GLOBAL GOVERNANCE: NEW ORGANIZATIONAL CONCEPTS IN A CULTURALLY DIVERSE SYSTEM

Rosita Dellios, Australia

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that as the West re-balances with the East in 21st century global governance, new organizational concepts – with their associated forms and structures – will emerge. Of particular interest will be two organizational concepts. One is ‘harmonious world’ (hexie shijie), as articulated by PRC President Hu Jintao at the United Nations in 2005. It provides a nuanced Confucian form of global governance, adding to existing forms and norms of international organization. The other is ‘mandalic regionalism’. Drawing from Indian strategic and spiritual tradition, it better explains the types of multilateral regional structures that are developing in Asia. Both Confucian form and mandalic structure are compatible. They can even be mutually enhancing where the state provides political will, as in the case of China with its expanding network of multilateral relations. Western concepts of global management will themselves adapt to the diversity of multiple worlds, including those of Chinese and Indian import. In doing so, the West will reinvigorate its own conceptual frontiers in advancing the still formative phenomenon known as ‘global governance’.

KEYWORDS

Global governance, Confucianism, regionalism, China, India, international relations.

1. INTRODUCTION

International relations under conditions of globalization have given rise to the notion of ‘global governance’. The term recognizes the limitations of studying global politics at the state level of analysis, even though the state remains the final arbiter of sovereignty. Thus there prevails a continuity from the Westphalian system of European-derived international relations dating from 1648. Recent change has occurred in the context of a post-Cold War globalizing world transformed by the ‘Information Age’ and the rise of culturally diverse powers, most notably China but also India. These, in turn, are part of the BRICs – Brazil, Russia, India, China – whose economies are predicted to become globally dominant by mid-century (The Goldman Sachs Group 2003). Along with the four BRICs is a century deemed ‘Asian’ in view of Asia’s high performance economies, including Japan.

The objective of this paper is to identify new organizational concepts – with their associated forms and structures – that will emerge as the West re-balances with the East in 21st century global governance. The motivation of the research is that China’s rapid rise, followed by India and other Asian economies, has not been met by a setting out of the philosophical implications this development holds for the still nascent phenomenon, heuristically labeled ‘global governance’. To quote Thomas G. Weiss (2009) “global governance” is an analytical tool or “heuristic” device “to understand what is happening in today’s world” and refers to “collective efforts to identify, understand, or address worldwide problems that go beyond the capacities of individual states to solve; it reflects the capacity of the international system at any moment in time to provide government-like services in the absence of world government.” That such government-like services may take on Confucian or Indic modalities, hybridized and successfully adapted to prevailing systems, has not been entertained beyond accusations that the Chinese Communist Party has been engaging in self-serving rhetoric. As for Indic forms of governance, these are normally treated as mere pre-modern history. Such is the neglect in Western discourse of Indian strategic culture that India’s rise as a global power will come as more of a shock that that of China. The Middle Kingdom has, after all, Napoleon (purportedly) to thank for his warning: “Let the Chinese dragon sleep for when she wakes she will shake the world.” Fear invokes a certain preparedness, which India has failed to inspire – except for its smaller neighbors and its largest, China (see Dellios 2003).

The potential for a cultural deviation of global governance away from predominantly Western Enlightenment values represents a strangely neglected area of investigation. It is one which has partially been addressed by publications of Bond University’s Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies, an electronic think tank, of which this author is a founding member. The contribution of this paper is to integrate previous work by this author on Confucian governance, mandalic regionalism and Western concepts concerning global governance (see Culture Mandala, CEWCES Research Papers, and recent work by Dellios, 2008, 2009). The paper’s purpose is to suggest an integrative approach to organizational concepts in global governance: more
of a yin-yang correlativity within the global wheel, than a Hegelian clash of otherwise interdependent civilizations.

2. NEW ORGANIZATIONAL CONCEPTS FROM THE EAST

During Europe’s Dark Ages, Asia and its oceans were flourishing in trade and cross-currents of thought. The arrival of Europeans on the scene marked the beginning of the end for Asian polities, most notably the Chinese Celestial Empire. It was eventually evicted from its central position in the East Asia order, and forced to kowtow to the West. The fate of the Indians was worse for they, unlike the Chinese, had been colonized. Interestingly, in 21st century Britain, the prelude to these spacial and spiritual conquests was presented rather optimistically in a museum exhibition. ‘Encounters: The Meeting of Asia and Europe 1500-1800’, held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2004, claimed in its catalogue that until 1800 there were no fixed “boundaries between different cultures” which exhibited “fluidity and hybridity” (quoted in Pankaj Mishra 2004). One wonders whether this is a sentiment of the present era of globalization projected back onto the world stage in post-1500 when a dramatic shift in the distribution of power occurred in favor of the West, or a warning of what is to come in the event of a rebalancing the other way.

In his review of the ‘Encounters’ exhibition, Pankaj Mishra (2004) did note that with the decline of the great empires of the East – the Ottoman, Moghul, and Qing – and Europe’s industrial-technological advancements that fueled the imperialist imperative, there was scant regard for conquered civilizations: Britain’s Lord Macaulay “thought that Indian learning was mostly worthless” and even the English political philosopher, John Stuart Mill, “assumed that Indians had to first grow up under British tutelage before they could accept the good things - democracy, economic freedom, science - that the west had to offer them.” Will this happen when a New Confucianism returns to center stage? When Indian power projects in ever widening geostrategic mandalas of influence?

While these questions are easily posed, they are not so comfortably answered. Comfortable or not, that which can be said is that after 500 years of Western dominance, it can no longer be assumed that the world will continue to operate in accordance with Western constructs of thought, even if the practice appears largely unchanged. Not only is there a set of culturally diverse players rising to global prominence, most notably the BRICs – Brazil, Russia, India, China – but the 2008-09 global financial crisis (GFC) revealed a willingness to marginalize the traditional Western-centric Group of Eight (G8), comprising France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK, US, Canada, and Russia – not China, in preference for the Group of Twenty (G20). The G20 of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors had formed in 1999 as a response largely to the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98 and the emergence of the developing nations that needed representation in global economic governance institutions. G20’s members may be divided, as Coral Bell (2009:41) distinguishes, into great powers (USA, China, India, Russia, EU and Japan), major emerging powers (Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Indonesia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, South Korea and South Africa), and established, developed Western powers (Germany, UK, France, Italy, Canada and Spain).

With the G20 and GFC, great power multilateralism continued as an international practice but the interests of non-Western states were now being asserted. Such interests represent diverse genealogical roots. China, with its emergence as a 21st century global power, is neither ‘Western’ nor predominantly Christian, or even a child of the Enlightenment. The Middle Kingdom developed independently of Western philosophy, recasting foreign ideas - including Marxism and Capitalism – within its own of templates of thought. The international political system of the Christian West has not similarly availed itself of Chinese, or – for that matter – Islamic, philosophy in the 19th and 20th centuries, as it was not the one so damaged that it needed to find a way to restore itself. The sick man of Asia, Confucian China, like the sick man of Europe, the Ottoman Empire as the last Islamic Caliphate, both needed to change their systems with new thinking.

The prevailing system of sovereign states which dates to the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 has shown remarkable continuity and a capacity to absorb systemic change. Most graphically this is demonstrated in state responses to globalization and the emergence of a borderless world. States participate in global processes through international inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) like the United Nations (UN) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with their sovereignty intact; but they are also ‘pooling’ sovereignty. In this, Europe is again the experimental site of international order, with the European Union (EU) as the forerunner of this form of regionalism. Less politically integrated but regionally coherent systems have become the common habitat of states: the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), African Union (AU) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) are notable examples. Economic regions abound even more, for example, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the South American regional trade agreement known as Mercosur.

So while the non-European societies converged into the mainstream Western international system, the international system itself has undergone dynamic but stable change. Such is the scope of change that
comparatively new members of the Westphalian system jealously guard their sovereignty rights, while the old order often condones such interventionist principles as the UN ‘responsibility to protect’, believing that intervention in the internal affairs of states is justified on humanitarian grounds. The new credo has in many respects become a sovereignty-denying one: “states forfeit their sovereignty rights when they violate or fail to protect the basic rights of their citizens” (Shimko 2008:245). Human rights, human security and “problems without passports” (Annan 2002), like climate change, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and pandemics, are the order of the day in the global incarnation of a Western-derived world order.

This ability to adapt may be explained by various Western epistemologies of change, ranging from the Hegelian dialectics of thesis (the state), antithesis (globalised borderless world) and synthesis (institutions and regimes in which states are members); to Social Constructivism, advocated by advocated by Alexander Wendt (1999), with its emphasis on change through shared meanings of international behavior and norm formation; and Complex Adaptive Systems which are self-organizing. These three examples are of interest as they will be shown to have similarities with a number of Eastern concepts discussed below.

With regard to the dialectical model, the worst of the realist paradigm of the struggle for power through traditional military (hard) balancing may be substituted with institutional or ‘soft balancing’, which involves “countering pressures or threats through initiating, utilizing, and dominating multilateral institutions” (He 2008:489). Moreover, as Kai He (ibid.) elaborates:

“The interplay between the distribution of capabilities and strong economic interdependence shapes states’ decisions on when and how to employ this strategy. Historical examples include: inclusive and exclusive efforts by Third World states and the superpowers to organize voting blocs in the UN during the Cold War; inclusive institutional balancing of ASEAN states to constrain China and ensure US support in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) after the Cold War; exclusive institutional balancing of ASEAN states against the US in the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) summit after the Southeast Asian financial crisis. These examples illustrate the logic of institutional balancing under the conditions of bipolarity, incipient multipolarity, and unipolarity.”

The sovereign nature of the state has not changed, but its modus operandi has. This is performed via a synthesis of the best that the global and regional levels of organization have to offer in dealing with transnational security issues, and the state’s sovereign power to enact the normative world in which it must survive and prosper. The state still has agency to pursue its national interests, but in doing so within a larger organizational framework its behavior is tempered by rules, codes of conduct and procedures.

Social Constructivism, by contrast, would say that the sovereign nature of the state has changed, as well its modus operandi. This is because it is this larger context of operations found in multilateral institutions which provides, in the words of Alexander Wendt (2003: 498), the ground for “the micro or bottom-up process of self-organization, and the macro or top-down process of structural constitution.” Social Constructivists thus see change as occurring through mutual interaction and norm formation.

To theories of the dialectical transformation of world order, and the intersubjective changes of Social Constructivism, may be added complexity theory with its adaptive properties. Indeed, the ‘work-in-progress’ identity of nations that comes from Social Constructivism also accords with adaptive behaviour. Complex Adaptive Systems (Capra 1976, 2002; Davies 2004; Hearn, Rooney & Wright 2008; for its application to international relations, see Denemark 1999; and Wendt 2003) are bottom-up self-organizers. They are able to maintain themselves by changing to fit new conditions. Complexity theory has been applied in contemporary military thinking, as evidenced by the U.S.’s Hybrid Wars and Australia’s Adaptive Warfare. With regard to the former, the February 2010 US Quadrennial Defense Review Report states:

“The term ‘hybrid’ has recently been used to capture the seemingly increased complexity of war, the multiplicity of actors involved, and the blurring between traditional categories of conflict. While the existence of innovative adversaries is not new, today’s hybrid approaches demand that U.S. forces prepare for a range of conflicts. These may involve state adversaries that employ protracted forms of warfare, possibly using proxy forces to coerce and intimidate, or non-state actors using operational concepts and high-end capabilities traditionally associated with states.”

Just as superior military technology and its new doctrines of application ultimately marked the transition from one world order to another, so too the military’s adoption of complex adaptive systems presents an area of fruitful investigation. It is true that industrialization and hence economic power were needed before military power could propel the trinity of the Imperial Age’s motivations: ‘God, gold, and glory’. However, with the East’s economic credentials described and analysed at length, its military processes are still not grasped, especially China’s – be it for reasons of opacity, incomplete modernization and lack of posturing. However, it should be noted that China has incorporated the logic of Complex Adaptive Systems to its post-2004 defense doctrine of “winning local wars in conditions of informationization” (xinxihua) (The State Council Information Office 2009). Local wars refer to limited wars and informationization is network-centric warfare that, paradoxically, has the potential for ‘unrestricted warfare’ (the title of a Chinese publication, see Qiao and Wang
1999) in that it targets the enabling conditions of the technological society upon which globalization is dependent. China’s Computer Network Operations are essential to its military modernization, which is still unfolding and which is consistently deemed to be defensive under China’s commitment to “peaceful development” (heping fazhan). Complex Adaptive Systems theory is thus relevant to both battlefield and extramilitary operations for the East as much as the West where the latest military developments are concerned.

The same is true of dialectics and Social Constructivism, but with Chinese characteristics. The traditional Chinese theory of correlativity is one in which the parties of a relationship make the necessary conditions for being what they are, for example, teacher and student. It is a condition, as Hall and Ames (1987: 17) put it, of “each requiring the other for adequate articulation”. Such correlativity accords with the yin-yang philosophy of interactive, and hence dynamic, difference and balance within the whole. Like Social Constructivism, it is intersubjective and allows for identities to change in a (Chinese) dialectical fashion.

While similarities are not difficult to find, differences can be illuminating. The emerging distribution of power in the shift from West to East, may well entail a future in which synthesis, as the outcome of the dialectics of thesis and antithesis, is not sought. It becomes a function of correlativity, as in yin-yang mutual articulation (why seek synthesis into an ideal when the relationship reality is in permanent process), and tolerance of apparent paradox (for example, ‘winning local wars’ through conditions of ’unrestricted warfare’). Even the Jain acceptance of difference as intrinsic to an object and beyond a human capacity to quantify or define renders global affairs inherently more open to interpretation than the ‘accepted wisdom’ of the West. The Jain parable of the prince, the elephant and the blind men expresses this Jain belief well.

It is a story about an Indian prince who wished to conduct an experiment on the nature of knowledge. The experiment involved six blind men and an elephant about which the men were told nothing. The prince assigned each of the blind men to a different part of the elephant. He then asked them to examine and describe the object of their consideration. Not knowing what they were dealing with, each had a different story to tell. Thus the man assigned the elephant's leg thought it was a tree. He who examined the trunk, concluding it to be a snake. This was nothing like the description which came from the man examining the elephant's ear. To him it was a large winnowing fan. As for the tail, its blind investigator was confident it had to be a broom. And so the divergent descriptions went; no one imagined the whole elephant.

The results of the prince's experiment about the nature of knowledge may seem obvious, but what they mean as a guide for action is not so evident. That which is obvious is that without the whole picture we cannot make informed judgements, but only prejudicial or approximate ones. The less obvious meaning is whether this is necessarily a problem. According to Steven Warshaw (1994: 25): "Through this parable, the Jains emphasised that all knowledge was relative and subject to varying points of view. The whole truth was a mystery for which men groped blindly. In India, this doctrine resulted in a growing tolerance for the opinions of others."

Having surveyed the similarities and differences between selected Eastern and Western ideas pertinent to the international system, new organizational concepts – with their associated forms and structures – may be envisaged to emerge. Below two are examined. One is a form from China and the other is a structure from India.

### 2.1. The Form: Harmonious World (Hexie Shijie)

In October 2005, PRC President Hu Jintao, articulated China’s foreign policy goals of a ‘harmonious world’ (hexie shijie), identifying this as the primary condition for peace and development in international relations. The following year of 2006 was the first in which China implemented its “harmonious world-oriented” diplomacy which took into account “both its national interests and the interests of other countries” (Yan 2006). Harmonious world, like global governance, may be viewed as a journey. It ultimate destination, like a river’s journey to the sea, may be a cosmopolitan “datong” – translated as greater community or universal commonwealth – but at present it is still a river having only just emerged from its source in the upper reaches of Chinese cultural experience, strongly infused with the humanist instincts of Confucianism. Harmonious world is a form – a philosophical outlook that is based on ‘human-heartedness’ (ren) and propriety or codes of humane conduct (li).

The introductory stage of the harmonious world concept in the first decade of the 21st century would render it as a Confucian nuance on a cosmopolitan form of global governance. In strategic terms, cosmopolitan global governance (inclusive of recent Confucian layering) has demonstrated intent at transnational order but not adequate capability. Expresed in the metaphor of the market, Qin Yaqing, Vice President of the China Foreign Affairs University, Professor of International Relations and translator of the Alexander Wendt’s writings on Social Constructivism, has highlighted a problem between “supply and demand”: “The major problem today is between demand for global governance and the conspicuous inadequacy of the global governance regime” (Qin 2009). How, he asks, can international actors work together to deal with the transnational threats we face? These include climate change, pandemics, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, financial instability, and migration. He offers the example of the GFC of 2008-09 in drawing attention to the limitations of international financial
regimes. “Reform is necessary,” he concludes. “This reform is not to overthrow existing regimes, but we must cooperate to make them suitable for today’s problems” (ibid.).

A harmonious world concept that locates itself in cosmopolitan (rather than unequitable, unaccountable and self-serving) global governance remains inclusive of a respect for the UN, the instructive value of the EU model and an acknowledgement of the continued utility of US leadership in the wider scheme of international life. It is here in the active context of positive global governance that China injects the values of Confucius in accordance with the prevailing quest for a stable, peaceful and cooperative system that privileges diplomacy over militarism, multilateral institutionalism over power politics, as well as a global ethic1 and intercivilizational dialogue over a clash of civilizations. As noted by Jian Zhang (2005), to many Chinese scholars, “the concept of a ‘harmonious world’ offers a more effective approach to deal with security challenges in an increasingly globalised world than the narrow-minded ‘democratic peace’ theory and the paranoia-driven ‘clash of civilization’ [sic] thesis, and should be the guiding principle of international relations in the 21st century.”

It is, however, still an eclectic concept in the minds of many outside the Confucian cultural area, identified with ritualistic classical China or seen as a perverse Communist ploy to lull the world into a false sense of security that the dragon still sleeps. The China threat thesis – which sees China’s growth as a threat to the US-backed world order - has given dialectical impetus to the harmonious world concept, which favors the “peaceful development” (heping fazhan) thesis. All warfare might well be based on deception, in the teaching of China’s famous classical strategist, Sun Tzu, but sustainable peace requires harmony, as emphasized in Confucian and Daoist thought.

That President Hu Jintao chose the UN’s 60th anniversary in 2005 to articulate the idea of constructing a harmonious world is indicative of an attempt to render this Confucian idea as more than merely Chinese, that harmonious world is, in effect, harmonious with the UN’s vision and global governance cooperation. This demystifies the concept but also steers clear of rendering ‘harmonious world’ as yet another impossibly idealistic slogan bandied about in global discourse. Hu Jintao’s speech at the UN on 15 September 2005 is worth noting in its concrete approach to bring harmonious world values into the global system. He offers a four-point policy prescription (Xinhua 2005):

1. **Multilateralism - for the purpose of common security under UN auspices**
   “We must abandon the Cold War mentality, cultivate a new security concept featuring trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation, and build a fair and effective collective security mechanism aimed at preventing war and conflict and safeguarding world peace and security . . . [The UN’s role] can only be strengthened and must not in any way be weakened.”

2. **Mutually beneficial cooperation (win-win) - for common prosperity**
   “We should work actively to establish and improve a multilateral trading system that is open, fair and non-discriminatory.” He also suggested worldwide energy dialogue and cooperation be stepped up to jointly maintain energy security and energy market stability.

3. **Inclusiveness - all civilizations coexist harmoniously**
   “In the course of human history, all civilizations have, in their own way, made positive contributions to the overall human progress. Uniformity, if imposed on them, can only take away their vitality and cause them to become rigid and decline. The world’s civilizations may differ in age, but none is better or more superior more others . . . We should endeavor to preserve the diversity of civilizations in the spirit of equality and openness, make international relations more democratic and jointly build a harmonious world where all civilizations coexist and accommodate each other.”

4. **UN reform**
   The UN needs “rational and necessary reform” to maintain its authority, improve its efficacy and give a better scope to its role in meeting new threats and new challenges. The UN reform “may be conducted step by step,” focusing on easier tasks first and more difficult ones later in order to achieve maximized benefits, he said.

Related to the above, China’s “new security concept”, noted in its defense white papers from 1998 (The Information Office of the State Council) holds for a more inclusive and multilateral doctrine that permeates Beijing’s whole governance diplomacy in Asia Pacific. The “new security concept” in its features of “mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination with a view to securing a long-term and favorable international and surrounding environment” (ibid.) is not so much new but adapted for the present era. It dates back to 1982 when China’s reformist leader, Deng Xiaoping, pronounced the international situation to be sufficiently stable

---

1 See the Foundation for a Global Ethic (http://www.weltethos.org/dat-english/index.htm) and the writings of Hans Küng.
for China to focus on economic development. This was in contrast to the theme of “war and revolution” that characterized the strategic thought of his predecessor, Mao Zedong. Despite contrasts in leadership preoccupations, the “new security concept” remains faithful to the original “five principles of peaceful coexistence” which located China as a non-aggressive power in the 1950s, and which are still evoked in the 2006 defense white paper: “China maintains military contacts with other countries on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, and develops cooperative military relations that are non-aligned, non-confrontational and not directed against any third party.” How this may be structured is suggested below in the second new organizational concept, mandalic regionalism, which is also derived from an ancient philosophy.

2.2. The Structure: Mandalic Regionalism

A mandala represents an inter-relational whole, a cosmogram composed of concentric forms. While the word comes from Sanskrit to denote a sacred circle, the appearance and experience of mandala is universal - and universalising. The term is commonly used to describe a cosmogram used for spiritual contemplation, especially in Hinduism and Buddhism. It is also a specialist term employed by scholars to denote traditional South and Southeast Asian political formations. Early political application may be found in Kautilya's *Arthashastra* or *The Science of Means*, a 3rd Century BCE Indian ‘Realist’ text (Kautilya 1967), in which there are designated relationships of power (rather than more mechanistic balances); while the repoliticisation of the mandala concept began after the Cold War and with the impact of globalization (see CEWCES Research Papers and *Culture Mandala*)

Just as UNICEF Bhutan has translated the guiding principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) into a mandala - blending the Buddhist approach to life with the basic framework of the CRC (UNICEF Bhutan n.d.) – so, too, the concept of global governance may benefit from the mandala as a cross-cultural technology for representing the ‘map’ of governance. By employing the mandala as a metaphor and model of a conceptual artifact indigenous to many parts of Asia (South, Central, Southeast and Northeast), it is possible to understand how governance is mandalically constituted. In Western theoretical discourse, equivalence may be found with the above noted Social Constructivism and Complex Adaptive Systems.

A ‘mandalic region’ here refers to an amalgam of the two meanings of mandala: the spiritual and the political (Arthashastra relationships of power, both competitive and cooperative). The reason for this is that it incorporates the normative perspective of constructivism with the adaptive architectural qualities of the systems approach. Moreover, Buddhism’s principle of ‘codependent origination’ is highly pertinent to constructivist mutuality and the micro-macro processes of complex adaptive systems. Codependent origination stresses the interdependent existence of all phenomena; that they are empty of their own existence and therefore contingent. The pivotal Buddhist term, ‘emptiness’ (Sanskrit: sunyata), is a simplified form of codependent origination (see Grey 2005, 2007).

A ‘mandalic region’ is a Hindu-Buddhist-inspired model of regionalism in a deterritorialised world. The borderless world is also a cosmological world. This is not only empirically evident in the way in which market values are no longer constrained within national borders, providing a secular cosmology, but also religious values. Thriving cosmological communities may be found in the growth religions of the 21st century: Islam and Buddhism. Thus a mandalic region in the global age is also a global region. It displays spatial and relational features that give rise to the notion of ‘regional place in global space’. Mandala is an apt metaphor for the global age because, like globalization, it represents a compression of a wider field of experiences. Its contours are a symbolic rendering of a complexity that co-arises. Mandala as a cultural technology may be equated with ‘tantra’, a term used to refer to a body of Hindu and Buddhist practices that hinge on the macrocosm-microcosm interaction.

The region as the unit of analysis deserves particular attention as it is on this (mandalic) platform that global macro forces are moderated to address the security of the microcosms of state and individual. Regional governance, then, becomes a significant factor in the management of economic and other security down the scale to states and citizens as well as up to the global level. In accordance with Complex Adaptive Systems, it works across multiples scales. Functionally speaking if, for example, economic prosperity is the goal of the mandala (its centre), then the region is the theatre of operations for its implementation; herein reside the conditions that must be mastered for the goal. Governance of the region may be regarded as the strategy employed. The institutions and actors involved in the strategy also require consideration, especially their correlative (yin-yang) relationship when viewed from a Chinese philosophical standpoint. For example, how will a declining global power (US) relate with an ascending one (PRC)? What two peer powers, China and India? Or the China-Russia dyad?

Their relationship may be mutually constraining through ‘institutional balancing’ (noted above). This is familiar language in traditional Chinese thought with its emphasis on harmonising the generative and restrictive energies of the ‘five elements’ (*wuxing*: earth, metal, water, wood, and fire) within the concept of the yin-yang and the five elements. For example, the wood element representing growth and creation, is constrained by metal.
(hard power and capability), but fire (change and activity: revolution or transcendence) can melt metal; on the other hand, water (cool and in pursuit of the path of least resistance) is supportive of wood, and earth (reproduction and nourishment: economy) is supportive of metal.

Chinese strategic culture still reflects a desire to pursue the balanced path, and China’s disposition is clearly of relevance to the future profile of the Asia-Pacific mandalic region. The Middle Kingdom’s economic, diplomatic and strategic influence renders it a key regional player. Southeast and Central Asia are two notable examples of mandalic sub-regions within the larger Asia-Pacific mandala.

ASEAN and its extensions (the ‘ASEAN Plus’ system, ARF, AFTA,2 and others) are where the big powers operate. Sensibly, China has put ASEAN in the driving seat of its Southeast Asian governance diplomacy. China’s approach – like ASEAN’s – is marked by flexibility and informality, as regional cooperation has tended to start with informal dialogue and then progress to practical projects. According to Chinese constructivist scholar, Qin Yaqing (2008), there is also an emphasis on process rather than results. This is in accordance with Confucian cultural dynamics. For example, in the East Asian summit, the ‘comfort level principle’ exists. Progress may be slow but process ensures it is sustainable (ibid.). Another feature of China’s behavior is that it prefers to see small and medium size countries taking the lead, not itself.

The other theatre of China’s Asia strategy is Central Asia, focusing on the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). This was China’s first initiative in forming a multilateral organization. It was originally established in 1996 as the ‘Shanghai Five’ - comprising China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan - to demilitarize the old Sino-Soviet border and resolve border demarcation disputes. In 1999 ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ was seen as the most pressing danger for Central Asian governments; fighting ‘terrorism, separatism and extremism’ came to dominate the agenda. For China the restive Xinjiang region was its primary concern, and to this day Beijing maintains tight security against the Turkic Muslim Uyghurs. The ‘Shanghai Five’ became the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in July 2001 with the addition of Uzbekistan. Mongolia joined as an SCO observer in 2004, with India, Pakistan and Iran becoming observers in 2005. This has expanded SCO’s regional range to South Asia and the Middle East, and incorporated the three of the BRICs - Russia, China and India – that represent the rising powers of the 21st century. Observer status is not confined to interested states but may also extend to intergovernmental international organizations. In the integration of new states or organizations, a ‘dialogue partner’ mechanism is being introduced, thereby allowing for an earlier stage to observer status and fully fledged member.

It is through SCO as a new form of regional governance that the Russia-China relationship may be better understood as having outgrown the old notion of alliances, as demonstrated by China’s and SCO’s ‘neutrality’ over Russia’s 2008 invasion of Georgia. China and Russia as SCO’s big powers may be mutually restrictive within the organization but they also combine to give the SCO the strategic clout it needs to address Western influence in the region. Eventually the United States may also be part of the expanding mandalic regions that China cultivates.

Because disparities in power cannot be ignored even if great power influence is exercised indirectly or discreetly, or through soft institutional balancing, it has been suggested that a hierarchic order is in fact the de facto position favored by the Southeast Asian nations: the United States at the top, China as the regional great power, followed by India, Japan, and South Korea as “second-tier regional powers” (Gog 2005). This represents a hierarchy of power distribution rather than an institutional governance scenario as represented by the European Union model at the far end of the realist-institutionalist spectrum.

However, the arrangement could also be viewed as one of a “mandalic” nesting of states that allows relations to be established through functional engagement from the center, for it is usually easier to interconnect than integrate. Hence the system of a core set of states “plus” other states or organizations. Clearly ASEAN has been the leader in this respect, but SCO is developing it too – for example SCO+Afghanistan. Transregional relations are one outcome, as shown by ASEAN signing a cooperation agreement with SCO in 2005. Meanwhile the EU is looking at an “ad hoc dialogue” with SCO. The implications here for a cooperative rather than competitive dynamic are apparent. As with the notion of process being more important than results, so too correlative relationships are a feature of China’s regional security thinking. Working with others on the basis of equality means recognizing them as being part of one’s identity-cum-security.

3. CONCLUSION

The key finding of this paper is that the rise of non-Western states in a Western-derived world order will usher in new organizational concepts for global governance, which is itself a phenomenon at its early and therefore malleable stage of development. With China and India as the two biggest nations in terms of population and with considerable cross-sector growth potential, it is important to identify their conceptual grounding in order to

2 ASEAN Free Trade Agreement
hypothesize governance forms and structures. Confucian form in mandalic structure recognizes China’s current emphasis on a harmonious world foreign policy within a structure that harks back to early Indic regionalism in Southeast Asia, and in which China partook through its traditional world order of tribute-trade relations. The difference today is that the Western international system has evolved beyond a mere sovereignty within anarchy. For the rising powers to succeed in this system and for the established ones to remain viable, governance through multilateral institutions and a cosmopolitan civil society will be increasingly in demand, especially under the imperative of addressing the growth of globalization’s ‘problems without passports’. The advantage of incorporating Eastern concepts is that this represents a self-organizing method of adapting to new conditions of a rebalancing of East and West. In doing so, intersubjective relations allow for a yin-yang correlativity – or Social Constructivist change toward more cooperative behavior.

Limitations are that China’s leadership may become more nationalist than internationalist Confucian in the future, especially if mutual (correlative) trust does not take root. India’s mandalic strategic culture could also veer toward suspicion and competition as the basis of relations rather than cooperation as the building block. Thus the predictive quality of both Confucian form and mandalic structure for the positive development of global governance is not assured. However the application of both over time increases the probability of this positive scenario occurring. For this reason more work needs to be done on the contemporary utility of Eastern concepts of governance, correlative to Western organizational ideas.

REFERENCES


