

Confucianism and Philosophy of a Shared-Future Global Community in an Inter-civilisational World Order: Comparative Analysis of Their Relationships and Prospects

Barack Lujia Bao 

Faculty Fellow and Researcher, Xianda College of Economics and Humanities of Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai, China

✉ **Corresponding Author:** Barack Lujia Bao, **E-mail:** baolujiamzd@qq.com; 2011068@xdsisu.edu.cn

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ABSTRACT

The Western-initiating international relations theoretical framework plays a fairly dominant role in analysing and initiating the prospects and scenarios of international order. However, with the peaceful rise of China, whose civilisation sustains almost 5000 years, China is playing a more proactive role in inter-civilisational international order; thus, in-depth explorations into Confucianism as the core element of Han Chinese Civilisation have been resurgent on the world stage, and it is indispensable for relevant scholars, intellectuals and strategists to closely evaluate unexploited implications and demystify the sustainability and intrinsic dynamism of Confucianism-themed Han Chinese Civilisation, and its implicit ties with a comparable philosophical concept of a global community of shared future. Through historical-studies approaches and comparative methodologies, the primary purpose of this paper seeks to crucially investigate a potential relationship between Confucianism and the philosophical concept of a global community of shared future ranging from the perspectives of historical origin, context, substance and so forth. It can be argued that the philosophical standpoint of a community of shared future for humankind bears historical significance and merits that Confucian thoughts somehow generate. This paper of research findings meanwhile predicts that China's inter-civilisational international engagement as part of China's soft-power strategy will proceed beyond classical state-based theoretic framework and the Confucian thoughts of the prevalence of public spirit and harmony without homogeneity will grow as an alternative guiding international norm in better services of rebuilding normative, inter-civilisational international order that a global community demands.

1. Introduction

Confucianism has not only played an influential role in Chinese intellectual and philosophical chronicle but also an unexpectedly crucial role in world's inter-civilisation exchanges as world's civilisations are diversified. It is with the peaceful rise of China that considerable significant thoughts of numerous ancient Chinese intellectual thinkers and implicit implications behind them have never been more noticeable than they were three decades or four decades ago at a time when China was not in a position of so deeply engaging with the rest of the world in a multidimensional way. The dissemination of Confucianism from Asia to Europe and chronological interaction and exchanges with European Enlightenment Movements of ideas necessitate important interpretation of inter-civilisation-based values of Confucianism. Nowadays, numerous issues at the political, economic, social levels require no unfitting decoupling of international actors or international players but more coordinated, collaborative interstate, inter-regional, inter-continental engagement and cooperation with original 'prescribed medications': an effective, conceptual formula of addressing those urgent, underlying global issues. Meanwhile, it is under this circumstance of unprecedented, transformative changes in the inter-civilisational world order that a comparable philosophical concept, i.e. a community of a shared future for humankind, has come into existence on the world stage, whose perception can be viewed as

supplementary or alternative to the classical, neoliberal Western world system. This concept of a global community of shared futures may bear certain roots of ancient Chinese philosophical thoughts, which especially includes the Confucian thought that a public spirit will rule all under the Heaven when the great Way prevails or the yearnings of harmony without homogeneity. It is fair to observe that the concept of a public spirit, prevalence of grand course as well as non-homogeneous harmony from the School of Confucianism can be identified as a potential prelude to the concept of a community of a shared future for humankind. At an inter-civilisation level, the world of civilisations can be fairly divided by numerous diverse regional and inter-regional civilisations, which embraces three consequential existential inter-regional, intercontinental civilisations on the international stage: Modern Western Civilisation, Islamic Civilisation, and Han Chinese Civilisation. The natures and substances behind these three heterogeneous civilisations chronologically interact, overlap, and sometimes collide, especially the clash between Modern Western Civilisation and Islamic Civilisation, which has been more noticeable and significantly influential within the chronicle of human civilisation, engendering inter-cultural, trans-civilisational antagonistic structures and scenarios. To the contrary, rarely has Confucianism-themed Han-Chinese civilisation itself, one of the most historically sustainable civilisations, pursued cultural predominance; instead, it has sought to, and still seeks to, create a harmonious, inclusive, non-exclusive position with neighbouring civilisations by literature, calligraphy, poetry and sometimes trade of communities. Therefore, it can be argued that the concept of a public spirit, of prevalence of the great Way as well as of non-homogeneous harmony is a ramification of creation, implementation and dissemination of Confucianism-themed Han Chinese Civilisation, which has been internalised into part of strategic development of Chinese soft power.

This paper attempts to unveil an investigation into fresh implications behind considerable quintessential conceptual elements from Confucianism in alignment with the cultural and international-order implications behind the concept of a global community of a shared future. This paper crucially inquires into three hypothetical questions of much vitality: 1) What kinds of intellectual thoughts from Confucianism can be inherited and abstractly translated into the philosophical concept of share-future-oriented global community? 2) What kind of interplay do they unknowingly entail from a contemporary point of view? 3) With the rise of China, how are these two conceptual frameworks relevant to the strategic development of Chinese soft power, which is heterogeneous to the classical Western system? It will be divided into several parts as follows. To begin with, this paper seeks to critically examine the historical context and substances of quintessential, positive Confucian intellectual viewpoints such as public spirit, prevalence of grand course or great similarity, and harmony without homogeneity, and the philosophical concept of a shared-future-oriented global community, which lays a theoretic foundation for bridging their reciprocal nexus. Next, this paper focuses on identifying their reciprocity and intrinsic interplay in a context of cross-cultural studies and international relations in a new era from the perspective of cultural relations and soft power of much significance. Moreover, this paper attempts to evaluate the holistic trajectory of how inter-civilisational engagement of Confucianism and the global community as Chinese soft power would advance in a complex international order. That highlights the significance of Confucianism as an alternative mirror of observing international relations in compliance with the consequential values of a community of shared future for humankind.

2. Deductive Analysis of Quintessential Confucian Thoughts in Alignment with the Concept of a Community of Shared Future for Humankind

2.1 Quintessential Thoughts of Confucianism in a Context of Inter-civilisational World Order

Confucianism, variably characterised as a system of social and ethical philosophy rather than a religion, has been internalised into part of the Chinese social fabric and way of life since the Spring and Autumn Period (Asia Society, 2021). With the rise of China, the shift to Confucianism is on a track of revival in contemporary China. Tze-ki Hon from State University of New York at Geneseo emphasises that “Confucianism is now considered the wellspring of cultural authenticity that anchors China’s rise in the 21st century. After a long silence, Confucius is again the sage who offers advice and wisdom to people in transition (Hon, 2015: 243).” Meanwhile, It can be witnessed that contemporary Confucianism varies in forms, “ranging from cultural nationalism and investment strategy to social protests and self-improvement (Hon, 2015: 243).”

However, what remains yet to be pronounced is how significantly the Confucian revival has impacted a modernising Chinese society as well as a cross-cultural international society in an era of ascendant globalisation, rapid economic growth, high-speed internet, and proliferation of hi-tech devices. Moreover, the revival of Confucianism is not, or should not be, singularly a fixed reimplementation of the Confucian traditions or direct reinstallation of its institutions that just are the historical products of Spring and Autumn and Warring State Period. Instead, novel relevant institutions and mechanisms are being and should be, well established in response to shared, concrete social, cultural and international issues and there should be a gradual process of reinventing part of the genuine essence of Confucianism in a new context in new times because a new manifestation of Confucianism that is incorporating with interstate or international community and social services is something completely distinct from the historical background and social circumstance of Spring and Autumn Period or Warring State Period. Therefore, it is much better for a community of intellectuals, scholars and strategists to be conscious about the implications of these

fundamental, multidimensional changes in re-emergence of pivot to Confucianism and creation of contemporary connotation of Confucianism-themed Han Chinese Civilisation that is chronologically sustainable and uninterrupted.

For instance, it should be clear that the underlying issue that confronted Spring and Autumn Period and Warring State Period was: what would the basis of a stable, unified, and enduring social order look like with the absence of the order-abiding spirits? One predominant viewpoint of that specific historical period, espoused by Legalists, was that maximum stringent rule of law and powerful, organised statecraft are the prerequisites to the unquestionable foundation of sound governance policy (Asia Society, 2021). According to the research findings of Asia Society, in compliance with Confucius, to the contrary, the basis should be dependent upon its genuine, normative rituals and social norms from the Chou Dynasty and Confucius himself put "ritual" into real practice and included courtesies and accepted standards of social mores in Spring and Autumn Period because only if a civilised society is established could that turn out to be a stable, unified, and enduring social order from the perspective of Confucianism (Asia Society, 2021). Confucianism, as well as disciples of Confucianism, helped to remold, re-develop, and re-applied rituals in achievements of the transformation of rituals from rules to ideas (Duan Youguo, 2018). Furthermore, it could be observed that Confucius not only highlighted social rituals, but also attached much importance to benevolence, which is by no means one singular virtue in isolation, but rather the source of all virtues because it nurtures the intrinsic character and ethical maturation of an individual person in a complex society. In other words, if the exterior side of Confucianism has to do with conformity and acceptance of social roles and ethics, the interior side has a strong association with sublimation of human conscience (Asia Society, 2021).

However, throughout the ancient Chinese intellectual and philosophical history, the exogenous and intrinsic aspects of Confucianism—its conforming and self-cultivating sides—were contradictory in real practice. Besides, the tensions between social and political realities and the high-minded moral intellectual ideals of Confucianism were an ongoing source of potential barriers to the should-be smooth advancement of a proper social order, domestic and international alike. Therefore, this paradoxical circumstance generates a crucial hypothetical question of much importance: what kinds of quintessential Confucian thoughts can be inherited in alignment with, and in better services of, an inter-civilisational international society even as the contradictory structure between philosophical thoughts and reality is pervasive?

In history, *The Economic Principles of Confucius and His School* written by Chen Huanchang points out one essential values of Confucianism, which is that when Great Principle prevails, spirit public will rule all under the Heaven; men of talents, virtue, and ability are elected; sincere agreement will be discussed, and universal peace will be cultivated (Cheng, 1912). It could be argued that this idea of the significance of public spirit under the circumstance of prevalence of a great way is one of most remarkable statements of all teachings of Confucianism because the stage of great principle or grand order is the ultimate, long-term objective for which Confucianism advocates, regardless of specific era or reality. When it comes to the implications behind it, it can be argued that this conceptual idea facilitates a state or civilisational entity to pursue a grand course and a common noble cause of all the Humanity, excluding narrow self-interest that is sharply at odds with a holistic social order. This intellectual concept helps to generate another exceptional philosophical point of view that are normally different from the monotheism of the Western religious and philosophical sense: Seeking harmony or great similarity without homogeneity. Within the Confucianism's philosophical domain, the elements of harmony can be divided into diversity and unity, and then harmony or great similarity without homogeneity refers to seeking the common good and collective unity without diminishing the dissimilarities of a diversification of intellectual thoughts from different human civilisations. Within the domains of today's inter-civilisational engagement, this philosophical thought can be viewed as an epitome of humanism because seeking harmony or great similarity without homogeneity can be comparable to yearning for prioritising structural harmony over secondary conflict, competition and differences, which sometimes might be negligible. It is fair to argue that Confucianism does not seek singular harmony in the embryonic stage; instead, harmony or great similarity should embrace common spirit beyond state, family and friendship. That can also be applied to the way of benign inter-civilisation engagements instead of narrowly sticking to subtle, exclusive differences that may cause conflicts and clashes.

2.2. Concept of a Global Community of Shared Future in a Context of International Order

Holistically speaking, a community is a collective group formed by a population under homogeneous circumstances; the cohesion of a community lies in the common identity shared by its members, which further strengthens the community afterwards (Liu, 2020). In other words, a community is basically a collective group of heterogeneous individuals featuring the unity of their individuality as well as a heightened sense of collectivism. Normally speaking, throughout human history so far, there are two principal different categories of communities in which the relationship between individual and collective group may be considered. The preliminary type contains both organisational structure and hierarchical power relations, which usually constitutes part of a broader community. Another type, notwithstanding entailing some form of organisation, possesses power deficiency and thus limited forces on their members, which is exemplified by the European Economic Community and European Union (Liu, 2020).

With the rise of China that engenders a constant change in power discourse and international system, the Chinese policymakers initiate the concept of a community of a shared future for humankind, whose characteristics and intrinsic philosophical standpoints can be to some extent comparatively investigated. Quite differently, this kind of global community initiative can be viewed as an exceptional one neither formally organised nor with any coercive power, which proceeds beyond all above-mentioned categories of community. Instead, the original philosophical concept of a community with a shared future for mankind pursues the most broadest stage in human society, which attaches much importance to the fundamental and common interests and aspirations of all people, instead of a singular area or single issues of much importance to mankind (Liu, 2020). This philosophical thought bears philosophical similarity and relevance to Confucian thoughts of the relationship between public spirit and great way as well as seeking the common good. In terms of ideological origin, one influential but controversial ideology has been focused on a “community” for mankind. The “human community” as envisioned by Western scholars, suggests that the destiny and future of mankind shall be “the eventual establishment of a world-wide cosmopolitanism” on the basis of sovereign nation-states (Liu, 2020:14). William McNeil (1992) highlights that the future of cosmopolitanism will be an unquestionable process of Westernisation and this would also be the case even if non-Westerners should happen to hold supremacy of world-wide political-military authority.

However, it can be contended that this theory and as well as its so-called “cosmopolitanism” in this sense, however, are singularly Eurocentric (Liu, 2020). The distinctive advancement of Chinese civilisational states and community in reality proceeds in a distinctively far different direction against McNeil’s partial hypothesis, which theoretically omits and obfuscates the dissimilarities between Chinese civilisational history and context and the Western civilisational ones in terms of population, historical development trajectory, administrative institutions and so forth. The concept of a community with a shared future for mankind inherits the partial merits of the “human community” while significantly excluding its unfitting Eurocentrism because the classical state-oriented international community is on the one hand obsolete and nations have become far more interdependent and synergistic, influenced by economic globalisation on the other (Liu, 2020). Furthermore, if the philosophical concept of a shared-future-oriented community is deconstructed, then that perception can be cemented into the dichotomy between “what is” (empirical perspective) and “what ought to be” (normative perspective). From the empirical perspective of “what is”, it can be seen that the destiny of all human beings has been far more inextricably interconnected in an era that is absolutely distinct from Confucius’s Day (Liu, 2020). To paraphrase it into the domains of international relations, in particular, the preliminary-phase coexistence or lower-level cooperation can barely exemplify or encapsulate the features of interstate relationships. Zhang Hui highlights that a community of shared futures for all should be a combination of all sovereign states of convergent interests and values, which can generate a new phase of international development (Zhang, 2019). On the other hand, from the normative perspective of “what ought to be”, the current form of a community with a shared future for humankind remains in the embryonic stage, subject to conflicts among a diversification of groups or between states of different specific interests. The reason for this preliminary phase is that members of the community have yet to be sufficiently conscious of the shared future for humankind and that various countries, nations, regions and political forces place their own narrow self-interests above the communal, collective interests of mankind (Liu, 2020). As a result, that makes it harder for international members to adopt policies completely out of the box of narrow self-interest.

Regardless, both re-shift to Confucianism and the China-initiating concept of building a global community of shared future can be framed as spread and development of China’s soft power that originates from sustained Confucianism-themed Chinese civilisation and Chinese specific circumstance of historical development, which is proportionately heterogeneous to the Western counterparts. The faster and more multidimensionally China grows, the more consequentially intellectuals should take the Confucianism-themed Han Chinese Civilisation and the philosophical concept of a global community of shared future seriously.

3. Intrinsic Disparity and Reciprocity between the Strength of Fundamental Thoughts of Confucianism and Community of Shared Future for Humankind

3.1. Delicate Disparity between Confucian Thoughts and Global Community of Shared Future

In the first place, the section begins by specifying the implicit, subtle disparities between the Confucianism-initiating concept of spread of public spirit with great principle and harmony without homogeneity, and the conceptual essence of community of shared future from the perspectives of history and philosophical pivot. When it comes to historical context, the concept of public spirit and harmony without homogeneity came into existence during the Spring and Autumn Period when regional, limited interstate conflicts and warfare were prevalent in Bronze Age. Those wars singularly caused the collapse of normative rituals that Confucianism demands. To the contrary, the philosophical concept of community of shared future for humankind is initiated amid a massive wave of economic globalisation with unconventional systemic inter-regional geopolitical tensions on a global scale. These far-reaching conflicts result in hardening international relations owing to pivot to national self-interest only. It can be observed that nowadays is far more unpredictable, complicated and contradictory than the historical background from which Confucianism originates. In addition, with regards to philosophical pivot, these intellectual ideas of Confucianism primarily seek to come up with effective solutions of how to advance individual self-cultivation and to govern a singular state well in the face of

the collapse of social norms and order in the Spring and Autumn Period. Briefly speaking, Confucianism's pivot has to do with sound governance of the state and singular revival of needed social order rather than seeking a common good as the primary purpose. To the contrary, the philosophical concept of community of shared future for humankind seeks to figure out a conceptual formula of how to well address international underlying issues and challenges in a civilisationally non-confrontational but inclusive way. It has everything to do with seeking the common good of all human civilisations instead of just reviving one singular civilisation or governance of state.

3.2. Crucial Reciprocal Relationships between Confucian Thoughts and Global Community of Shared Future

However, those above-mentioned dissimilarities do not offset nor contradict with supplementary intrinsic reciprocal, convergent ties between Confucian philosophical spotlights of prevalence of public spirit and harmony without homogeneity and the shared-future-community awareness. Instead, their reciprocal bonds far outweigh their disparities in many ways. It can be argued that Confucian thoughts of public spirit and harmony without homogeneity generate historical significance for the philosophical concept of a community of shared future for humankind which bears part of roots of Confucianism. Moreover, the latter one is an unanticipated theoretic extension of the above-mentioned Confucian thoughts in a context of international relations theory of the contemporary era.

"Almost all empires were created by force, but one can be sustained by it. Universal rule, to last, needs to translate force into obligation" (Kissinger, 2011: 21). Former US National Security Advisor and US Secretary of State Dr. Henry Kissinger (2011) emphasises that the modern Western conception of international relations rests from the medieval structure of relations between European nations. No single state could hold supremacy of political will over neighbouring states of equal strength. The concept of exclusive sovereignty and the legal equality of states became the foundation of diplomacy.

Distinctively, Confucianism advocates for "harmony without homogeneity", and stands for handling interstate relations between nations in the spirit of "benevolence and harmony" because according to Confucianism, conflicts and warfare will just result in irreversible damage and lose-lose dilemma, while differences can singularly be ironed out through mutual understanding and negotiation (Li Xiaolin, 2002). Therefore, the Chinese approach to world order, because of Confucianism's intellectual influence, was thus vastly distinct from the system that was institutionalised in the Western Hemisphere. The predominant values of Chinese society derived from the prescriptions of Confucius are heterogeneous to the Eurocentric philosophical values from the specific Western-Hemisphere systems. "Unlike Machiavelli, Confucius was concerned more with the cultivation of social harmony than with the machinations of power. Confucianism's themes were the principles of compassionate rule, and the performance of correct rituals" (Kissinger, 2011: 21). Confucius's different answer to the chaos of Spring and Autumn Period was the 'Way' of the just and harmonious society, which, he taught, had once been realised before. In other words, in accordance with Confucianism, mankind's central spiritual task was to re-create this proper order already on the verge of being lost. That is meanwhile applied to establishing an inter-civilisational order, or a different new ritual, which is harmonious and representative.

"Cross-cultural identification" refers to recognition beyond all sorts of cultural diversities, on a basis of human commonality and cultural universality (Chen Desheng, 2020). It has become an urgent practical problem of how to look beyond oneself and construct cross-cultural identification to carry out meaningful cross-cultural dialogues (Si Zhu, 2008). Cross-cultural identification reflects their inclusive attitude and capability to ditch the ethnocentrism and integrate diverse cultural perspectives (Chen Desheng, 2020). It can be deduced that as a kind of "global view" beyond the country and ideology, the concept of a community with a shared future is a Confucianism-initiating Chinese cross-cultural identification and "international development strategy to adapt to the interrelation of human societies with a view of world peace and development" (Chen Desheng, 2020: 217). The community of shared future for humankind advocates the collaborative view of global governance, and in the course of social experimentation and performance, encourages all crucial, pertinent international members to strengthen political, economic and cultural mutual trust, to ditch communication barriers and suspicions, "for the purpose of facilitating exchanges and mutual learning among world civilisations, promoting common development of cultures of all" (Chen Desheng, 2020: 219).

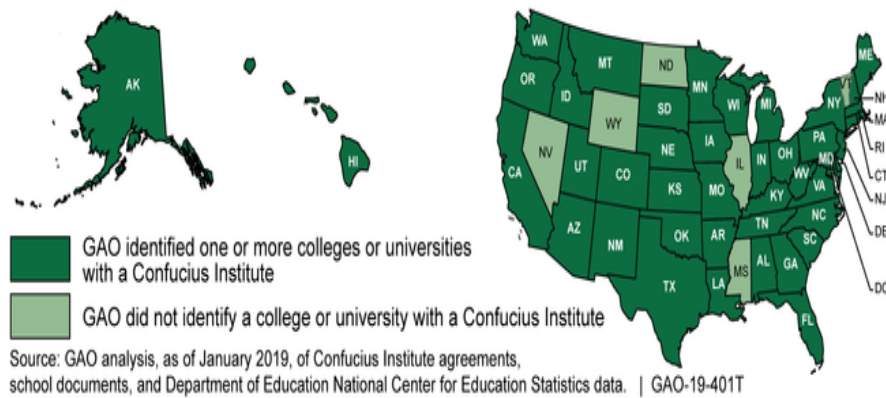
Furthermore, the concept of a community of shared future for humankind engenders fresh implications for how to better re-define some remarkable intellectual thoughts of Confucianism such as public spirit and harmony without homogeneity in new times from individuality to collective state, from state to cross-cultural world system. The concept of a global community of shared future comparably seeks to embrace various, divergent civilisational entities in a global village of shared underlying issues, shared global problems instead of attempting to cause antagonistic inter-cultural, trans-civilisational scenarios. In other words, the philosophical concept of a global community of shared future does not seek to advocate for the predominance or superiority of Confucianism-themed Han Chinese civilisation over other civilisational entities that are distinct from it, but prognosticate that no single civilisation nowadays will be perfectly capable of addressing enormously tricky, difficult problems alone without inter-civilisational convergence in some ways. The concept of building a community of shared future advocates for treatment and cooperation on an equal footing, whose concept is to a large extent comparable to the Confucian concept of the public spirit of grand course and harmony without homogeneity.

From the perspective of international order, the concept of public spirit and a community of shared future for humankind, to a large degree, can help maintain and safeguard the peace and security of an individual state and international society. Professor Andrew Moravcsik from Princeton University identifies that “contradictory or irreconcilable differences in core beliefs about national, political, and social identity promote conflict, where complementary beliefs promote harmony and cooperation” (Moravcsik, 2010:237). Quite differently, the concept of public spirit of grand course and harmony without homogeneity further develops the concept that states and international actors and international players can maximise opportunities to engage peacefully and harmoniously even as the huge differences in organisational, political, and governmental institutions and mechanism remains so long as the disparities can be well manageable and put in a secondary position. Historically speaking, Confucianism-themed Han Chinese civilisation was in no position to conquer all of its neighbouring civilisations. The Confucian principle of civilisational non-interference and convergence and embrace is closely relevant to the concept of a global community of shared futures in an international-order context.

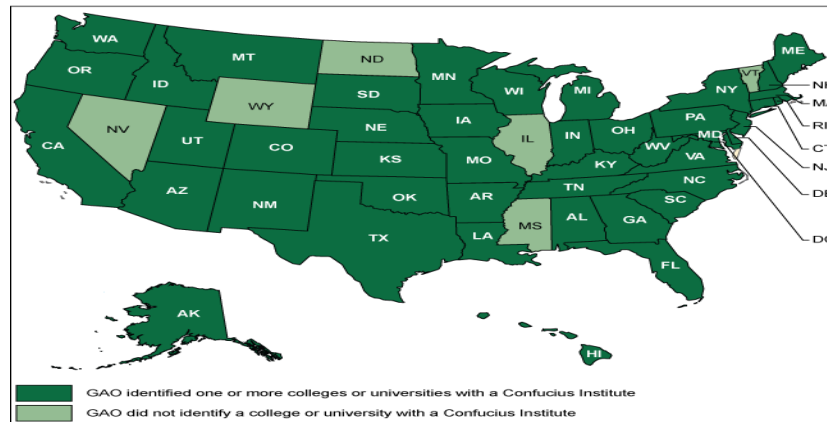
Ultimately, Chinese soft-power advancement in associating Confucianism with the shared-future-community initiative in a context of international relations has a supplementary role to play in revising a genuine inter-civilisational order. This order should proceed beyond pervasive Western international-relations discourse. Instead, it is necessary to utilise a historical approach to reviewing Confucianism-themed philosophical thoughts in better services of inter-civilisational, international engagement beyond classical geopolitical mentality.

4. In What Way Are They Relevant to Strategic Development of Chinese Soft Power?

To influence others in some ways can be a logical premise of becoming a major power. Whether approaches to appealing to other members proceed successfully or not are highly dependent upon how well nation’s soft-power strategy is adopted and implemented. Not only should such orientation of soft power be enshrined in economic and commercial interdependence that may share win-win results, but also in “harmonious co-existence and mutual learning in culture” (Liu Yumei, 2007:83). It can be deduced that various modern interpretations on philosophically attractive thoughts from Confucianism as well as the concept of global community of shared future have profound connections with the strategic development of Chinese soft power that seeks to influence others in ways that are endogenously different from the Western forces, and thus helps China to restructure international arena without sacrificing China’s basic, legitimate interests.



Notes: From “Colleges and Universities across the United States Have Confucius Institutes on Campus” by Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, 2019, *China: Observations on Confucius Institutes in the United States and U.S. Universities in China*, p.ii. Copyright 2019 by Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics. Permission not sought.



Source: GAO analysis, as of January 2019, of Confucius Institute agreements, school documents, and Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics data. | GAO-19-278

Notes: From “All But Six U.S. States Have at Least One Confucius Institute on College or University Campuses”, by Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, 2019. *China: Observations on Confucius Institutes in the United States and U.S. Universities in China*, p.4. Copyright 2019 by Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics. Permission not sought.

The chronologically-uninterrupted Han Chinese Civilisation necessitates China’s endeavour of its protection of cultural heritage and construction of infrastructure for cultural resources as an integral part of Chinese soft power strategy. The role of Confucianism cannot be ignored because one fairly noticeable case of dissemination of Chinese soft power is the gradual rise of Confucius Institutes all across the regions and countries worldwide. Building on the experience of numerous international actors from Europe, such as the UK, France, Germany and Spain, in advancing their national languages and cultures, China began its own exploration in 2004 through Confucius Institutes to promote the Chinese culture at an international level (Li Jie, 2017). Albeit in some ways the transnational establishment of Confucius Institutes suffered from misinterpretations and misconceptions owing to some forces to politicise them, their indelible contributions to the dissemination of Chinese culture could never be neglected (Shi, 2016). Quantitatively speaking, the first Confucius Institute was opened in 2004 in the Republic of Korea, followed by “440 Confucius Institutes and 646 Confucius Classes worldwide at the beginning of 2014” (Kukharenko & Klyuchanskaya, 2014: 67). The number has been increased in the following years afterwards. Li Jie points out that 1073 Confucius classrooms and 511 Confucius Institutes in nearly 140 nations have made Confucius Institutes play a crucial role to bridge Oriental-Occidental cultural and civilisational exchange (Li Jie, 2017). In Ireland, Confucius Institutes have penetrated all the educational institutions: over 5,000 students from primary and secondary school join in Chinese lessons annually (Li Jie, 2017). In addition to developed countries and regions, by the end of 2013, 37 Confucius Institutes and 10 Confucius classes in Africa had been set up in 31 African countries, followed by assistance of 360,000 Chinese technical experts and professionals, agricultural connoisseurs to Africa (He Wenping, 2017). The above-mentioned statistics can be an indication of worldwide recognition and acceptance of Confucianism-themed Han Chinese Civilisations that Chinese soft power strategically preserves without approach of imposition and force.



Notes: From *Confucius Institutes Around the World–2021*. <https://www.digmandarin.com/confucius-institutes-around-the-world.html>. Copyright 2021 by Dig Mandarin. Permission not sought.

It can be generally-acknowledged that in today's interconnected world, growing into a superpower is not merely an issue of military might and economic scale, but civilisational facilitating force in re-defining and rebuilding international relations. During the bipolar period, different from the USSR, never did China produce a radically alternative ideology nor attempt to convert other international members to chase China's model; contrary to the US, barely does China seek to invade foreign countries through military forces, nor impose economic sanctions or embargoes on countries or regions of opposing institutions or political behaviour (Trontin, 2015). A comparable example of dissemination of the concept of a global community of shared future as part of Chinese soft power strategy was the successful launch of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). This institution plays a supplementary role to the neoliberal system for helping solve shared issues: infrastructure building in particular. Around 50 countries, including Germany, France, Britain, actively participated in this new institutions, generating much surprise to the US side who would prefer to "see their allies circling wagons around traditional, Western-dominated facilities such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and Asian Development Bank" (Trontin, 2015:55). Owing to the advancement of the unipolar interest of the US, it can be observed that taking leverage over international affairs and freeing themselves from the excessive influence of Washington, which do not help resolve shared, common issues like infrastructure successfully, motivates many of the crucial participants, including some US allies. Put it briefly, China's soft power strategy from the concept of the global community of shared future for humankind facilitates China to adopt an alternative policy to, or to a large extent restructure, the international arena and international system.

5. Concluding remarks

In a nutshell, cross-cultural, inter-civilisational international engagement highly likely proceeds on the track of convergence and divergence, cooperation and competition, mutual learning and suspicion-causing confrontation. The philosophical ideas of the prevalence of public spirit and harmony without homogeneity are historically and theoretically synergistic with the philosophical concept of share-future-oriented global community despite their difference in historical context and primary pivot. The former thought of disseminating a great way facilitates the latter's thought of seeking a common cause and good. The perception of harmony without homogeneity has something to do with no superiority nor inferiority among civilisations and relevant entities, for which the concept of a global community of shared future advocates. Furthermore, strategic development of Chinese soft power, which is heterogeneous to the classical Western system in some cases, necessitates an organic combination between these Confucian thoughts and the standpoint of a global community, which will be in services of rectifying a world of anarchy, convergence and fragmentation.

It can be suggested that the international society should plan to re-adopt the new-era implications of Confucianism as well as its potential links to the concept of a global community of a shared future. The inter-civilisational international society meanwhile needs to diversify the way it does to the different civilisational entities. An inter-civilisational international order should be accrued beyond Machivellianism-relevant realism and values-oriented liberalism as chief Western international-relations discourse. Instead, it is necessary to utilise the historical approach to reviewing embryonic Confucianism-themed international relations theory and philosophical thoughts. Moreover, for aligning a global community of shared future with re-emergence of Confucianism and building a more open, inclusive, and representative world that can enjoy harmony, unity and diversity, concerted efforts are consequential in the multiple areas of international relations and international development, and civilisational sustainability.

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