Mozi on the basis of their political stance, but classifies Laozi and Hanfeizi according to their way of thinking. Inconsistency in the principles of classification means that the classifications themselves are unclear.

Xu Jin thinks that the analytical method of Xunzi should be grouped with Mencius at the level of the individual. His argument is correct. Xunzi is not as consistent in his view as Mencius is, however. Xunzi sometimes also looks at the cause of conflict from the level of the social system. In an important passage he argues, "The life of human beings cannot be without communities. If there are communities without distinctions, then there will be conflict, and if conflict then disorder, and if disorder then poverty. Hence, the failure to make distinctions is the bane of human life,

whereas having distinctions is the basic good of all under heaven.”⁹ In line with the phrase “the ruler is the key to the management of distinctions,”¹⁰ Dr. Xu classifies Xunzi’s analysis as on the level of the individual. I think that Xunzi is a dualist who combines internal and external factors. He thinks that the internal cause of war is that human nature is evil and the external cause is the lack of distinctions in society, and it is only when the two come together that war erupts. In his criticism of Mencius’s theory of the goodness of human nature, Xunzi makes human nature a constant.¹¹ Therefore, he takes the norms for making distinctions as a variable. If we separate the analytical levels of Xunzi by taking a variable as the standard, it is much more meaningful than if we make our classification from the angle of a constant, because a constant does not change and hence it is not adapted to the methodological role of an independent variable. For instance, neorealism also acknowledges that a cause of war is the pursuit of profit by individuals and states, but this school thinks that both are constant. Neorealists understand the cause of war from the angle of the variable of the international configuration. Therefore, this school belongs to the analytical level of the system rather than that of the individual or of the organization.¹²

I classified the philosophical viewpoints of the pre-Qin masters into the three categories of conceptual determinism, material determinism, and the dualist combination of both. Some scholars have other views of the actual categories to be used. For instance, Yang Qianru disagrees with my classification of Laozi’s philosophy as conceptual determinism because to a certain extent other schools of thought—Confucian, Legalist, Mohist, Militarist, Yin-Yang, and Guanzi—inherited some of Laozi’s ideas. The fact that Laozi’s views were used by other schools, however, does not prove that Laozi’s philosophy does not belong to conceptual determinism. Confucianism and Mohism are conceptual determinist theories, and that they inherited some ideas from Laozi simply proves that they are all conceptual determinists. Guanzi, Xunzi, and the Yin-Yang school are dualists who combine concepts and matter. That they accepted some ideas from Laozi simply proves that dualists do not reject the role of concepts, but this does not prove that Laozi is not a conceptual determinist. As for the Militarist school and Legalist personages such as Shang Yang and the

first emperor of Qin who stress the role of matter, there are also records of them discussing the way of humane authority, which simply shows that they have their own view of the way of humane authority; it does not prove that they accept Laozi's ideas. Still less does it prove that Laozi is not a conceptual determinist. This is like saying that advocates of celibacy may discuss marriage, but this does not prove that they accept the idea of marriage and the family.

Dr. Xu quite reasonably thinks that Xunzi is a conceptual determinist because he regards the idea of the ruler as the determining factor in the future of a state. Nevertheless, Xunzi's analysis of social conflict is a combination of concept, matter and system. For instance, Xunzi says, "When the power exercised by two people is equal and they want the same thing and goods cannot satisfy them, then there will be conflict. Conflict will lead to disorder and disorder to poverty."¹³ This passage sees the cause of conflict as lying in the three variables of social status, evil desires, and lack of material goods. Evil desires may be explained as a conceptual factor, social status as a systemic factor, and the lack of material goods as a material factor. Many historians of philosophy think that Xunzi combines Confucianism and Legalism, which from one point of view shows that Xunzi is a moderate conceptual determinist. At least he places less emphasis than Mencius does on the role of concepts.

Dr. Xu agrees with the explanation of Mencius's idea of the goodness of human nature, according to which Mencius did not argue that human nature was originally good but rather that the mind has good tendencies, which can result in good actions. In fact this explanation cannot paper over the deficiencies in Mencius's theory of human nature. First, the theory that the mind has good tendencies that can result in good actions does not exclude the twin possibilities that the mind lacks good tendencies but a person can still do good, or that a person whose mind has good tendencies may perform bad actions. In other words, whether the mind has good tendencies has no relationship to whether good is done. Second, one tendency of the mind may be to good and another to evil and hence which plays the role of motivation is wholly dependent on external circumstances. From the point of view of methodology, the nature of the mind has become a constant and is no longer a variable. Xunzi thinks that the

greatest deficiency of Mencius's theory of the goodness of human nature is that it does not differentiate between nature and custom. He thinks that nature is *a priori*, whereas custom is *a posteriori*; the former is bad, whereas the latter is good.¹⁴ Xunzi's idea that nature is evil and custom is good is also very deficient because there is a difference in the quality of a person's *a posteriori* merit. His idea that human nature is *a priori* and custom is *a posteriori* is worth learning from, however. From a methodological point of view, if we but acknowledge that the natural factors in society that bring about violent conflict are the same, then we can analyze what kind of social factors are beneficial to suppressing violence and what factors bring about violence. Policy makers' understanding of international relations is not *a priori* but *a posteriori*. The differences in their views are largely determined by the differences in the circumstances of their *a posteriori* life rather than by differences generated from *a priori* nature. Seen in this way, Mencius's theory of the goodness of human nature is unscientific and therefore cannot serve as the premise for creating a scientific theory of international relations.

A WAY OF DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN HUMANE AUTHORITY AND HEGEMONY

In the discussions of interstate relations by the pre-Qin masters the central theme is humane authority or hegemony. Ever since Mencius distinguished the two in terms of their basic nature, people have made even more qualifications to this distinction. Yang Qianru thinks that, according to the way of thinking of pre-Qin people, humane authority and hegemony were mutually linked and were not opposed to each other. The pre-Qin masters do not disagree that there is a mutual relationship between humane authority and hegemony, but on whether the two are opposed, different schools have different opinions. In chapter 1, I introduced the views of seven pre-Qin thinkers regarding humane authority and hegemony. Of these, Laozi, Confucius, Mozi, and Hanfeizi do not distinguish the two as having different features, but Guanzi, Mencius, and Xunzi do, especially Mencius, who stresses that the two differ in essence.

Mencius says, "Using force and pretending to benevolence is the hegemon. The hegemon will certainly have a large state. Using virtue and practicing benevolence is the sage king. The sage king does not rely on having a large territory."¹⁵ Apart from this, pre-Qin thinkers do not differ on the features shared by humane authority and hegemony; rather, the key to the differences among these thinkers lies in the features humane authority and hegemony do not share. This point warns us that when today we study humane authority and hegemony in the pre-Qin period, the stress should be placed on the differences between the two rather than on what they share.

Is the difference between humane authority and hegemony one of nature or of degree? This is a topic worthy of study. Wang Rihua thinks that among the concepts of the pre-Qin philosophers, humane authority and hegemony differ in grade. His judgment is in accord with the truth, but it remains to be seen if the difference in grade is one of degree or of nature. Xu Jin realizes that the key difference in Mencius's and Xunzi's understandings of hegemony lies in their points of view. Mencius thinks that the two differ in nature: humane authority aims at benevolence and justice, whereas hegemony seeks power though claiming to practice benevolence and justice. Xunzi thinks that the difference between the two is one of degree. Hegemony also has benevolence and justice, but the level of these virtues is lower than in humane authority. I think that an understanding of the difference in the views of hegemony of the pre-Qin philosophers can help us to clarify the distinction between humane authority and hegemony and their differing influences on the international system.

Wang Rihua holds that the political hegemonic theory of ancient China maintains that factors at the domestic level have a determinative impact on factors at the international level. His judgment is correct, but it may mislead the reader into thinking that political hegemonic theory is a form of internal-factor determinism. When pre-Qin philosophers see political power as the core factor in hegemonic power, they mean that the fundamental cause of the uneven development of power lies in changes in the strength of leadership of governments. As a factor, however, political power, when seen from one's own state's point of view, is at the domestic level, though if it is viewed from the point of view of other states it

becomes a factor at the international level. In other words, Barack Obama's inauguration, which led to a foreign policy different from that of George W. Bush and increased American political power, is a domestic factor. But for China, an increase in the international political mobilization of the United States is an international factor, because an increase in the United States' political power means a relative reduction in China's political power. Among the pre-Qin philosophers, Guanzi's view of this issue is very typical. He says, "The ruler has the Way; hegemons and sage kings have their opportunities. When one's own state is reformed and neighboring states lack the Way, this is capital for hegemons and sage kings." And again, "That by which the former sage kings ruled was that what the neighboring states did was not correct." In other words, China's pre-Qin thinkers' view of hegemony had already developed the concept of relative power in terms of international politics. When Zhu Zhiwu says, "The advantages of your neighbors are your disadvantages, O Prince," he is expressing a typical understanding of power in international politics.¹⁶

People later viewed Mencius and Xunzi as important Confucian thinkers, but Xunzi was very critical of Mencius and hence the differences between the two have become an important area of scholarly research. Xu Jin notes that in actual international politics, China, like Mencius, is opposed to hegemony, whereas the United States, like Xunzi, concentrates on the strategic credibility required for hegemony. Xu holds that the origin of the different attitudes toward hegemony of China and the United States, as of Mencius and Xunzi, lies in different definitions of hegemony. Seen from the specialized field of international studies, the term *hegemony* in English has no negative connotations. It means that the influence or power of a given state is much greater than that of other states.¹⁷ It is obvious that the different political standpoints with regard to hegemony of China and the United States are influenced by the different meanings of the word *hegemony* in the two languages, but I think it is not simply a semantic issue. It is much more influenced by their different international statuses. Since the end of World War II in 1945, the United States has always enjoyed hegemony, whereas since 1840, China has repeatedly suffered from invasions by Western powers. China looks at hegemony from the point of view of the political justness of the international

order, whereas the United States looks at hegemony from the point of view of the stability of the international order. In reading *Mencius* and *Xunzi* we realize that Mencius evaluates hegemony according to whether its political goals are right or not,¹⁸ whereas Xunzi assesses hegemony in terms of the stability of the international order.

Dr. Xu holds that "there is a certain plausibility in Xunzi's using the failure of a state as large as Chu to attain all under heaven and comparing this with the territories of the kings Tang and Wu as proof that hard power is not important to humane authority." I think that if Xunzi is arguing that a state's power being greater than that of others does not necessarily mean that it can attain humane authority, then this logic is sound. But when he argues that the scale of a state's power is unrelated to its attaining humane authority, his logic is unsound. The weak occasionally defeat the strong and there are shifts in the center of international politics. Both these phenomena are often seen in international politics, but they do not prove that the scale of power has no bearing on attaining world leadership. The uneven development of power is a process and attaining humane authority or hegemony is just a process in which the contrast of power undergoes a shift. When the kings Tang and Wu were initially opposed to Jie of the Xia and Zhòu of the Shang, respectively, their hard power was indeed inferior to that of Jie and Zhòu, but when they ultimately won this battle, their hard power exceeded that of the defeated Xia and Shang dynasties. In other words, if we assess their power at the moment when King Tang of the Shang and King Wu of the Zhou ultimately attained humane authority, their hard power was the strongest within the system at that time. Similarly, when China's civil war began in 1946, the hard power of the Nationalist Party (KMT) was greater than that of the Communist Party (CCP). But in 1949, when the Communist Party acceded to the government of the state, its hard power surpassed that of the Nationalists.

A humane authority under heaven relies on its ultrapowerful moral force to maintain its comprehensive national power in first place in the system. Its hard power may not be the strongest at the time, but the level of its hard power cannot be too low. From a historical point of view, a state that is able to attain leadership of the system, whatsoever its nature, must have hard power that can be ranked among the top class. It is unthinkable

that a state could attain humane authority under heaven relying purely on morality and hard power of the lowest class. In the international politics of the twenty-first century, the importance of the area of territory ruled has declined as a factor in gaining world leadership, but a population of more than two hundred million does play an important role. In other words, there is no way that a state with a population of less than two hundred million can become the leading state of the contemporary international system. Even if after the Cold War there was the idea of one super-power with several powerful satellites, including states such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan, and Russia with populations of less than two hundred million, in the twenty-first century these states have no possibility of becoming the leading states of the system. France and Germany understand that any opportunity of providing the key to a future international configuration lies not with them individually but rather with the European Union.

FACTORS ENRICHING MODERN THEORY

There are many insights in the works of the pre-Qin thinkers but they fail to constitute a complete system of interstate thought. Therefore, we principally can draw lessons from their thought to develop contemporary theory in two areas. First, we can learn from their understanding of the nature of interstate relations. Since the basis for interstate relations is human nature and human nature never changes, their understanding of the nature of interstate relations may always be valid. Second, we can learn from the concepts they use to understand interstate relations. These concepts are ancient tools of thought. Simply because they are ancient, however, they may be applicable to a broader period of history. Their suitability to this wider range of time may enlarge the scope of the effectiveness of international relations theory.

Pre-Qin thinkers generally thought that power in both international and domestic society had a hierarchical structure. This is manifestly different from the assumptions of contemporary international relations theory. Contemporary international relations theory generally holds that

international society is an anarchic system—that is, international actors play similar roles and their power relationships are equal—whereas domestic society has a hierarchical structure in which actors have different roles and power is expressed in terms of relations from top to bottom.¹⁹ If we look carefully at today's international system, however, we discover that the power relationships among members of the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund are all structured hierarchically and are not equal. The United Nations distinguishes among permanent members of the Security Council, nonpermanent members of the Security Council, and ordinary member states. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have voting structures dependent on the contributions of the members. If we combine what contemporary international relations theory has to say about equality of power with the hierarchical idea of the pre-Qin thinkers we will arrive at a new way of thinking. For instance, in international society, relations between states are neither equal nor ranked from top to bottom. Rather they form a loose hierarchy. Domestic power relationships are determined by social norms, whereas international power relationships are determined by the capability of states. In the domestic system, hierarchical norms guide conduct in society, whereas in the international system norms of both hierarchy and equality direct state behavior.

Pre-Qin thinkers generally believe that hierarchical norms can restrain state behavior and thus maintain order among states, whereas contemporary international relations theorists think that, to restrain states' behavior, norms of equality alone can uphold the order of the international system. If we look at history, we find that relations of absolute equality between states lead to violent conflict, and relations of absolute hierarchy lead to tyranny in which the strong oppress the weak. If we unite the views of both ways of thinking, we may suppose that a combination of norms of equality and norms of hierarchy is best for upholding international order. Hierarchical norms carry with them the demand that the strong should undertake greater international responsibilities while the weak respect the implementation of discriminatory international rules. For instance, developed countries should each provide 0.7 percent of their GDP to assist developing countries, and nonnuclear states must not

seek to possess nuclear weapons. Norms of equality, by contrast, guarantee that states with the same power enjoy the same international rights, while states of different grades respect the implementation of common regulations. For instance, the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council all have veto power, while all member states must refrain from using military force to annex other members. The recently developed principle of common but different responsibilities in reducing emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) is a typical example of the combination of equal and hierarchical norms.

The pre-Qin thinkers emphasize the influence of the leading state on the effectiveness of interstate norms, whereas contemporary theory stresses the influence of the system on the effectiveness of international norms. The former stresses that respect for norms is determined by the way in which the leading state acts according to those norms, whereas the latter concentrates on how the system itself restrains the conduct of states. If we combine the two, we can work from the nature of the leading state to understand the process of socialization, institutionalization, and internalization of international norms. According to contemporary theory, we already know that there are three steps in the formation of international norms. The first step is that new norms are put forward by major powers, the second step is that they win support from most states, and the third is that after being implemented over a long period of time they are internalized by most states. Contemporary theory still does not understand the process by which international norms are internalized, however. According to the views of the nature of humane authority and hegemony expressed by pre-Qin philosophers, we know that humane authority has the role of taking the lead in implementing and upholding international norms, whereas hegemony lacks this. Based on this realization, we can study the path by which the nature of the leading state affects the internalization of international norms after they have been established. Based on the positive influence of the multilateralist policy of Bill Clinton and the negative influence of the unilateralist policy of George W. Bush regarding the norms for preventing nuclear proliferation, we can suppose that the different leadership provided by leading states plays a role in the direction and speed of the internalization of international norms.

Hegemony is an ancient idea, and what the foundations of hegemony are is a topic that has long been debated. Wang Rihua notes that the pre-Qin thinkers saw political power as the core factor in hegemony. In this they differed from contemporary international relations theory, which sees material power as the core element in hegemony. Based on this difference, we may compare these two factors of power to see which plays the determinative role in the rise of the new China over the past sixty years. The transformation of the political system in China in 1949 and the change of China's political line in 1979 are both important turning points in the course of China's rise. At these two moments, China's international power status did not change, but both brought about long-term increases in China's military and economic strength, respectively. At the same time, annual increases in the actual strength of China's armed forces and of its economy did not bring about immediate changes in its international status, but over a long period of time there was a change in its status. A strengthening of political power can bring about an increase of material power, but an increase of material power does not necessarily mean an increase of political power. For instance, the Soviet Union had the world's second largest army in 1991 but lacked the political will to prevent the breakup of the country. Based on this comparison, we can suppose that the conversion of political power into military and economic power is the basis for a state to attain international leadership. From this we can establish a pyramidal framework for hegemonic theory in which hegemony is based on hard power, and hard power on political power. The wider and more solid the foundations of political power are, the stronger and greater the economic and military power it can generate.

Pre-Qin thought can be used not just to analyze actual international politics but also to predict trends in international politics. Yang Qianru thinks that study of the thought of the pre-Qin masters is a study of the past, whereas research in contemporary international relations theory is geared toward the future. In fact, this is not the case. Both the study of pre-Qin interstate political philosophy and contemporary international relations theory can be aimed at forecasting the future. My purpose in rereading the pre-Qin works is to find in them an analytical framework and ideas that can help us to deepen our understanding of the trends in

contemporary world politics. For example, by learning from the distinction between humane authority and hegemony in the pre-Qin philosophers we were able to predict that after the election of Barack Obama as president of the United States the international political influence of the United States would increase. After Obama took office in 2009, his adoption of policies to reduce climate change won favor with traditional allies in Europe. This fact serves as preliminary support for the earlier prediction, and Obama's leadership over the next few years will show whether it holds.

APPLICATIONS TO THE RISE OF CHINA

The core issue with which pre-Qin interstate political philosophy is concerned is governing. Humane authority and hegemony are two types of governance. The current rise of China is also an issue of governance, both internally and externally. Internally it is a question of how to construct a civilized and prosperous society; externally it is how to establish a new international order. Hence, 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. At the eleventh meeting of heads of the diplomatic corps, Hu Jintao proposed as the goals of foreign policy "that China should have greater political influence, greater economic competitiveness, greater cultural affinity, and greater moral impact."²⁰ These goals show not only that China no longer uses the policy formulated by Deng Xiaoping in 1990 of keeping a low profile as the guiding principle of its foreign policy, but also that it no longer sees increasing economic profit as the top priority in its foreign policy, and that Chinese leaders have begun to think about foreign policy in terms of how China can become the leading power in the world and what kind of world leadership it can provide. These goals also show that Chinese leaders are beginning to realize that political influence and moral impact are of great significance in attaining world leadership. When academia studies pre-Qin interstate political philosophy, it does so precisely to learn how pre-Qin thought can

enrich our understanding of the foundations, strategies, and influence of China's rise.

There are opposing voices in the pre-Qin masters' view of interstate politics; hence, a big question faced by scholars today is exactly what philosophy can we learn from to guide China's rise. Ever since the publication of my book *Zhongguo Jueqi Guoji Huanjing Pinggu* (An assessment of the international environment for China's rise) in 1998, scholars in China have been discussing whether China should rise and how. In 2004, even the Chinese government joined the debate.²¹ Yang Qianru thinks that the Chinese government should learn from Laozi: "All under heaven is a spiritual vessel and cannot be run or grasped. To try to run it ends in failure; to try to grasp it leads to losing it" (*Laozi* 29), and that a rise to greatness should not be a national goal. In the course of rediscovering China's ancient political philosophy, the school of conspiracy and plotting has become a strong strand in political thought. Books advocating conspiracy and plotting have become the staple studies of ancient thought in airport bookshops in China. This school proposes using the strategies of the ancients to further one's own ends. I believe that if we make national restoration or ascent our goal, we do not need the stratagems of the ancients but rather their understanding of the laws of international politics.

A national grand strategy should be formed against the background of today's realities and changes. This means that any historically successful grand strategy will become out of date because times change. The goal of national resurgence lies in ensuring that China is more advanced, more civilized, stronger, and richer, but not more crafty, devious, or smug. The goal of national resurgence requires that Chinese people do their utmost and struggle to make it happen. But if we take Laozi's nonaction as our guideline, there is no way in which China can realize its national resurgence. China must learn from thought of positive significance such as the idea of "strategic reliability being established, one can attain hegemony."²² If this is done, then China's foreign policy will take as its goal the maintenance of strategic reliability. Maxims such as "the sage kings of old had righteous troops and did not disband their armies"²³ allow China to affirm

that its use of defensive military strength is in accord with the correct interpretation of international norms.

Study of pre-Qin thought is of assistance to us in understanding history correctly. A nation that cannot face historical events correctly is one that cannot win over the hearts of other states. Yang Qianru thinks that “at no time in the past or in the present has China made hegemony over the world the goal of its development.” If we believe that the Chinese people gained a modern scientific understanding of geography only in the final years of the Qing empire, then we can say that, since that time, China has not made hegemony over the world its goal. This fact does not, however, prove that before this time China did not make world hegemony its goal. The debate about humane authority among the pre-Qin masters is precisely a discussion of the issue of whether to wield humane authority or hegemony over all under heaven. Given the then lack of a modern scientific understanding of geography, the Chinese notion of all under heaven meant all the land, sea, and people under heaven. The term *all under heaven* was virtually synonymous with *the world*. The title *Son of Heaven* referred to the person who ruled over all people on the earth as the representative of Heaven. The emperors of China’s feudal times called themselves Son of Heaven, which shows that they thought of themselves as rulers of the world. The idea that “under heaven’s canopy there is nowhere that is not the king’s land; up to the sea’s shores there are none who are not the king’s servants”²⁴ illustrates that the contention for the power of Son of Heaven was, from another point of view, a contention for world leadership. Study of pre-Qin interstate political philosophy also has the role of taking the past as a mirror so as to learn about the rise and fall of great powers, and hence to predict what kind of results different strategies of ascent may bring about. In practice, it 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.

To learn from pre-Qin thought certainly does not imply rejecting Western notions of democracy. To contrast China’s traditional thought with Western political thought is to overlook what they share. Yang Qianru thinks that if China were to accept the modern idea of democracy, it could not establish an international order based on humane authority of

its own style. I think that in their respect for norms, the modern concept of democracy and the ancient Chinese concept of humane authority are alike. For instance, in the pre-Qin era the practical realities of humane authority were the rites and norms of the Western Zhou period, but the inner core was the universal morality required for political legitimacy. As history constantly changes, the universal moral standard also changes. For instance, inheritance by the eldest son was once the universal norm of political legitimacy, but in modern society it is no longer considered moral and it has been replaced by the norm of elections. The electoral system has become the universal political norm today. Even states that support one-party rule must have an electoral process for choosing the leader of the state. Although China supports the one-party leadership of the Communist Party, it still retains the consultative system of having eight democratic parties, so the Chinese government proclaims that China is a multiparty state. Given that democracy is the universal standard of political morality, in learning from the pre-Qin maxim "when norms are established, one can attain humane authority,"²⁵ China must make the moral principle of democracy one of those it promotes. In fact, in its foreign policy, China has already used the expression "jointly promoting democratization of international relations."²⁶ Even more important, the moral principles China emphasizes in its foreign strategy should be different from those the United States stresses in its hegemonic system.

Learning from the distinction between humane authority and hegemony in pre-Qin times, the strategy for China's rise in its foreign policy should be distinct from that of the United States in three areas. First, China should promote an international order that takes as its principle a balance between responsibilities and rights. At any given time, there are differences in power among states; hence, according to their power, states enjoy different rights and undertake different responsibilities. This is beneficial to the stability of the international order. China should not adopt the United States' current way of acting, saying that all states are equal while in practice always seeking to have a dominant international status. The United States' policy of saying one thing and doing another is, in fact, seen by international society as hypocritical hegemony.

Second, China should reflect on the principle of reversed double standards, namely, that more developed countries should observe international norms more strictly than less developed ones. For instance, the Kyoto Protocol sets different standards for the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions for developed and developing countries. China should not follow the United States in imposing a single standard on international society. This is especially so in politics, where the principle of having dual standards is more beneficial in upholding the stability of the international order than that of having one standard. There are more than two hundred political entities in the world. The differences between them are too great. Having a single standard can only lead to conflict and is not helpful in reducing friction among states.

Third, China should promote the open principle of the traditional idea of all under heaven as one, that is, China should be open to the whole world and all the countries in the world should be open to China. Ever since Europe invented the modern nation-state, nations have continually increased control of their borders. Even through some regional organizations have reduced border control among their members, the larger trend has led to the world's becoming more fragmented rather than more integrated. Border controls have become increasingly comprehensive in terms of employment, suffrage, social welfare, travel, investment, and so on. Thus, the national treatment of peoples becomes an important international political issue. After the end of the Cold War, the United States attained the position of being the only superpower, and it has constantly made its border controls stricter. After September 11, 2001, it enacted a policy of taking the fingerprints of foreigners coming into the country. Stricter border controls lead to greater suspicion between nations and more pronounced confrontation. China should promote the principle of freedom to travel, to live, and to work anywhere in the world. People tend to move to the better place, and thus nations with better conditions will be attractive to talented people. Hence, China should expand its policy of opening to international society.

Even though research into pre-Qin interstate political philosophy has attracted attention among scholars within China, it has not yet attracted the notice of international colleagues. In order to make a more rapid

breakthrough, three tasks remain. The first is to translate the recent fruits of Chinese scholars into English and other languages so as to introduce what we are doing to our international colleagues. The second is to expand comparative study of China's pre-Qin interstate thought, Europe's ancient interstate thought, and contemporary international relations theory. The third is to create a new international relations theory on the basis of both pre-Qin thought and contemporary international relations theory. It may be that the third task is the most important. It is only by creating a new theory that we can fully prove the value of studying pre-Qin thought. For this reason, I hope that more Chinese and foreign scholars will take part in the field of the study of China's pre-Qin interstate political philosophy.