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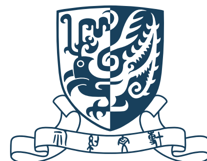

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BOOK REVIEW ESSAYS

*Ancient China and India: The Story of IR Fiasco?**

Yuri Pines

Bridging Two Worlds: Comparing Classical Political Thought and Statecraft in India and China, edited by Daniel A. Bell, Amitav Acharya, Rajeev Bhargava, and Yan Xuetong. Berkeley: University of California Press (Great Transformations Series), 2023. 334 pp. US$34.95 (Paperback). ISBN: 9780520390980.

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The rise of Asia in general, and of China and India in particular, is among the most significant geopolitical developments of the twenty-first century. This rise is obvious in the economic sphere, is increasingly observable in the fields of science and technology, and is palpable also on the level of the global political and, potentially, military balance of power. The two and a half centuries during which the West dominated the globe are coming to an end, possibly in our generation.

Yet whereas the power of China's (and, to a lesser extent India's) economic hardware is readily recognized worldwide, in terms of software, viz. their global cultural and intellectual impact, both countries are much weaker. In both the humanities and the social sciences, in particular, their contributions are rarely considered important. As Amitav Acharya, a co-editor of *Bridging Two Worlds* emphasizes in his introduction, "Western scholarship often holds up Greece and Rome as the definitive sources of concepts and approaches to political science, history, philosophy, and IR [International Relations] … This Greco-Roman centrism is the forerunner and foundation of modern Eurocentrism … The Greco-Roman heritage is seen as more progressive, scientific, advanced, and

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democratic and its practices and ideas as universal and applicable to all. Such assumptions serve as the bedrock for modern social sciences and humanities" (pp. 22–24). Moreover, the dominance of Western values in the academy produces what the eminent Indian historian Romila Thapar calls "the inferiority complex" of non-Western academics, who mine their traditions "in an effort to prove that non-Greek cultures have identical values as those of the Greek-dominated ones" (p. 24). This state of affairs in which non-Western experience is sidelined results not just in significant injustice to the rich cultural legacy of Chinese, Indian, or, e.g., Islamic civilizations, but also impoverishes social sciences and humanities globally and, arguably, makes them less relevant to the newly formed multipolar world.

It is against this backdrop that a group of mostly Chinese and Indian scholars convened thrice (twice in China in 2017 and 2019, and once in Thailand in 2018, after the planned Indian leg was moved from New Delhi to Bangkok "due to international tensions between India and China at the time" [Bell's introduction, p. 5]). The multi-year project, generously supported by the Berggruen Institute, yielded a book in 14 chapters divided into seven sections or "themes" (Methodology, Political Leadership, Amoral Realism, Empire, Just War, Diplomacy, and "Balancing, Hegemony, and Mandalas"). One chapter on each theme was written by a Chinese contributor (including two Western scholars—Roger Ames and Daniel Bell—who were then, like all their Chinese colleagues, teaching in mainland China); another was penned by an Indian counterpart (invariably scholars of South Asian ancestry, some of whom teach in the U.S. and New Zealand). The avowed goal of the book is, in Acharya's words, "to compare classical Chinese and Indian political thought, especially as it relates to 'global' or 'world' order-building" (p. 22). The book focuses on the formative periods of both civilizations (primarily the second half of the first millennium BCE, with infrequent forays into later periods). The editors aver, in Daniel Bell's words, that "ancient schools of thought offer rich and profound ways of thinking about politics and statecraft and explicitly or implicitly shape much political debate in India and China" (p. 3). The book is aimed not just to introduce insights from early China and India to Western readers, but also to bring two ancient traditions into dialogue with each other. Bell emphasizes, "Deeper mutual understanding can form the basis for mutual appreciation and friendship, or at least help to avoid clashes based on misunderstandings" (p. 4).

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The project's goals are laudable. The investment of time and thought by the editors (who, I assume, were the project's organizers) is most impressive. The results, however, are disappointing. Whereas the volume does contain a few gems, overall it falls far short of the high expectations I had after reading the editors' introduction. The Chinese side is especially disappointing, with a few articles that could be considered on the "revise and resubmit" level, and a few others that should have been outright rejected. The volume's immediate problems, as I shall outline in the first two sections of the present review article, are, first, the disciplinary selection of contributors, especially on the Chinese side, which did not fit the project's goals, and, second, the volume's unsatisfactory editing. Yet beyond these (entirely avoidable) problems, I want to question the IR focus of the volume as not particularly fitting the lofty goal of presenting the modern relevance of traditional Chinese and Indian thought and these civilizations' historical experience. These points will be discussed in the third and fourth sections of this review article.

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1. The Disciplinary Quagmire

The volume opens with its best chapter, "Mining the Past to Construct the Present: Some Methodological Considerations from India," written by Patrick Olivelle (Department of Sanskrit and Indian Religions, the University of Texas at Austin). This essay is the volume's true gem, and should be assigned to any student engaged in studying early cultures and their current relevance. Olivelle enumerates five methodological problems "to which, I feel, our group has not always paid adequate attention." These are "(1) dangers of essentializing; (2) multiple voices; (3) problems of translation and definition; (4) importance of context; and (5) gleaning from the past for contemporary global order" (p. 39). Olivelle then demonstrates the advantages of his cautious methodology in a brief but most engaging discussion of three early Indian approaches to international relations. I shall address the second part of Olivelle's essay later; here suffice it to note with great regret that too many contributions, particularly on the Chinese side, suffer precisely from the problems outlined by Olivelle. I shall demonstrate this by focusing on Olivelle's points 2 to 4, each of which requires historical and philological expertise of a contributor. Alas, this expertise is lacking for an easily recognizable reason: almost all of Chinese contributors are specialists in IR and political science and not in early Chinese history and thought.[1]

Let us start with the point of "multiple voices." One of the most remarkable features of China's Warring States-era (戰國 Zhanguo, 453–221 BCE) intellectual flourishing was precisely the diversity of ideological perspectives. The richness of that age, dubbed the era of the Hundred Schools of Thought, is well known. Yet the contributors to *Bridging Two Worlds* confined themselves to a very narrow sample of texts (*Mengzi* [孟子, *Mencius*], *Xunzi* [荀子], and *Han Feizi* [韓非子]). Most other texts with plenty of insights about interstate relations—from *Mozi* (墨子) to *Laozi* (老子), to *Guanzi* (管子), to *Lüshi chunqiu* (呂氏春秋)—were ignored altogether. Most oddly, most of the authors ignored two major repositories of early China's diplomatic ideas—the *Zuo Tradition* (or *Zuo Commentary*, 左傳 *Zuozhuan*) and the *Stratagems of the Warring States* (戰國策 *Zhanguoce*). This dramatically impoverished their discussion, as I shall explain in section 3.

Olivelle's "problems of translation and definition" likewise appear in every Chinese contribution. The authors never try to define what is meant, for instance, by such a crucial term as *tianxia* (All-under-Heaven; 天下): does it refer to the entire known world, to a smaller Zhou realm, or just to the areas under the effective control of the Son of Heaven (天子 *tianzi*)? Is it a cultural or a political designation?[2] And what does the term *wang* (王) mean? Is it just a neutral "king" or the True Monarch, the future unifier of All-under-Heaven? What did the thinkers imply by discussing the figure of a hegemon (伯 *bo*, or its cognate, 霸 *ba*)? Without addressing these and a great variety of related terms, the contributors repeatedly err in their translations or interpretations of the texts under discussion. All too often the discussion fluctuates from inaccurate to misleading to simply incomprehensible (see the next section).

The situation is even worse with regard to Olivelle's dictum to pay attention to the importance of the context. Here, some of the chapters become truly weird. The worst, perhaps, is that of Xu Jin from Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). Xu's article compares ideas of Han Fei (韓非, d. 233 BCE) and Kauṭilya (to whom Xu consistently refers as Cāṇakya, the putative prime minister of Candragupta Maurya [late fourth century BCE], although the association between the two persons has long been refuted).[3] Here are some of Xu's arguments from his "Background" section:

> Both Han Feizi and Chanakya were living in periods of great historic transition from slavery to feudal monarchy … Han Feizi … was living in the

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> Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, from 280 BC to 233 BC. At that time, vassals contended for supremacy; wars of annexation broke out frequently; and states sought to change their laws to become stronger (p. 121).

The statement is full of inaccuracies. Putting aside the erroneous identification of Kauṭilya and Cāṇakya, we may note first the fallacy of the "great historic transition from slavery to feudal monarchy." The attempt to impose Karl Marx's half-baked division of human history into five stages (primeval society, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, and socialism) on China's past was once promulgated by Guo Moruo (郭沫若, 1892–1978) and enshrined in China's school textbooks; but it has long been abandoned by the overwhelming majority of historians of early China as totally unrelated to the country's historical trajectory. Referring to it as a kind of unshakeable truth betrays Xu's lack of interest in early Chinese history as such. Second, putting together the Springs-and-Autumns (春秋 Chunqiu, 770–453 BCE) and the Warring States period as if they were all but same is ridiculous; actually, Han Fei's world differed from the Springs-and-Autumns era as much as Marx's differed from the age of Columbus. Third, the notion of "vassal states" by which presumably Xu refers to the regional states (諸侯國 *zhuhou guo*) is wrong: the regional leaders of Han Fei's era were patently NOT the vassals of the Zhou king. And fourth, and most annoying, Xu ignores the singularly important aspect of Han Fei's background, viz. his belonging to the ruling family of the tiny state of Hán (韓) (not to be confused with the Hàn [漢] dynasty), a polity due to be swallowed by its powerful neighbor, Qin (秦), whom Han Fei reportedly hoped to serve, and where he met his death. This backdrop is essential for understanding Han Fei's gloomy views of the interstate relations of his era, especially as reflected in the first two chapters of *Han Feizi*. Alas, these chapters, which contain the richest depository of contemporaneous views of the interstate relations are ignored by Xu altogether.[4]

The ubiquity of methodological problems in the articles by Chinese contributors makes me wonder why they were selected to represent ideas and practices that are fairly removed from their field of expertise. Was there an implicit expectation that an educated Chinese person can speak confidently on behalf of his country's intellectual tradition? If so, this expectation was ungrounded. It is certainly true that for an average Western social scientist any Chinese colleague may appear knowledgeable about her or his country's past, but this is not the level of expertise that

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makes one eligible to introduce the two-millennia old texts and events to the scholarly audience. A book which promised to bring gems of Chinese political thought to an IR reader yields a series of mediocre articles. In my eyes, this is a lost opportunity.

2. The Language and Copyediting Problem

The disciplinary unfitness of Chinese contributors is aggravated in many cases by their habitual eschewing of Anglophone publications in the field of early Chinese history and thought. Martin Kern recently lamented the problem of nativism and monolingualism that permeates significant portions of Chinese academy.[5] Some of the contributions to *Bridging Two Worlds* exemplify the resultant pitfalls. These pitfalls become fully visible once a Chinese colleague writes in English without the benefit of being exposed to Anglophone publications in the field. This results in awkward (and at times misleading) translations from Chinese classical works (of all the Chinese contributors, only Yan Xuetong, a co-editor of the volume, was prudent enough to utilize a published translation of *Xunzi* instead of struggling with the classical text alone). In addition, abundance of unidiomatic expressions whenever issues related to China's early history are discussed makes parts of the discussion fairly incomprehensible.

With this regard, I want to single out two articles as particularly annoying. One is by the aforementioned Xu Jin. Judging from his footnotes and list of references, Xu did not utilize Anglophone materials at all. That he ignored Anglophone study of *Han Feizi*, I cannot complain: after all, Xu equally ignored publications by leading Mainland scholars, such as Bai Tongdong (白彤東), Jiang Chongyue (蔣重躍), or Song Hongbing (宋洪兵). But, more oddly, even Xu's discussion of Kauṭilya (whom, recall, he misidentifies as Cāṇakya) is based purely on a few Chinese-language publications. With due respect to these, one should be reminded that the primary language of studying Kauṭilya is clearly English. Yet, puzzlingly, aside from two references to Deepshikha Shahi (an Indian contributor to the same section of Amoral Realism), Xu ignores even the contributions of other co-authors (particularly Olivelle) who discuss Kauṭilya's thought. Why the editors did not require him to acquaint himself with his colleagues' submissions is anyone's guess.

Not all Chinese contributors are as staunchly monolingual as Xu; but most are adamantly so whenever the field of early China is concerned.

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Take, for instance, chapter 12, "From Ancient Silk Road to Modern Belt and Road Initiative," by Zhao Yujia (Shandong University). Zhao utilizes a lot of Anglophone materials, but never in the field of early China, not even translations. To demonstrate the results, let us turn to her translation from *Xunzi*: "Xunzi states that '[if kings] clarify the intention of non-annexation and treat friends and enemies with credibility, they will win and dominate *Tianxia* as hegemonies'" (p. 245). What does "win and dominate *Tianxia* as hegemonies" mean? Is the author aware of the basic difference between the idea of a True Monarch and a hegemon in *Xunzi*'s thought? Actually, Zhao simply did not understand the original. In *Xunzi*, it is said: "Hence, [the aspiring hegemon] clarifies that he is not going to annex [the regional lords], and makes his way of befriending rivals reliable. If there is neither a [true] monarch nor hegemonic lord under Heaven, he will always be victorious" (故明其不並之行，信其友敵之道，天下無王霸主，則常勝矣). If Zhao had consulted any of the existent translations (either by John Knoblock, utilized by Yan Xuetong, or by Eric Hutton), the problem could easily have been avoided. The same goes for her other (invariably awkward and inaccurate) translations from classical texts.

Yet Zhao's problems are minuscule in comparison to the second annoying article, by Qi Haixia (Department of International Relations at Tsinghua University, Beijing). She stands out as the one who penned the least comprehensible essay. Her study of "Balancing in Ancient China" was meant to deal with the history of diplomacy in early China; but she did not consult a single relevant publication in English. As for the outcome, consider the following passage:

> According to the patriarchal clan system of the Western Zhou Dynasty, Zhou Tianzi (周天子) was the majority of the world and the supreme patriarch of the aristocracy with the same surname. The son of Zhou Tianzi was divided into princes (諸侯). The sons of the princes were feudalized as Qing (卿大夫), minor princes to the princes, and major presences in their families. (p. 270)

One can work hard to retranslate this passage into Chinese and make it comprehensible (a task I shall leave to the readers). What perplexes me is how this gibberish eschewed the attention of a copyeditor (Paul Tyler, according to the book's Acknowledgments). And how neither the editors nor the copyeditor, nor the book's reviewers paid attention to Qi's even more ridiculous blunder when she translated the term *qing dafu* (卿大夫; ministers and grandees, or high and medium-ranked nobles) as "Doctor

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Qing" (p. 271)? Would we pass an undergraduate paper with such a mistranslation?

This brings me to the problem of copyediting in general. Its gross inadequacy is intolerable in a well-funded volume published by a leading academic press. Look at the footnotes and references in each of the articles and you will discover total cacophony. Some contributors apply Author Year style; other use endnotes only; yet others use endnotes cum references list. Some refer to Chinese secondary and primary sources through *pinyin* transliteration; other through translation (not always accurate). Some provide (simplified) characters for references to primary texts; others transliterate; yet others translate (and, again, often mistranslate) titles and chapter names. Oddly, some Chinese contributors seem to forget the rule that in Chinese surname comes first; hence Jin Haipeng is abridged in Xu Jin's article to "Haipeng" (p. 131, n. 23). Some contributors avoid umlaut, transliterating Lü as Lv (p. 169, n. 31). And blunders recur in the main text as well. For example, in otherwise well written article by Yan Xuetong, Xunzi is mixed with "Sun Tzu" (i.e., Sunzi [孫子], the putative author of *Sunzi's Methods of War* 孫子兵法) (p. 77). And so forth.

I cannot tell who precisely should be blamed for this carelessness and why the volume was not edited as appropriate to the publication on that level. But I can assure the readers that I shall neither consider nor recommend the University of California Press series "Great Transformations" (the series editors are Craig Calhoun and Nils Gilman). For me, the way *Bridging Two Worlds* was published marks blatant disrespect to readers. Such publications should be utterly avoided.

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3. Chinese and Indian Lessons for IR: A Frustrating Task?

Putting the volume's weaknesses aside, I want to repeat that I am very sympathetic with the editors' desire to mine the field of early Chinese and Indian thought for its potential applicability in the present. I remain skeptical, however, of this thought's usefulness to the narrowly defined IR discipline; and after reading the articles in *Bridging Two Worlds*, my skepticism only increased. Whereas most IR-based contributors to the volume try to show how the texts/thinkers under discussion are relevant for the current IR problems, my conclusions differ. From the point of view of a historian, I view both Chinese and Indian experiences as detrimental rather than supportive of IR studies.

Let us start with India. Olivelle identifies three personalities/texts in early India that may be of relevance to the IR field. The first is the Maurya emperor Aśoka/Ashoka (r. ca. 268–232 BCE), one of the most impressive leaders in world history (his legacy also stands at the focus of Rajeev Bhargava's article and is addressed, briefly, in Upinder Singh's contribution, chapters 4 and 8). Having started his career as a great warrior and conqueror, Aśoka later repented. His rock and pillar inscriptions, scattered throughout much of Indian subcontinent, express his belief that "the foremost conquest" is "the conquest through *dharma*" (p. 44). These were not empty words: Aśoka tried to promote "peaceful conquest" of the remote countries by sending doctors and disseminating medical knowledge, by digging wells and planting trees along the roads (p. 45). In his inscriptions Aśoka presents himself a paragon of international moral leadership. Alas, he was an exceptional figure. As Olivelle summarizes, "much of his political philosophy of coexistence and nonviolence based on *dharma* … soon disappeared from Indian political history, although it remained a cornerstone of Indian moral philosophy" (p. 55). Sadly, Aśoka's empire did not outlive him by much, and we have no way to evaluate the practical value of his lofty stance.

On the opposite side of the IR spectrum stands Kauṭilya, an "amoral realist," whose *Arthaśāstra* "is the only extant scientific treatise" from the tradition of early Indian political science (p. 55). Kauṭilya's treatise "is a strong articulation of *realpolitik*, and it probably comes closest to the historical reality of ancient Indian kings vying for power and control against each other" (p. 55); not surprisingly, *Arthaśāstra* figures prominently in no fewer than four other chapters of the volume (3, 5, 6, and 14). Kauṭilya envisions the world as that of perennial rivalry, in which one's neighbor is one's natural enemy, whereas the neighbor's neighbor is conversely one's ally. Peaceful agreements with enemies are possible only as temporary measures needed to buy time, but not as a viable solution for rivalry (p. 50). In this world of endless conflict, no stability is possible, and to outsmart one's rivals, anything is permissible. For example, when dealing with powerful rival confederacies, one should "find out the grounds for mutual abuse, hatred, enmity, and quarrels among members of confederacies, and sow dissension in anyone whose confidence they have gradually won" (p. 51). To attain this goal—which frighteningly reminds us of modern attempts to engineer domestic turmoil or regime change in rival countries—one can apply any means, including, e.g., sowing discord among the children of one's rivals through secret agents

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posing as teachers. The practical usefulness of Kauṭilya's methods is undeniable, but I doubt that his arts will be taught prominently in IR departments, if not because they are morally deplorable then because they are frustrating: there is no way out of permanent conflict, not even through a universal empire (p. 53).

The third relevant treatise discussed by Olivelle (and ignored by the rest of the contributors) is that of Manu (first century CE), a staunch defender of Brahminism, which he sought to resurrect against a variety of intellectual and political challenges. Manu's most relevant point from the IR point of view is his advocacy of *dharma* as a transcendent universal law to which all kings should subscribe. This idea, much like the concept of all-embracing ritual (禮 *li*) in Springs-and-Autumns-period China (see below) is attractive insofar as it creates common norms of conduct that transcend an individual polity. Yet, as Olivelle acknowledges (p. 55), this system could work well only in the cultural landscape of Indian subcontinent. How to impose common norms on radically different cultural entities is a problem that neither Manu nor Chinese advocates of *li* were able to resolve.

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Aside from the three traditions discussed by Olivelle, India offers another potential inspiration to IR specialists—the great epic, *Mahābhārata*, which stands at the center of Kanad Sinha's chapter. Sinha finds two appealing ideas in the epos. First is "a politics of balance between pacifism and justice, a balance that the present world greatly needs," as displayed by Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa in the "Udyogaparvan" book of *Mahābhārata* (p. 199). Sinha's is an entirely legitimate interpretation of Kṛṣṇa's role, and I am sure that his understanding of the epos is deeper than mine. Yet my amateurish reading of *Mahābhārata* leads me to see Kṛṣṇa more as a cynical manipulator who calmly leads both sides to a battle of mutual annihilation than a just mediator. Given Kṛṣṇa's problematic role in many of *Mahābhārata*'s sections—e.g., during the sadistic burning of Khāṇḍava Forest in the first book—he does not seem to me an appropriate paragon of prudence and justice. By contrast, Yudhiṣṭhira, the King of Dharma, is indeed the most admirable personality in the epos (at least in the present reviewer's eyes). Sinha's association of Yudhiṣṭhira's dharma with *ānṛśaṃsya*, which is "a philosophy of noncruelty and considerate empathy for all beings," is convincing (pp. 204–205). But once we recall the futility of Yudhiṣṭhira's *dharma*, which failed to prevent suicidal fratricidal war, its applicability to modern IR becomes somewhat questionable.

In the final account, none of the four ways of dealing with IR problems proposed by ancient Indian rulers, thinkers, and epic composers, seems to me either adequate for the modern world or just deserving a major place in IR studies. The situation with the Chinese side of equation is equally disappointing for those eager to find new solutions to the current imperfect world. Here we have incomparably more detailed sources both about the practical functioning of the multistate world before Qin's unification of East Asian subcontinent in 221 BCE, and about conceptualizations of interstate politics during these centuries. Since the topic was not adequately addressed in the volume, it will make sense to make a longer digression and remind readers of why the attempts by Chinese statesmen and thinkers to establish a rule-based multistate order collapsed and which lessons were drawn from this fiasco.[6]

The Springs-and-Autumns period was one of many ages of political fragmentation in East Asian subcontinent, but it is exceptional insofar as the multistate system was considered back then not an aberration, but a fait accompli, and significant efforts were invested to perfect and stabilize it. The peculiarity of this system (and its relative legitimacy) should be traced to the preceding Western Zhou (西周) rule (ca. 1046–771). The Zhou kings divided their realm into two parts: the royal domain, stretching from the Wei (渭) to the Yi-Luo (伊洛) river valleys, was under the king's direct control; the eastern part of the realm, by contrast, was ruled by autonomous regional lords, most of whom were either the king's affinal or agnatic kin.[7] The kings maintained loose control over the regional lords not only because of the military and economic superiority of their domain, but, primarily, thanks to their "soft power." In their capacity as Sons of Heaven (天子 *tianzi*), the kings maintained preferential access to the supreme deity, Heaven, on behalf of which they allegedly ruled; in addition, they also had preferential access to deified ancestors of the ruling clan. And soft power mattered. Even after the disastrous fall of the Western Zhou in 771 BCE, when "for nine years (749–741 BCE) Zhou was without a king, and the rulers of the states and regional lords then for the first time ceased attending the Zhou court" (周亡王九年，邦君諸侯焉始不朝於周),[8] the dynasty did not perish. Most importantly, the ritual system, established in the second half of the Western Zhou rule, remained the foundation of the sociopolitical order throughout the Springs-and-Autumns period. It was also the foundation of contemporaneous interstate relations.[9]

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Zuozhuan, our major, even if not unbiased, source of information about the Springs-and-Autumns period history, exemplifies both the functioning of ritual norms in solidifying the multistate system, and these norms' limits.[10] On the one hand, ritual regulated rules of interstate intercourse, determined the interstate hierarchy (albeit inconclusively), and even regulated aspects of warfare. The major impact of these norms can be observable on the level of the ongoing respect for the Zhou kings, who maintained, despite their weakness, the exclusive position as Sons of Heaven.[11] On the other hand, it is equally clear from *Zuozhuan* that ritual norms did not suffice to stem interstate competition and the resultant malfunctioning of the multistate system. In particular, the fact that the ritual-mandated hierarchy reflected the realities of the Western Zhou period and could not be easily adjusted to incorporate the new balance of power among major states made the applicability of ritual rules unsustainable in the long term. Worse, to function as a surrogate of the interstate law, ritual norms had to be effectively enforceable. The lack of enforceability became the ritual system's Achilles' heel.

The earliest meaningful attempt to stabilize the interstate system was made through the institution of hegemony. The first and most lauded hegemon, Lord Huan of Qi (齊桓公, r. 685–643 BCE), positioned himself as the protector of the Zhou Son of Heaven. Pretending to act on the Son of Heaven's behalf, Lord Huan could legitimately lead other polities, interfering in their domestic affairs and bilateral relations. Coupled with Qi's military superiority, and bolstered by Lord Huan's magnanimity (in the latter half of his career he refrained from annexing weaker neighbors and even supported the restoration of a few polities that had been eliminated by non-Sinitic invaders), the system of unilateral hegemony functioned reasonably well. From the IR perspective, it can be compared to the situation in 1990s when the US effectively maintained its global hegemony, skillfully positioning itself as enforcer of UN-based rules. Overall, when the Warring States-period thinkers referred to hegemony as an adequate means of maintaining interstate order, they primarily thought of Lord Huan's example.[12]

The problem of unilateral hegemony was its intrinsic unsustainability. The death of Lord Huan and subsequent succession struggle put an end to Qi's superiority. Soon enough, two rival blocs emerged: the northern alliance led by the state of Jin (晉), and the southern one led by Chu (楚). This system of competing alliances (which resembles the global arena during the competition between the USSR and the US-led blocs) lasted

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almost a century (632–546 BCE). The alliance leaders maintained their position through periodic assemblies, during which solemn covenants were made; leaders were furthermore supposed to protect allies from domestic and external challenges and regulate relations among them. These means of ensuring a semblance of interstate stability were eroded, however, by two factors. First was the competition between the rival alliances. Whereas major battles between Chu and Jin were relatively rare, both states frequently invaded intermediate polities, who had to switch sides time and again, causing renewed incursions from a former patron-turned-foe. Second, the alliance leaders' greed, intemperate behavior, and domestic pressure by powerful ministers frequently resulted in discarding solemn obligations to allies and acting out of pure self-interest. For instance, Jin, which nominally acted as the Zhou kings' protector, was ready to sideline the kings when they were less than cooperative. Betrayal of allies, arbitrary intervention in their domestic or bilateral conflicts, and even seizing allies' territories were also common.[13] Chu was equally ruthless. As time passed, the statesmen's cynicism increased. As a respected Jin leader blatantly acknowledged, "How else can lands be taken, if not by invading small [polities]?" (若非侵小，將何所取).[14] A Chu leader was equally blatant:

> Jin and Chu have been faithless with each other for a long time, caring only to do whatever is advantageous. So long as we fulfill our ambition, what use do we have for good faith? (晉、楚無信久矣，事利而已。苟得志焉，焉用有信？)[15]

In 546 BCE, the most interesting attempt was made to stabilize the multistate system: a "disarmament conference," initiated by the intermediate states battered by the Jin-Chu rivalry.[16] The organizers proposed the creation of a mega-alliance, led simultaneously by Jin and Chu, legitimating thereby the bipolar world. This initiative, however, failed miserably because of the lack of trust between major powers (as exemplified in the citation above). A short period of de-facto hegemony by a ruthless King Ling of Chu (楚靈王, r. 540–529 BCE) ensued, after which internal crises in both Chu and Jin opened the way to the rise of new major powers. By the late sixth century BCE, the center of political gravity shifted to the southeastern states of Wu (吳) and, later, Yue (越). As both (especially Yue) were culturally peripheral to the Zhou oikouménē, their readiness to adhere by the Zhou ritual norms was limited.[17] The idea of a norms-based multistate system was dying.

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By the late sixth century BCE, the Zhou world entered a new stage of multipolarity, which, for all practical purposes, signified the collapse of the stable multistate order. Whereas loose alliances were maintained between Jin and Wu (and, later, between Jin and Yue, which had supplanted Wu), as well as between Chu and Qi and, separately, Chu and Qin, these were just temporary coalitions of little consequences beyond periodic cooperation against a common enemy.[18] The erstwhile relatively stable alliances disintegrated and the war of all against all ensued. The crisis was aggravated by domestic struggles in many of the leading states, most notably Jin. The breakup of this state in 453 BCE is conveniently viewed as the beginning of the era ominously named the age of the Warring States.

The Warring States period was marked, as noted above, by immense intellectual creativity. It was also an age of dramatic advances in the economy, demography, warfare, administrative techniques, and the like. Yet, in terms of IR, this was a sad era of *Arthaśāstra*-type perennial conflict and ever-aggravating bloodshed.[19] It was an age of brazen cynicism and the abandonment of even nominal pretensions to maintain a rules-based order. To understand the new intellectual atmosphere, suffice it to revisit the anecdotes scattered throughout the *Stratagems of the Warring States*—a compilation prepared by the Han librarian Liu Xiang (劉向, 77–6 BCE) from no fewer than six texts discovered in the imperial library.[20] The text abounds in stories of states that betrayed alliance obligations, violated solemn covenants, backstabbed their allies, and the like. Such examples abound in *Zuozhuan* as well, but there such behavior is normally condemned, and the stories are constructed so as to caution would-be malefactors of the inevitable punishment. The *Stratagems*, by contrast, hails the trickery as the manifestation of the statesmen's acumen. Many stories scattered throughout the text promote profiteering as the only honorable value.[21] That attempts to restore a functioning multistate system were discontinued in this intellectual atmosphere should come as no surprise.

The IR scholars would easily identify the above situation with international anarchy, but actually the Warring States-era anarchy was more anarchic than the IR theorists commonly assume. The problem was that profiteering was not limited to states but applied primarily to individuals, particularly diplomats. And their relation to the state was very different from that of the aristocratic Springs-and-Autumns period. Back then, top positions in the state apparatus were normally occupied either by the

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ruler's closest kin or by hereditary ministers, who were stakeholders in the domestic political order, and, unless under duress, would never abandon their position and move to a rival polity. By contrast, by the Warring States era, most ministerial positions were occupied by the members of the new meritocratic elite of *shi* (士; men-of-service). For them, the Zhou oikouménē was a huge market of talent, in which hopes for adequate self-realization as well as the selfish quest for enrichment and fame prompted employees—including top political executives—to move from one polity to another in search of better appointment.[22] For these men, the belonging to individual states mattered little, if at all (*pace* Yan Xuetong bizarre claim that "the Chinese feudal system makes every individual's identity tied to the state where he/she is born" [p. 79]).[23] And this was doubly so for the diplomats, who, by the very nature of their profession, got excellent opportunities for double dealing. These diplomats—derisively called "roving persuaders" (游說 *youshui*)—became the epitome of the brazen search for personal benefit at the expense of any moral and political considerations.

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Two figures exemplify the roving persuaders' abilities and their lack of scruples—Su Qin (蘇秦, d. 284 BCE) and Zhang Yi (張儀, d. 309 BCE).[24] The *Stratagems* pairs them (somewhat anachronistically) as major opponents: Su was the architect of the anti-Qin Vertical Alliance, whereas Zhang tried to bolster the pro-Qin Horizontal Alliance.[25] The *Stratagems* demonstrates time and again how their rhetorical skills caused rulers of different states to switch sides repeatedly. This admiration aside, the *Stratagems* does not conceal Su Qin's and Zhang Yi's blatant selfishness. This is best demonstrated in an anecdote about Su Qin, which was probably designed as an introduction to his career.[26] According to the anecdote, Su Qin started his career by attempting to convince the King of Qin—almost a century before the First Emperor—"to annex the regional lords, swallow All-under-Heaven, declare yourself Thearch and establish orderly rule" (並諸侯，吞天下，稱帝而治). Su was rejected however. Feeling frustrated, he vowed to avenge his humiliation. Su asked himself: "Is there a persuader who is unable to make the ruler part from his gold, jade, silk and brocade, and to receive the honors of high minister and chancellor?" (安有說人主不能出其金玉錦繡，取卿相之尊者乎). Having trained himself anew the art of strategy, he turned to Qin's rival, the King of Zhao (趙), who employed Su Qin. Soon enough, Su fostered an anti-Qin alliance. To cement ties among the allies, Su was appointed simultaneously as a minister in six anti-Qin states. The anecdote hails him:

> Su Qin was after all a mere man of service from poor environs, dwelling in a mud cave with mulberry branches and a hole drilled [in the wall] instead of a door. Yet, leaning on the dashboard and holding the reins, he traversed All-under-Heaven, spoke to kings and regional lords and confounded their aides; nobody under Heaven was a match for him (且夫蘇秦特窮巷掘門、桑戶棬樞之士耳，伏軾撙銜，橫歷天下，廷說諸侯之王，杜左右之口，天下莫之能伉).[27]

The story presents in a nutshell the roving persuaders' ideal: to maximize personal glory and benefits. Which state to serve and why was secondary. The continuous manipulations by these servants of several masters undermined whatever expectations one could cherish of a viable interstate order. Su Qin himself was, according to another series of anecdotes, a secret agent of the state of Yan (燕), on behalf of which he served the state of Qi only to enmesh Qi in reckless expansion southwards and allow Yan to attack Qi from the north.[28] Whatever the veracity of these and other details of Su's career, the bottom line is clear: diplomacy was a means of manipulating a rival polity; it was of little, if any, use for attaining interstate peace and stability. The only real beneficiaries of diplomatic efforts were diplomats themselves. Actually, the failure of diplomacy is outlined, somewhat ironically, in Su Qin's speech to the King of Qin in the above anecdote:

> Despite clear pronouncements and manifested principles, weapons and armor arise ever more; [despite] outstanding and compelling arguments, battles and offensives never stop; [despite] gorgeous sayings and refined words, the world is disordered. Tongues are worn out and ears deafened, but no achievements are seen; the conduct is righteous and the treaties are trustworthy, but there is no intimacy under Heaven (明言章理，兵甲愈起；辯言偉服，戰攻不息；繁稱文辭，天下不治；舌弊耳聾，不見成功；行義約信，天下不親).[29]

This speech recognizes the futility of diplomatic efforts aimed at stopping battles and offensives. It also explains why none of the Warring States-period thinkers—even such resolute opponents of aggressive warfare as Mozi (ca. 460–390 BCE) and Mengzi (ca. 380–304 BCE)—made any notable attempt to elaborate principles of peaceful coexistence among rival polities. In the eyes of these thinkers, diplomacy served little else than the personal interests of glib talkers. This point (once again, overlooked by Xu Jin) is outlined with utmost clarity in *Han Feizi*. Han Fei weighs the advantages and disadvantages of the Vertical and Horizontal

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alliances, between which his home state of Hán constantly fluctuated, and concludes: whomever it allies with, a small state will forever be bullied by its allies, and the only beneficiaries from the alliances will be the scheming ministers:

> Although the ruler is humbled, the ministers have become ever more honorable; although the state's territory is partitioned, the private [ministerial] families have become rich. If the undertaking succeeds, they use their authority to prolong their own political importance; if the undertaking fails, they withdraw with their wealth and live as privates (主上雖卑，人臣尊矣；國地雖削，私家富矣。事成則以權長重，事敗則以富退處).[30]

Han Fei explains that the only way out of this quagmire is to create a powerful army that would protect the state from external intruders. But he was sober enough to understand that even this would bring only temporary respite to his home state. In a world that did not allow peaceful coexistence among rival polities, a world in which diplomacy was considered a mean undertaking and the betrayal of alliances was normal, preserving a small state was a pipe dream. The authors of *Lüshi chunqiu*, a compendium composed in the state of Qin on the eve of the imperial unification, summarized: "When All-under-Heaven is in turmoil, no state can be secure" (天下大亂，無有安國).[31]

The bottom line of rival thinkers is surprisingly similar: there are no diplomatic (IR) means to ensure peace and stability under Heaven. It is unfortunate that this conclusion was glossed over by the volume's contributors. True, this realization could undermine the lofty goal of making early Chinese experience relevant to the IR field. But one may argue that learning from others' failures is just as important as learning from their successes and insights. Besides, despite their countless disagreements, early Chinese thinkers offered a clear solution to interstate anarchy. This solution was to discard the multistate order altogether and replace it with a unified entity that would encompass the entirety of All-under-Heaven. Mengzi succinctly summarized: "Stability is in unity" (定於一).[32] The debates among rival thinkers continued to revolve about how to attain unity, but not about whether or not the universal polity is desirable.[33] In the future unified empire, diplomacy was useless and the fate of roving persuaders was sealed.

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4. Afterword: The Empires and Their Lessons

The above discussion has demonstrated that immense differences between Indian and Chinese intellectual traditions and historical experience notwithstanding, both civilizations do not offer positive lessons for the field of IR. At the very least, neither succeeded in maintaining a stable multistate order. But what about their imperial experience? Whereas its relevance is naturally limited (we are currently not at a stage when a universal empire is feasible), maybe the empires in China and India can nevertheless provide a few inspiring ideas for the IR theorists and practitioners? This topic is discussed in section 4, Empires, of *Bridging Two Worlds*.

The Empires section juxtaposes a professional historian (Upinder Singh, Department of History, Ashoka University), and an IR specialist (Zhou Fangyin, the School of International Relations, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies). This is one of the sections in which the disciplinary gap is most easily observable. Singh presents an excellent summary of early Indian views of an empire, especially the distinct views of *cakravartin* (world victor) in different Indian traditions. He outlines the geographic dimensions of Indian "universal" empire: it was clearly confined to the civilized land of the *āryas* (the cultured, civilized people), which was conterminous with Indian subcontinent, although "the northeastern and northwestern boundaries remained fuzzy" (p. 171). Singh notes, furthermore, the crucial difference between India and China: the relative marginality of the idea of a "universal" empire in the former. "What is emphasized in India is political paramountcy among a hierarchy of rulers rather than political unification. An ancient Indian emperor did not have to eliminate other kings; he had to get them to acknowledge his paramountcy" (p. 181). In China, of course, this was different: coexistence of two competing emperors was an aberration, which could be tolerated in the short term but never legitimated in the long one.[34] Overall, Singh's succinct summary of the imperial ideal in India and its limitations makes his chapter one of the best in the entire volume.

In contrast to Singh, Zhou adopts an apologetic approach, which primarily tries to exonerate the Chinese empire from negative practices associated with the maligned concept of "imperialism." He presents the Chinese empire as reluctant to use force abroad, as supportive of "informal equality" with neighboring polities despite maintenance of "formal hierarchy" (p. 159), as an empire that "did not show a strong tendency to

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colonize other places" (pp. 159, 163–165); besides, this empire preferred to remain within its own cultural boundaries and disliked expansion (pp. 161–163). Finally, "ancient China was not an empire in the sense of maximizing power or maximizing security" (p. 166). Zhou acknowledges manifold exceptions to his rules (most readily associating these exceptions with the Mongol Yuan dynasty [1271–1368]), but overall he tries to portray the Chinese empire in the most benevolent light. By the end of his discussion, we know more about what the empire was not than what it really was.

I shall not waste the reader's time by quibbling with each of Zhou's arguments. It is all too easy to find in China's long history examples of violent, expansionist, and even colonialist behavior (although never colonies on other continents). But the very exercise of looking for examples of benevolent or malevolent practices in the history of any polity—not to say of an empire that lasted for over two millennia—so as to hail or disparage it according to the twenty-first century political sensitivities is by itself pointless. Zhou's shortcoming is that he is fixated on Western colonial empires and on emphasizing the moral superiority of China over them. This is not a difficult task: indeed, the Chinese empire cannot be imagined sending settlers overseas, profiteering from large-scale slave trade, or waging anything comparable to the Opium Wars. But this conduct is not characteristic of most other continental empires in Eurasian history either. If Zhou had opted to compare China with its peers (from Achaemenids to Maurya, from Romans to the Arab Caliphate, from Mongols to Mughals) the results would have been more interesting. Such a comparison would highlight both similarities and differences between Chinese and other continental empires, help to understand the former's peculiarity, and perhaps even allow us to discern the potential relevance of Chinese imperial experience for the current world (its relevance to China itself is self-evident and will not be addressed here).

Let us take one point, the imperial China's alleged dislike of expansionism. Whereas it is all too easy to recall periods of China's robust territorial expansion (see below), it is true that most emperors were reluctant to commit considerable resources toward territorial aggrandizement beyond the confines of China proper (roughly the territory of the Qin dynasty [221–207 BCE]). But what were the reasons for this reluctance? Zhou argues, "It was considered more important to achieve the 'cultivation of morality and peace' and maintain harmony, stability, and

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prosperity in the central part of the country than to annex foreign territory" (p. 158). It is true that such sentiments were voiced repeatedly, but should we accept them at their face value any more than, e.g., the Romans' insistence that they invariably fought *bellum iustum* ("just war")?[35] Can we not look beyond propaganda and discern deeper factors that prompted expansion or its cessation?

Recall that most Eurasian empires were predicated on the idea of universal rule, which played a major role in the imperial propaganda. In the vast majority of cases, however, the "universe" was confined to the empire's macro-region, determined by ecological and geographical constraints. Within the macro-region, an empire was predicated to maintain its dominance, if not total control. But expanding further was not feasible, as the costs of expansion normally outweighed any material and ideological benefits.[36] This was the case of Chinese empire as well. Its major achievement, which distinguishes it from most other imperial peers, was the impressive integration of most of its macro-region (the continental East Asia) into an administratively centralized entity with fairly unified elite culture and relatively advanced cultural integration of the lower strata as well. Although the Sinitic cultural sphere and the Chinese imperial space were never fully coterminous, the overlap was greater than in most other empires, in which "politics of difference" were the rule.[37] In China, the mutually reinforcing administrative and cultural unity did not prevent periodic fragmentation, but it facilitated renewed integration of the realm after periods of division. This repeated resurrection of the unified empire in the agricultural heartland of East Asia—prompted by the political actors' universal acceptance of the dictum "Stability is in unity"—distinguishes China from other empires. Within the confines of what we call "China proper," political unity remained the default choice, which was not the case in other imperial macro-regions.[38]

It should be recalled here that the formation of "China proper" as we now call it was by itself the result of robust territorial expansion of early imperial regimes. The realm unified by the Qin dynasty was dramatically larger than the Zhou oikouménē. For instance, vast areas to the south of the Yangzi were peripheral to the Zhou civilization well into the end of the Warring States period but were duly incorporated by the Qin.[39] This was even more notable with regard to the southeastern coastal areas (known under the generic name of Yue [越]). Even on the very eve of China's imperial unification, these were considered not just culturally distinct but also irrelevant as an avenue of expansion because they were

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too difficult to control.[40] It was only through the efforts of the First Emperor of Qin, later reenacted by Emperor Wu of Han (漢武帝, r. 141–87 BCE) that these areas became incorporated into Chinese political and cultural sphere (in due time becoming China's economic and cultural core). Taking this angle, we may aver that China was originally no less expansionist than other major empires. It was simply more successful in gradually integrating newly acquired territories.

However, once the empire absorbed most of the agriculturally productive territories in East Asia, its expansionist zeal receded indeed. Through trial and error, its leaders learned that "All-under-Heaven" has its limits insofar as the Son of Heaven's direct control is concerned.[41] Economically speaking, further expansion (e.g., into Mongolian steppes, the Western Regions [Xinjiang], Tibetan Plateau, Manchurian forests, or Korea) was prohibitively costly. Such an expansion could be undertaken on account of security concerns, though, as was the case under the Qing dynasty [清, 1636/1644–1912], when the struggle against the rival Junghar imperial enterprise caused the Qing armies to march westwards, dramatically expanding the Qing imperial space.[42] This expansion surely bolstered the emperors' prestige, but was of no direct benefit to the empire's economic wellbeing. This situation closely resembles that of Indian empires (the Indian subcontinent was infinitely richer than, e.g., neighboring Afghanistan or Myanmar). By contrast, elsewhere, empires could profit tremendously from appropriating agriculturally productive areas or lucrative commercial hubs, such as Egypt, which was coveted by the Assyrians, Persians, Romans, Arabs, Ottomans, and later the French and British. In those cases, the profits of the conquest could outweigh its costs, which was not true for China (or India).

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The second, and more peculiarly Chinese, reason for the lack of expansionist zeal was the composition of the ruling elite during much of China's imperial period. Whereas most imperial dynasties were established "on horseback" and in their early years the military played an important role in the imperial leadership, prompting military activism and often robust expansion, this situation normally did not last long. Gradually (and at a very different pace from one dynasty to the next), the literati took command, relegating military officers to lower positions in the imperial hierarchy. Most literati tended to advocate defensive policies simply because of their "class interest," i.e., to prevent the military commanders' renewed rise to prominence. This was another major reason for the expansion's cessation. To which extent this state of affairs

is peculiar to imperial China or shared by other imperial regimes in Eurasia remains to be examined.

Beyond the above factors one may argue that the third reason which made Chinese empires less warlike than most of their peers elsewhere in Eurasia was the absence of a religious motivation to expand. China lacked universalist proselytizing religion (or, more precisely, it was on the recipient's side of these religions, be they Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, or Manicheism). Its leaders never considered bringing the eternal and universal truth of e.g. Confucianism, Daoism, or even Buddhism to neighboring polities. Some of these polities (Japan, Korea, and Vietnam) were more receptive to Chinese culture, whereas others, such as most political entities within the Inner Asian cultural sphere, remained less sympathetic. The degree of cultural proximity or the lack thereof does not seem, however, to be a major factor shaping imperial China's relation with its neighbors; certainly not to any degree comparable with the situation in, e.g., the Christian and Islamic worlds.[43] To be sure, no Chinese ruler would consider sending armies abroad to bring the light of Confucianism to the locals. This observation is applicable, mutatis mutandis, to most empires and expansive polities in India (although of course one cannot dismiss the proselytizing zeal of Islamic dynasties there, most notably the Mughals).

This final observation may, in my eyes, become the singularly meaningful lesson from China (and India) to the modern world. Whereas "Chinese" or "Indian" wisdom could not preclude conflicts motivated by the rulers' greed, vanity, or security concerns (whether reasonable or ill-conceived), it could reduce at least one factor of conflicts: the desire of one polity to impose its own version of universalistic truth—be this the Gospels or Qur'an, socialism or multi-party democracy—on the rest of the world. Indeed, neither modern China nor modern India seem to be interested in actively exporting its worldview, sociopolitical model, or philosophy worldwide. Whereas this does not make these countries intrinsically peace-loving, at the very least it eliminates one reason for potential belligerence.[44] And this by itself could be a good contribution toward reducing the world's tensions.

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Notes

1 A single exception is the renowned scholar of Chinese philosophy, Roger T. Ames, who penned a defensive methodological essay in response to Olivelle; this essay, however, is surely not among Ames's best publications.

2 I discuss some of these questions in Yuri Pines, "Changing Views of *tianxia* in Pre-imperial Discourse," *Oriens Extremus*, Vol. 43, No. 1/2 (2002), pp. 101–16.

3 See Patrick Olivelle's introduction to his *King, Governance, and Law in Ancient India: Kautilya's Arthasastra* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), esp. pp. 25–28.

4 These two chapters are based on Han Fei's memorials submitted to the King of Qin: one, penned ca. 255–250 BCE, urges the king to start immediately decisive wars to unify "All-under-Heaven"; the second, penned ca. 233 BCE, conversely, begs the king to spare Han Fei's home state of Hán. The authorship of the first of these memorials is hotly disputed; see a brief summary in Yuri Pines, "Han Feizi: The World Driven by Self-Interest," in *Dao Companion to China's* fa *Tradition: The Philosophy of Governance by Impartial Standards*, ed. Yuri Pines (Dordrecht: Springer, forthcoming), q.v. for further references.

5 See Martin Kern, "Beyond Nativism: Reflections on Methodology and Ethics in the Study of Early China," in *At the Shores of the Sky: Asian Studies for Albert Hoffstädt*, eds. Paul W. Kroll and Jonathan A. Silk (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 83–98. For an earlier Chinese version of the article see Ke Mading (Martin Kern), "Chaoyue bentu zhuyi: zaoqi Zhongguo yanjiu de fangfa yu lilun" (Beyond Nativism: Methods and Theories in Early China Studies), *Xueshu Yuekan* (Academic Monthly), Vol. 49, No. 12 (2017), pp. 112–121.

6 The only chapter in the volume that tries to trace the history of pre-Qin diplomacy is that by Qi Haixia (chapter 13), but it suffers not just from inadequate understanding of historical sources but, primarily, from the author's awful English (see section 2 of the present article), which makes the discussion incomprehensible. In English, the only systematic discussion of pre-Qin interstate relations is Richard L. Walker, *The Multi-State System of Ancient China* (Hamden, Conn.: Shoe String, 1953). An updated study is much overdue.

7 For the Western Zhou system, see Li Feng, *Landscape and Power in Early China: The Crisis and Fall of the Western Zhou 1045–771 BC* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

8 Cited from Yuri Pines, *Zhou History Unearthed: The Bamboo Manuscript* Xinian *and Early Chinese Historiography* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), p. 157. See further discussion in Chen Minzhen and Yuri

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Pines, "Where is King Ping? The History and Historiography of the Zhou Dynasty's Eastward Relocation," *Asia Major* (Third Series), Vol. 31, No. 1 (2018), pp. 1–27.

9 For the formation of the Zhou ritual system and its impact on the social life of the Springs-and-Autumns polities, see Lothar von Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000–250 BC): The Archaeological Evidence* (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, UCLA, 2006); for the ritual's sociopolitical impact, see Yuri Pines, *Foundations of Confucian Thought: Intellectual Life in the Chunqiu Period, 722–453 B.C.E* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), pp. 89–104, and pp. 107–118.

10 There are considerable debates about the extent to which *Zuozhuan* reflects the realities of the period it depicts; compare David Schaberg, *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001); Pines, *Foundations*; and Li Wai-yee, *The Readability of the Past in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007).

11 The understanding that the ability of the Zhou kings to maintain their symbolic superiority was intrinsically linked to the preservation of the ritual system was put forward with the utmost clarity by Sima Guang (1019–1086) in his first (and ideologically most significant) authorial comment in *Zizhi tongjian* (Comprehensive Mirror to Aid the Government) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), chapter 1, pp. 1–5.

12 For the systematic discussion of Lord Huan's hegemony, see Yoshimoto Michimasa, *Chūgoku sen Shin shi no kenkyū* (Research on Pre-Qin History of China) (Kyōto: Kyōto University Press, 2005), pp. 100–139. Xunzi's positive views of hegemony (discussed in Yan Xuetong's chapter) often refer, even if implicitly, to Lord Huan's pattern.

13 Jin's hegemony is summarized in Yoshimoto, *Chūgoku*, pp. 140–191.

14 *Zuozhuan*, Xiang 29.11. All translations from *Zuozhuan* are borrowed from Stephen W. Durrant, Wai-yee Li, and David Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition / Zuozhuan Commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals"* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), with slight modifications if necessary. I use their division of the Lu lord's years into sections (this division is in turn borrowed from Yang Bojun, ed., *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* [*Chunqiu* and *Zuozhuan* with Glosses] [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990, rev. ed.]).

15 *Zuozhuan*, Xiang 27.4c.

16 For this conference (and its 541 BCE follow-up), see Kōno Osamu, "Chūgoku kodai no aru hibusō heiwa undō" (Movement for Disarmament and Peace in Ancient China), *Gunji Shigaku* (Military History), No. 13 (1978), pp. 64–74.

17 For the cultural outlook of Wu and Yue, see Lothar von Falkenhausen, "The Waning of the Bronze Age: Material Culture and Social Developments,

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770–481 B.C.," in *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, eds. Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 352–544), pp. 525–542. For the challenges their power posed to the ritual-based interstate norms, see Pines, *Foundations*, pp. 117–118.

18 Newly available materials, such as the bamboo manuscript *Xinian* from the Tsinghua University collection of looted manuscripts (*Qinghua jian*), provide important information about the interstate politics of the fifth century BCE (the period which is inadequately covered in received texts). See more in Yuri Pines, *Zhou History Unearthed*, pp. 112–120.

19 For the summary of interstate relations during the Warring States period, see Mark E. Lewis, "Warring States: Political History," in *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, pp. 587–650 (especially pp. 632–641).

20 For the studies and translations of the text, see James I. Crump, Jr., *Intrigues: Studies of the Chan-kuo Ts'e* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964; revised edition published in 1996); idem, tr., *Legends of the Warring States: Persuasions, Romances, and Stories from the Chan-kuo Ts'e* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999); Kim V. Vasil'ev, *Планы Сражающихся Царств (Исследования и переводы)* (Stratagems of the Warring States: Studies and Translations) (Moscow: Nauka, 1968). To my knowledge, the best study of the nature and composition of *Zhanguo ce* is He Jin, *'Zhanguo ce' yanjiu* (A Study of *Stratagems of the Warring States*) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2001).

21 See, e.g., Paul R. Goldin, "Rhetoric and Machination in *Stratagems of the Warring States*," in idem, *After Confucius: Studies in Early Chinese Philosophy* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), pp. 76–89. The text's compiler, the moralizing thinker Liu Xiang, stated in his preface that the intrigues depicted in the text were the necessary means of saving one's state, but also cautioned contemporaries against learning from the protagonists' behavior.

22 For the market paradigm, see Chen Qiyou, ed., *Han Feizi xin jiaozhu* (New Collated Glosses to *Han Feizi*) (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 2000), chapter 36, p. 849 (Nan yi [Objections, One]).

23 Yan does not seem to realize the magnitude of difference in the employment patterns between the Springs-and-Autumns and the Warring States period. For this difference, see, e.g., Yuri Pines, "Friends or Foes: Changing Concepts of Ruler-Minister Relations and the Notion of Loyalty in Pre-Imperial China," *Monumenta Serica*, No. 50 (2002), pp. 35–74.

24 Amazingly, neither Su Qin, nor his alleged nemesis, Zhang Yi (d. 309 BCE) are mentioned in *Bridging Two Worlds*. This overlooking of the two figures who epitomize the apex of early Chinese diplomacy (and its ultimate futility) is inexplicable.

25 Numerous anachronisms in the treatment of Su Qin in the *Stratagems* and in Sima Qian's (ca. 145–90 BCE) *Records of the Historian* (*Shiji*) caused not

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a few scholars to suggest that Su Qin is an entirely fictitious personality. See in particular Henri Maspero's (1883–1945) "Le Roman de Sou Ts'in," *Études Asiatiques*, Vol. 2 (1925), pp. 127–141 (the revised version published in *Mélanges Posthumes: Quatre études historiques sur la Chine* [Paris, 1950, electronic edition Chicoutimi, Québec, 2005]). However, the discovery of the silk manuscript *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* (Documents of the Warring States-Period Masters of Vertical and Horizontal Alliances) in Tomb 3, Mawangdui (1973) has permitted the correction of certain inaccuracies in Sima Qian's reconstruction of Su Qin's story, which caused Maspero's skepticism in the first place. See Tang Lan, "Sima Qian suo mei you jianguo de zhengui shiliao: Changsha Mawangdui boshu *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu*" (Precious Historical Documents Unseen by Sima Qian—The Silk Book from Mawangdui, Changsha: Documents of the Warring States-Period Masters of Vertical and Horizontal Alliances), in *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu*, ed., Mawangdui Hanmu boshu zhengli xiaozu (Mawangdui Han Tomb Silk Book Editorial Team) (Beijing: Wenwu, 1976), pp. 123–153. For debates about these new materials, compare Zhao Shengqun, "*Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* suo zai 'Su Qin shiji' bu kexin" (Su Qin's Deeds as Recorded in the *Documents of the Warring States-Period Masters of Vertical and Horizontal Alliances* are Unreliable), *Zhejiang shifan daxue xuebao (shehui kexueban)* (Journal of Zhejiang Normal University: Social Sciences), Vol. 32, No. 1 (2007), pp. 63–68 and Yang Yanhua, "Lun *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* dui Su Qin shiji suo yanjiu de gongxian ji jiazhi" (Contributions and Value of the Research on Su Qin's Deeds in the *Documents of the Warring States-Period Masters of Vertical and Horizontal Alliances*), *Jiangxi keji shifan xueyuan xuebao* (Journal of Jiangxi Normal Technological College), No. 4 (2011), pp. 105–109.

26 See He Jianzhang, ed., *Zhanguo ce zhushi* (Annotations to *Stratagems of the Warring States*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), 3.2, pp. 74–76 (Qin 1). I discuss this anecdote and its dubious veracity in Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire: Chinese Political Thought of the Warring States Era* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 142-144.

27 *Zhanguo ce*, 3.2, p. 75 (Qin 1).

28 See Lewis, "Warring States," pp. 633–634.

29 *Zhanguo ce*, 3.2, p. 74 (Qin 1).

30 *Han Feizi xin jiaozhu*, chapter 49, p. 1115 (Wu du [The five vermin]).

31 Chen Qiyou, ed., *Lüshi chunqiu jiaoshi* (The Collated Explanations of *Lüshi chunqiu*) (Shanghai: Xuelin, 1995), 13.3, p. 689 (Qu you [Getting rid of prejudice]); 26.2, p. 1706 (Wu da [Devotion to greatness]).

32 *Mengzi*, 1.6, cited from Yang Bojun, ed., *Mengzi yizhu* (*Mencius*, Translated and Annotated) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), p. 12.

33 See Yuri Pines, "'The One That Pervades the All' in Ancient Chinese Political thought: The Origins of 'The Great Unity' Paradigm," *T'oung Pao*, Vol. 86, No. 4–5 (2000), pp. 280–324.

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34 Pines, "'The One that Pervades the All'" and idem, *The Everlasting Empire: The Political Culture of Ancient China and Its Imperial Legacy* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 11–43.
35 See Alexander Yakobson, "Public Opinion, Foreign Policy and 'Just War' in the Late Republic," in *Diplomats and Diplomacy in the Roman World*, ed. Claude Eilers (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 45–72.
36 See discussion in Yuri Pines, with Michal Biran, and Jörg Rüpke, "Introduction: Empires and their Space," in *The Limits of Universal Rule: Eurasian Empires Compared*, eds. Yuri Pines, Michal Biran, and Jörg Rüpke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2021), pp. 1–48. We identify five imperial macro-regions in Eurasia: the Middle East, Europe, South Asia, East Asia, and the Inner Asian steppe belt.
37 See Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).
38 For the resilience of Chinese empire, see Pines, *The Everlasting Empire*. Several other empires, most notably the Romans (especially in the western parts of their realm) and the Caliphate advanced much toward cultural integration of their imperial space. The aspirations to restore their past glory—through a variety of *translatio imperii* attempts—remained politically important for centuries after their downfall. However, due to a variety of factors, these attempts were less successful than the restorations of the unified imperial polity in continental East Asia.
39 See Maxim Korolkov, *The Imperial Network in Ancient China: The Foundation of Sinitic Empire in Southern East Asia* (London: Routledge, 2022).
40 As noted in *Han Feizi*, chapter 11, p. 246 (Gu fen [Solitary resentment]).
41 See Yuri Pines, "Limits of All-under-Heaven: Ideology and Praxis of 'Great Unity' in Early Chinese Empire," in *The Limits of Universal Rule*, pp. 79–110.
42 For the dynamics of Qing's expansion, see Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005); Yingcong Dai, *The Sichuan Frontier and Tibet: Imperial Strategy in the Early Qing* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009); Matthew M. Mosca, "The Expansion of the Qing Empire Before 1800," in *The Limits of Universal Rule*, pp. 316–341.
43 In these worlds, the failure to establish a universal monotheistic empire gave place to Muslim and Christian (eventually Orthodox and Catholic) "commonwealths" (see Garth Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993]). By contrast, one cannot speak of a comparable "Confucian commonwealth" in East Asia.
44 Compare to the futility and dangers of exporting democracy as outlined, e.g., by Eric Hobsbawm, "The Dangers of Exporting Democracy," *The Guardian*, 22 January 2005, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/jan/22/usa.comment.

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