The Collective Imagination and the Limitations for the *Tianxia* to Replace the Westphalian World Order

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Abstract. The collective political imagination establishes world orders that define how political communities interact. The relative power of the West allowed the introduction of the first global world order, known as the Westphalian. However, the increasing relative power of the People's Republic of China allows it to promote an alternative world order vision, which is the result of its political imagination. Zhao Tingyang's re-imagined hierarchic *Tianxia* order is seen as a challenger to the Westphalian order. This paper analyzes whether the *Tianxia* order can replace the Westphalian, considering the contemporary global political environment. The discussion is based on Jeffrey Legro's theory of collective ideas and foreign policy change, applying it to world order replacement analysis. The findings suggest that the *Tianxia* has significant limitations in replacing the Westphalian world order. The Westphalian order orthodoxy remains strong. The order is also adaptable, capable of including hierarchical elements. Despite the increase of the PRC's relative power and its greater capabilities to shape norms with domestic support, continuity usually prevails, so the habit of sovereignty prevails over hierarchical order. Finally, the article argues that the *Tianxia* order is not resilient to the anarchic-competitive element of human nature.
Keywords: collective imagination, world order, Westphalian order, Tianxia, hierarchy, People's Republic of China.

Kolektyvinė vaizduotė ir ribotos galimybės *Tianxia* pakeisti vestfalinę pasaulio tvarką

Santrauka. Kolektyvinė politinė vaizduotė apibrėžia pasaulio tvarką lemiančias politinių bendruomenių sąveikas. Santykinė Vakarų valstybių galia leido įtvirtinti pirmąją globa-

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lią pasaulio tvarką, kuri yra žinoma kaip vestfalinė pasaulio tvarka. Vis dėlto didėjanti santykinė Kinijos Liaudies Respublikos galia leidžia siūlyti alternatyvią pasaulio tvarkos viziją, kuri yra paremta jos politine vaizduote. Zhao Tingyango intelektualiai atgaivinta hierarchinė *Tianxia* („Paskliautės“) tvarka potencialiai gali mesti iššūkį vestfalinei tvarkai. Straipsnyje analizuojama, ar, atsižvelgiant į šiandieninę globalią politinę aplinką, *Tianxia* tvarka potencialiai gali pakeisti vestfalinę tvarką? Diskusija plėtojama remiantis Jeffrey Legro kolektyvinių idėjų poveikio užsienio politikos pokyčiams modeliu – jis pritaikomas pasaulio tvarkos pokyčių analizei. Straipsnio išvados rodo, kad *Tianxia* turi labai ribotas galimybes pakeisti vestfalinę pasaulio tvarką, nes jos ortodoksija išlieka stipri. Vestfalinė tvarka geba adaptuotis besikeičiančioje aplinkoje ir yra pajėgi integruoti hierarchinius elementus. Nepaisant Kinijos Liaudies Respublikos santykinės galios augimo ir didėjančių galimybių formuoti normas, kurios sulaukia Kinijos Liaudies Respublikos visuomenės palaikymo, tęstinumas dažniausiai vyrauja pokyčio atžvilgiu, todėl ir suverenitetas, būdamas tvarkos įpročiu, vyrauja prieš hierarchinę tvarką. Galiausiai, straipsnyje teigiama, kad *Tianxia* tvarka nėra atspari anarchiniam-konkurenciniam žmogaus prigimties veiksniui.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: kolektyvinė vaizduotė, pasaulio tvarka, vestfalinė tvarka, *Tianxia* tvarka, hierarchija, Kinijos Liaudies Respublika.

Introduction

The concepts of a world and international order have been interchangeably used, largely because of the domination of the Westphalian order, and without significantly reflecting differences between the world and international orders.[1] The *order* is an area in which several things taken together tend to display a relationship to one another according to a particular perceived pattern, and that relationship contains some discernible principle.[2] In social life, order emerges when there is a pattern of particular results, an arrangement that promotes certain goals or values.[3] The world order is "patterns or dispositions of human activity that sustain the elementary or primary goals of social life among mankind as a whole."[4] This concept suggests that political communities worldwide interact according to the agreed or set out norms. Such an

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[1]   For the discussion, see: Richard Haass, "World Order 2.0 The Case for Sovereign," *Foreign Affairs* 96, no. 1 (2017); Marcin Kaczmarski, "Convergence or Divergence? Visions of World Order and the Russian-Chinese Relationship," *European Politics and Society* 20, no. 2 (2019): 207–224.

[2]   Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*. 4th (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 3.

[3]   *Ibid.*, p. 3–4.

[4]   *Ibid.*, p. 19.

approach means that states and sovereignty are not preconditioned, meaning that states and their interactions result from the domination of a particular collective imagination regarding the political organization of the people. Next, for the world order to be global, it requires a technological level that permits interactions between all regions of the planet.

There is a significant difference between the world order and international orders. The international orders are orders amongst states, meaning that the international order is already the result of a particular, in this case Westphalian, world order.[5] The Westphalian order already defines states as key actors, which further shapes their interactions. However, alternative world orders cannot be dismissed, meaning that they would have different actors as the key players whose interactions may differ from that of the Westphalian order, also known as the international order.

The Westphalian order came into being as a result of the Peace of Westphalia, but its foundation began to emerge well before 1648 as a result of changing norms in Europe.[6] After the development of its main properties was finalized, it expanded globally by the end of the 19th century.[7] Since then, the Westphalian order has been considered

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[5]   For the discussion, see: Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics.* 4th (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); John G. Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace, 1812–22* (Echo Point Books & Media, 1957); John G. Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2001); Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California, 1979); John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Nanon & Company, Inc., 2001); Charles L. Glaser, "A Flawed Framework. Why the Liberal International Order Concept Is Misguided," *International Security* 43, no. 4 (2019): 51–87.

[6]   Georg Sørensen, "Sovereignty: Change and Continuity in a Fundamental Institution," *Political Studies* 47 (1999): 592–604, p. 591; Robert Jackson, "Sovereignty in World Politics: A Glance at the Conceptual and Historical Landscape," *Political Studies* 47 (1999): 431–456, p. 435–438.

[7]   Mark W. Zacher, "The Territorial Integrity Norm: International Boundaries and the Use of Force," *International Organization* 55, no. 2 (2003): 215–250, p. 217.

a world order, while sovereignty – a "political organization based on the exclusion of external actors from authority structures within a given territory" – defines its main characteristic. Sovereignty defines that states themselves regulate their interactions.[8] For this reason, the Westphalian order is essentially anarchic, based on the competition of states, which serves to prevent the creation of a universal empire.[9] The Westphalian order became universal by rejecting universality and accepting differences in domestic political orders.

The expansion of the Westphalian order was a result of "civilizing" actions – enforcement of norms practiced amongst European political communities on other political communities (such as Russia, Japan, Korea, China, and many others).[10] The expansion of the Westphalian order was also related to the relative power of the West. The order became universal because of the conquests and the colonization by the European empires.

The changing distribution of power in the 21st century opens possibilities for alternative world orders based on non-European norms, challenging the existing Westphalian world order. The growing relative power of the People's Republic of China (PRC), alongside a relative decline of the West and increasing globalization, have become catalysts for a redefinition of the world order. Many authors discuss the impacts of the mentioned variables on world order.[11] Many au-

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[8]   Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty. Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 3–4.

[9]   Robert Jackson, "Sovereignty in World Politics: A Glance at the Conceptual and Historical Landscape," *Political Studies* 47 (1999): 431–456, p. 441.

[10] Robert Jackson, "Sovereignty in World Politics: A Glance at the Conceptual and Historical Landscape," *Political Studies* 47 (1999): 431–456, p. 442; Yannis A. Stivachtis, "Civilization and International Society: The Case of European Union Expansion," *Contemporary Politics* 14, no. 1 (2008): 71–89, p. 73.

[11] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations: And The Remaking of World Order* (Simon & Schuster UK, 2002); John J. Mearsheimer, "Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order," *International Security* 43, no. 4 (2019): 7–50; Charles L. Glaser, "A Flawed Framework. Why the Liberal International Order Concept Is Misguided," *International Security* 43, no. 4 (2019): 51–87; Richard Haass, *World in Disarray, a American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order* (New York: Penguin Books, 2018); Acharya Amitav, *The End of American World Order*. 2nd. (Cambridge: Polity, 2018); John G. Ikenberry, *Power, Order, and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Henry Kissinger,

thors also discuss how the increasing power of the PRC provides it with an opportunity to reshape the world order based on its traditions and norms.[12] Much attention is given to Zhao Tingyang's re-imagined *Tianxia* world order, which provides a glimpse of an alternative world order based on the Chinese norms.[13] [14]

World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History (New York: Penguin Press, 2014); Randall L. Schweller, "The Problem of International Order Revisited. A Review Essay," *International Security* 26, no. 1 (2001): 161–186.

[12] Bruno Macaes, *Belt and Road: A Chinese World Order* (C. Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, 2018); Ban Wang, *Chinese Visions of World Order: Tianxia, Culture, and World Politics* (Duke University Press Books, 2017); Michael J. Mazarr, Timothy R. Heath, and Astrid Stuth, *China and the International Order* (Research Report, Rand Corporation, 2018); Yan Xuetong, *Leadership and the Rise of Great Powers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Yang Yuan, "Escape both the 'Thucydides Trap' and the 'Churchill Trap': Finding a Third Type of Great Power Relations under the Bipolar System," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 11, no. 2 (2018): 193–235.

[13] William A. Callahan, "Chinese Visions of World Order: Post-Hegemonic or a New Hegemony?" *International Studies Review* 10 (2008): 749–761; Yaqing Qin, "A Multiverse of Knowledge: Cultures and IR Theories," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 11, no. 4 (2018): 415–434; David C. Kang, "International Order in Historical East Asia: Tribute and Hierarchy Beyond Sinocentrism and Eurocentrism," *International Organization* 74 (2020): 65–93; Acharya Amitav, "From Heaven to Earth: 'Cultural Idealism' and 'Moral Realism' as Chinese Contributions to Global International Relations," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 12, no. 4 (2019): 467–494; Shunji Cui and Barry Buzan, "Great Power Management in International Society," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 9, no. 2 (2016): 181–210; Allan B. Bentley, Srdjan Vucetic, and Ted Hopf, "The Distribution of Identity and the Future of International Order: China's Hegemonic Prospects," *International Organizations* 72 (2018): 839–869; Randall L. Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu, "After Unipolarity: China's Visions of International Order in an Era of U.S. Decline," *International Security* 36, no. 1 (2011): 41–72; Taesuh Cha, "Competing Visions of a Postmodern World Order: The Philadelphian System versus the Tianxia System," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 31, no. 5 (2018): 392–414; Thuy T. Do, "China's Rise and the 'Chinese Dream' in International Relations Theory," *Global Change, Peace & Security* 27, no. 1 (2015): 21–38; David Shambaugh, "International Relations Studies in China: History, Trends, and Prospects," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 11, no. 3 (2011): 339–372; Wang Fei-Ling, *The China Order: Centralia, World Empire, and the Nature of Chinese Power* (SUNY Press, 2017); Hendrik Spruyt, *The World Imagined: Collective Beliefs and Political Order in the Sinocentric, Islamic and Southeast Asian International Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

[14] Zhao Tingyang, "A Political World Philosophy in Terms of All-under-Heaven (Tianxia)," *Diogenes* 221 (2009): 5–18; Zhao Tingyang, *Redefining a Philosophy for World Governance* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); Zhao Tingyang, "Rethinking Empire from

In the eleventh century BC, in what is now China, political communities came up with the hierarchical order of "all under heaven" – the *Tianxia* regional world order. This order became the central element shaping Chinese interaction with the rest of the world for the next three thousand years.[15] The political communities entered into cooperative hierarchic relations under a justified single leadership of the sole sovereign of the world. The *Tianxia* concept dismissed the sovereignty of the political entities while recognizing their autonomy in particular areas. During China's imperial period (from 221 BC until the end of the 19th century), the *Tianxia* was manifested in China's tributary relations with its subordinates and in the recognition of the emperor as the sole sovereign by those tributaries.[16] Tributary relations provided recognition and validity for the order.[17] There were no international relations in the *Tianxia* world order, because they could exist only among sovereign states, which should be equal from the perspective of the law. Because in *Tianxia* there is only one sovereign, all relations are essentially between the master and its subjects (the sub-states). As a result, without sovereignty, the concept of borders also has no appreciable meaning. Evidently, the traditional Chinese approach to the relations between political communities is significantly different from that of the Westphalian order.

The European empires in the 19th century replaced the *Tianxia* in East Asia with the Westphalian order. When China was relatively weak, its strategy necessitated integration within the Westphalian order. However, an increase in PRC's relative power allows it to rejuvenate its inherent world order vision.[18] Contemporary Chinese thinkers have

a Chinese Concept 'All-under-Heaven' (Tian-xia)," *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 12, no. 1 (2006): 29–41.

[15] Daniel A. Bell, "Realizing Tianxia: Traditional Values and China's Foreign Policy," in *Chinese Visions of World Order: Tianxia, Culture, and World Politics*, ed. Ban Wang (Duke University Press Books, 2017), 129–146, p. 129.

[16] Chishen Chang, "Tianxia System on a Snail's Horns," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 12, no. 1 (2011): 28–42, p. 32–35.

[17] Erik Ringmar, "Performing International Systems: Two East Asian Alternatives to the Westphalian Order," *International Organization* 66 (2012): 1–25, p. 4.

[18] Randall L. Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu, "After Unipolarity: China's Visions of International Order in an Era of U.S. Decline," *International Security* 36, no. 1 (2011): 41–72, p. 59.

called into question the Westphalian world order, arguing for more hierarchical arrangements.[19] An idealized version of China's imperial past inspires the plans of Chinese scholars and policymakers when it comes to China's future and that of the world, combining contradictory discourses of nationalism and cosmopolitanism.[20]

The core problem of the study is to assess whether the *Tianxia* world order can replace the current Westphalian world order. The object of the study is the contemporary global political norms allowing or constraining the replacement of the world order. The study is based on Jeffrey Legro's theory of collective ideas and foreign policy change outlined in his book *Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order* (2007). Legro outlines the driving forces behind the changes in international norms initiated by the great powers. In this research, his approach is applied to investigate the prospects and limitations of the replacement of the world order.

The study's first objective is to disclose the interrelations between constructivist (ideas) and realist (power) theories to explain the causes behind the continuity and change of collective ideas, in this case, the replacement of world order. The second objective is to introduce the methodological approach of the study. The third objective is to conduct an interpretative-historical and interpretative-theoretical analysis of opportunities and constraints to replace the current world order. Finally, the paper discusses the internal aspects of the *Tianxia* and Westphalian orders related to their functioning and survival. The hypothesis is that the *Tianxia* cannot replace the Westphalian order because of the dominance of the anarchic element in the relations of actors in different orders. Still, some aspects of the *Tianxia* order can be integrated into the Westphalian world order, which accepts the manifestations of hierarchy.

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[19] Daniel A. Bell, "Realizing Tianxia: Traditional Values and China's Foreign Policy," in *Chinese Visions of World Order: Tianxia, Culture, and World Politics*, ed. Ban Wang (Duke University Press Books, 2017), 129–146, p. 134.

[20] William A. Callahan, "Chinese Visions of World Order: Post-Hegemonic or a New Hegemony?" *International Studies Review* 10 (2008): 749–761, p. 749–750.

1. The Collective Imagination and Replacement of World Orders

Before moving to the analysis of the replacement of world orders, it is necessary to underline that no order has to be accepted as a given. The introduction showed that two regions on the different ends of the Eurasian continent produced unique regional political orders based on their experiences. The Westphalian world order became global because of European expansionism, but this does not allow dismissing possibilities of different scenarios.

Every social theory has geographic and cultural birthmarks based on the experiences and practices of people living in a particular environment.[21] The political orders established by political communities are nothing more than the results of collective imaginations.[22] World orders and civilizations are not "natural" because they are constituted.[23] These assessments suggest that it is necessary to accentuate the constructivist approach to understand world orders. Constructivism does not take the Westphalian world order for granted and does not oversimplify reality as realism and liberalism do. Most international relations theories focus on the interactions of actors defined by the Westphalian world order, which became perceived as "natural." Scholars and practitioners have found it challenging to think beyond the Westphalia because it had become associated with the world order due to its long-term domination and global coverage.[24] However, an

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[21]   Yaqing Qin, "Relationality and Processual Construction: Bringing Chinese Ideas into International Relations Theory," *Social Sciences in China* 30, no. 4 (2009): 5–20, p. 18.

[22]   Hendrik Spruyt, *The World Imagined: Collective Beliefs and Political Order in the Sinocentric, Islamic and Southeast Asian International Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 4, 74.

[23]   Raymond Duvall and Çiğdem Çıdam, "Power in the Analysis of World Orders," in *Civilizations and World Order: Geopolitics and Cultural Difference*, edited by M. Akif Kayapınar and İsmail Yaylacı Fred Dallmayr (New York: Lexington Books, 2014), 35–50, p. 36.

[24]   Erik Ringmar, "Performing International Systems: Two East Asian Alternatives to the Westphalian Order," *International Organization* 66 (2012): 1–25, p. 2.

increasing body of literature suggests that there is nothing "natural" about the Westphalian order, concluding that the modern system of states was socially constructed.[25] As a result, it should be considered that the existing global world order can be replaced or changed.

The differences in collective imaginations regarding order between different political communities offer little explanation of why one or another order begins to dominate and becomes eventually accepted as the legitimate one. The expansion of the Westphalian order suggests that power is necessary for a regional order to become the world order. A particular political community with its specific world order has to achieve hegemony over the collective imagination of most other political communities. An increased relative power pushes great powers to expand their spheres of influence and change or replace certain norms to match their cultural, socioeconomic, and political orientations.[26] The outlined approach aligns with Jeffrey Legro's claims that imagination (ideas) has to be supported by power to form and reform international orders.[27] Legro's theory regarding the change of collective ideas is helpful when it comes to explaining the replacement of world orders.

According to Legro, the change of collective ideas happens in two stages. First, the collapse of the reigning orthodoxy is necessary. The existing orthodoxy has to lose legitimacy, and agitation to replace it has to appear.[28] Ideas regarding order replacement tend to signal the erosion of a pre-existing orthodoxy and trigger proposals for a new orthodoxy.[29] For the analysis of the replacement of the world order, it is necessary to indicate criticism of the order and the loss of its legitimacy. The Westphalian order should not be able to cope with its

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[25] John Gerard Ruggie, "Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations," *International Organization* 47 (1993): 139–174.

[26] Charles A. Kupchan, "The Normative Foundations of Hegemony and The Coming Challenge to Pax Americana," *Security Studies* 23, no. 2 (2014): 219–257, p. 226.

[27] Jeffrey W. Legro, Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order (Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 40.

[28] *Ibid*., p. 28–29.

[29] *Ibid*., p. 36.

challenges, or there should be extensive doubts about that. Hence, the political communities have to search for ways to intensively replace the prevalent norms of interactions.

Second, a possible new orthodoxy has to present alternative ideas and ideals and consolidate support. The consolidation process faces difficulties because of disagreements about the acceptability of the outcomes and desirable beliefs.[30] Such an approach suggests that alternative world orders must be proposed as remedies to fix the failures of the existing order. However, alternative orders face a consolidation problem, because they compete for support among political communities.

When explaining the change of collective ideas, Legro suggests that continuity usually prevails over potential change, as it is much easier to modify dominating ideas than replace them with new ones.[31] In essence, the change of collective ideas is an evolutionary process that allows merging orthodoxy with new ideas. Such an approach assures stability and legitimacy while gradually modifying orthodoxy. As a result, orthodoxy does not stagnate. Only a stark failure between expectations and actual results could challenge dominant beliefs.

Legro further argues that two types of factors impact the change of collective ideas. One is the relative power of states involved, which defines a state's capability to maintain its dominant ideas or promote new ones.[32] The other is the consolidation of domestic support for an actual occasion regarding the potential change. In addition, support from society contributes towards expanding new ideas through social groups or movements and epistemic communities within political communities. Consequently, the analysis of the relative power of actors suggesting the replacement of the world order is necessary, including the domestic support for it within them.

The discussion above suggests that the global world order is a competitive area where different political communities try to set

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[30]   *Ibid.*, p. 28–29.

[31]   *Ibid.*, p. 33–35.

[32]   *Ibid.*, p. 40.

their norms based on their political interests, philosophy, and values. The material elements of power are essential in such a competition. Therefore, merging constructivist (ideas) and realist (power) aspects allows for constructing a methodology to analyze the replacement of a world order.

2. Methodology

The methodological framework for analyzing the replacement of the Westphalian global world order by the *Tianxia* world order is built on the provided theoretical discussion. First, the analysis outlines the main aspects on which the Westphalian order is criticized from the perspective of the *Tianxia* order. Second, the core ideas of the modern *Tianxia* order are presented, as they are perceived to be a way to eliminate certain flaws by replacing the Westphalian world order. For this, an interpretative analysis of texts comprising the foundation of the *Tianxia* order, written by Zhao Tingyang (published from 2006 to 2015 and translated into English), is conducted. Later, this article focuses on an interpretative-historical and interpretative-theoretical analysis of variables defining the replacement of world orders (collective ideas), as outlined in Legro's theoretical approach and applied to this study. Finally, the article discusses the impact of the core norms of two orders on their survival.

3. The Criticism of the Westphalian World Order and the Core Ideas of Modern Tianxia

Zhao Tingyang criticizes the currently dominating world order on two levels. On the first level, he criticizes the Westphalian world order and, on the second, the dominant player of the order, which is the United States of America. This article focuses only on the criticism of the Westphalian world order.

Zhao proposes the *Tianxia* world order as an alternative to the Westphalian world order. According to Zhao, *Tianxia* is superior to

the Westphalian order because it can be global (all-inclusive), accepted by "all peoples" of the world, thus capable of achieving legitimacy, and is hierarchical.[33] Furthermore, he argues that contemporary international interactions lack political unity and universally accepted political institutions, while the world is ruled by a dominant power (the US), leading to a "failed" world.[34]

At the core of Zhao's criticism is the lack of the order's "worldness," meaning that the contemporary world is an *agora* without a *polis,* where states struggle to achieve their interests by competing with one another (the Hobbesian anarchy) and do not seek to better the whole global political community, the *polis*.[35] For Zhao, the lack of "worldness" results from the domination of Western values and norms. He criticizes individualism, democracy, and monotheistic religions, which have served to form political imagination that produced dogmatism and exclusivity.[36] Consequently, exclusivity prevents people from thinking about world interests and a deeper cooperation between political communities, ultimately leading to an anarchic order. Furthermore, for Zhao, the Westphalian order hinders international organizations from representing the interests of the world. For instance, the United Nations is only an organization of bargaining between states, while the EU is considered a company of states that cannot prioritize a common interest over the interests of each member.[37] In other words, Zhao states that there is no coherent world society governed by a uni-

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[33]   Zhao Tingyang, *Redefining A Philosophy for World Governance* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 58; Zhao Tingyang, "A Political World Philosophy in Terms of All-under-Heaven (Tian-xia)," *Diogenes* 221 (2009): 5–18, p. 9.

[34]   Zhao Tingyang, "A Political World Philosophy in Terms of All-under-Heaven (Tian-xia)," *Diogenes* 221 (2009): 5–18, p. 5–7, 16–17.

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

[36]   Zhao Tingyang, "Rethinking Empire from a Chinese Concept 'All-under-Heaven' (Tian-xia)," *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 12, no. 1 (2006): 29–41, p. 30–33; Zhao Tingyang, *Redefining A Philosophy for World Governance* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 45, 49–54.

[37]   Zhao Tingyang, "A Political World Philosophy in Terms of All-under-heaven (Tian-xia)," *Diogenes* 221 (2009): 5–18, p. 16; Zhao Tingyang, "Rethinking Empire from a Chinese Concept 'All-under-Heaven' (Tian-xia)," *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 12, no. 1 (2006): 29–41, p. 38.

versally accepted political institution.[38] This is considered a fault of the Westphalian order, in which the interests of individual states are prioritized over the interests of the world.

Zhao also suggests an alternative to the Westphalian orthodoxy. To fix flaws, Zhao proposes a modern manifestation of the *Tianxia* – an institutional world based on a global political philosophy and re-creation of the notion of world sovereignty.[39, 40] From his perspective, the world should be perceived as a single *polis* and a starting point for politics.[41] Furthermore, Zhao pays a good deal of attention to the concept of all-inclusiveness, arguing that in the ideal state, the world has to be an integrated entity with no externalities, acknowledging the world as a common area of interest and a shared resource for all mankind.[42]

To achieve changes, Zhao suggests replacing the Western norms and values with the traditional Chinese ones. Furthermore, he suggests replacing the individual with the family as the core unit of philosophy. The archetypal principle of the family has to be extended to all levels of government by applying the Confucian principle that the *Tinaxia* and political communities have to be governed the same way as families are.[43] As a result, the primacy of a family legitimizes

[38] Zhao Tingyang, "A Political World Philosophy in Terms of All-under-Heaven (Tian-xia)," *Diogenes* 221 (2009): 5–18, p. 5.

[39] Zhao Tingyang, "Rethinking Empire from a Chinese Concept 'All-under-Heaven' (Tian-xia)," *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 12, no. 1 (2006): 29–41, p. 30; Zhao Tingyang, "A Political World Philosophy in Terms of All-under-Heaven (Tian-xia)," *Diogenes* 221 (2009): 5–18, p. 5.

[40] Acharya Amitav, "From Heaven to Earth: 'Cultural Idealism' and 'Moral Realism' as Chinese Contributions to Global International Relations," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 12, no. 4 (2019): 467–494, p. 474.

[41] Zhao Tingyang, "A Political World Philosophy in Terms of All-under-Heaven (Tian-xia)," *Diogenes* 221 (2009): 5–18, p. 7.

[42] Zhao Tingyang, *Redefining a Philosophy for World Governance* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 18.

[43] Zhao Tingyang, "A Political World Philosophy in Terms of All-under-Heaven (Tian-xia)," *Diogenes* 221 (2009): 5–18, p. 13; Zhao Tingyang, *Redefining A Philosophy for World Governance* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 24; Zhao Tingyang, "Rethinking Empire from a Chinese Concept 'All-under-Heaven' (Tian-xia)," *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 12, no. 1 (2006): 29–41, p. 32–33.

hierarchy in relations between people. Globally, this means establishing hierarchic relations between political communities. The hierarchy is also prioritized by the idea of the importance of harmony.[44]

Finally, Zhao Tingyang suggests forming a global world governance based on all-inclusiveness and hierarchical relations. The hierarchical authority must be effectively transposable from the highest to the lowest levels, because higher levels should condition smaller societies and not the other way around.[45] It is worth noting that he does not provide a precise model of such a world institution or how it should be established. Nevertheless, he suggests that the global institution (world government) should have sovereignty over political communities (sub-states), who will voluntarily join the hierarchic order.[46] According to Zhao, "[t]he number of sub-states depends upon the diversity of cultures, nations, or geographical conditions."[47] This essentially means that sub-states would replace existing states and retain the dynamics of power distribution as it currently is in the Westphalian order.

The world government should be in charge of universal institutions, laws, and order, uphold justice and peace, control shared resources, recognize sub-state political legitimacy, supervise them, and carry out punitive actions against those who break universal law.[48] The sub-states will have autonomy in their domestic economy, culture, social norms, and values but be dependent on a world government in terms of their political legitimacy and obligations. Interestingly, such a system somewhat resembles the government model of the ethnic autonomous areas defined in the PRC Constitution (sec-

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[44] Zhao Tingyang, "Rethinking Empire from a Chinese Concept 'All-under-Heaven' (Tian-xia)," *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 12, no. 1 (2006): 29–41, p. 33.

[45] Zhao Tingyang, "A Political World Philosophy in Terms of All-under-Heaven (Tian-xia)," *Diogenes* 221 (2009): 5–18, p. 13.

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

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 8–9.

tion 6).[49] Jeffrey Mankoff argues that the "*Tianxia* is a PRC structured state. Imagined as a state with a PRC model."[50]

According to Zhao, the system of relations between the world government and sub-states offers possibilities for a coalition of sub-states to replace the world government through revolution. Finally, by abandoning the sovereignty of states, the meaning of borders is also lost. By rejecting borders and encouraging the freedom of migration, the *Tianxia* order ensures a constant erosion of national identities and cultural differences. Such an approach adheres to teleological assumptions in Confucianism and Marxism about the inevitable disappearance of ethnic distinction in the process of economic development.[51] Zhao's vision demonstrates the complementarity between traditional Chinese norms (*Tianxia*) and the Marxist values of the contemporary PRC, suggesting that there are no significant differences between China's past, present, and future.

4. The Constraints in Replacing the Westphalian World Order

The suggestion to replace the Westphalian world order with the *Tianxia* order is a revolutionary change. For this, a global transformation of norms is necessary.[52] Although Zhao extensively argues the necessity of openness to all cultures and religions, his proposed values and norms are exceptionally Chinese. Therefore, "all-inclusiveness" and "worldness" are not inclusive at all, while the approach itself resembles ideological imperialism, which led to the expansion of the Westphalian order.

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[49] Constitution of the People's Republic of China. *The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China*, accessed 16 May 2022, http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/constitution2019/201911/1f65146fb6104dd3a2793875d19b5b29.shtml.

[50] Jeffrey Mankoff, *Empires of Eurasia: How Imperial Legacies shape International Security* (Yale University Press, 2022), 222.

[51] *Ibid*., p. 223.

[52] Prasenjit Dura, "The Chinese World Order and Planetary Sustainability," in *Chinese Visions of World Order: Tianxia, Culture, and World Politics*, ed. Ban Wang (Duke University Press Books, 2017), 65–83, p. 70.

For the Westphalian order to be replaced, it has to lose legitimacy. The functioning of the order has to face challenges beyond those with which it can cope. At the very least, the perception of the order's failure has to become relatively widespread.

Globalization, the creation of the UN, the EU, and other international organizations, the introduction of norms regarding universal human rights, interventions into states through the right to protect, and the increasing power of multinational corporations should suggest the decreasing viability of the Westphalian order.[53] However, in most cases, all the mentioned processes are accepted as evolutionary, gradually modifying the Westphalian world order, allowing it to maintain its legitimacy.

The Westphalian norms remain the basis of the interactions of political communities and do not experience an existential crisis. Westphalian global world order remains the preferred type of interaction between political communities. States, in many cases, oppose the creation of hierarchical interactions. The discussions on climate change and voluntary pledges on greenhouse gas emissions were favored over mandatory quotas.[54] The COVID-19 pandemic showed that countries coordinated poorly and dealt with the pandemic mostly unilaterally, competing for medical resources. The 2015 migration crisis in the European Union also showed the disinclination of member states to accept the Commission's decisions on mandatory quotas for the relocation of migrants. The prioritization of sovereign over joint actions during several financial crises testifies to the priority of

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[53]   For the discussion, see: Julian G. Ku and John Yoo, "Globalization and Sovereignty," *Berkeley Journal of International Law* 31, no. 1 (2013): 210–234; Allen Carlson, "Moving Beyond Sovereignty? A Brief Consideration of Recent Changes in China's Approach to International Order and the Emergence of the Tianxia Concept," *Journal of Contemporary China* 68, no. 20 (2011): 89–102; Keerthi Sampath Kumar, "State Sovereignty to Sovereignty of Individuals: Evolution of R2P," *Strategic Analysis* 35, no. 6 (2011): 966–972. Allison D. Garrett, "The Corporation as Sovereign," *Maine Law Review* 60, no. 1 (2008): 130–164.

[54]   *Paris Agreement*, accessed 11 November, 2021, https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf.

state interests over global interests. The examples suggest that sovereignty remains the preferred option.[55]

The societies within states also prefer anarchic world order over the hierarchic one. The post-Second World War history experienced just a few mergers between states but witnessed a significant increase in the number of sovereign states.[56] The armed conflicts for liberation and sovereignty also contradict the appeal of hierarchic orders. Ukraine's defense of its sovereignty against the Russian invasion in 2022, which was aimed to transform Ukraine into a sub-state under Russian domination, contributes to the argument.

In the EU, which is the most integrated international organization with elements of supranationalism, the sovereignty of its member states remains at its core despite the supranational aspect. The EU has an exclusive competence related to economy, trade, and finances. It also has an area of shared competence where member states have limitations to exercise competencies if the EU has done so. Finally, it has supporting competence in coordinating the actions of member states. However, in many cases, there is a need for the mutual agreement of states to have decisions in different areas. The bargaining between institutions and states and between member states is a continuous process. In essence, the existence of the EU is a result of the decisions of member states, and they also provide resources for its functioning. The legitimacy of and powers wielded by the EU bureaucracy depend on the will of the member states to comply with them. The example of Brexit shows that decisions regarding whether to stay or leave the supranational organization have priority over the EU's interests. According to Nicolas Jabko and Meghan Luhman, the EU will need to find ways to reconcile issues between sovereignty and integration as these issues will likely become more intensive.[57]

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[55] June Teufel Dreyer, "The 'Tianxia Trope': Will China Change the International System?" *Journal of Contemporary China* 96, no. 24 (2015): 1015–1031, p. 1031.

[56] The number of members within the UN has significantly increased (from 55 in 1945 to 193 in 2011).

[57] Nicolas Jabko and Meghan Luhman, "Reconfiguring Sovereignty: Crisis, Politicization, and European Integration," *Journal of European Public Policy*, May 2019: 1037–1055.

The synthesis between the Westphalian order and elements of hierarchical order inside the EU becomes possible only because of core Westphalian principles, which permit individual states to pool and share sovereignty in agreed areas. In such a way, states agreeing to a supranational organization create a common cause while maintaining sovereignty. In essence, the states which represent political communities agree to limit competition, but competition is still present.

The evolution of the Westphalian world order suggests that it can incorporate different regional orders within it while maintaining its core principles. Though the Westphalian order rejects hierarchy in practice, hierarchical relations between states are inevitable due to their power asymmetry. Less powerful states enter hierarchic relations with greater powers when they search for security (small and middle-sized states join NATO), economic benefits (states join the EU), or norms (Ukraine's choice of the Association Agreement with the EU over integration in the Eurasian Union).[58] Simultaneously, states can be forced into hierarchic relations (the Warsaw Pact). By entering hierarchical relations, lesser powers decrease their autonomy and begin to consider the interests of the dominant power. The differences in autonomy between states lead to particularistic orders defined by the dominant state(s). Such orders can be traced back to the times of colonialism in terms of the relations between metropolises and colonies.[59] World orders with hierarchical elements existed during the Cold War because the US and the Soviet Union were able to achieve hierarchical orders within the anarchic Westphalian world order.[60] During the Cold War, the Westphalian (international) order was a thin one, and the US and the Soviet Union's hierarchic regional

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[58] David Lake, "Economic Openness and Great Power Competition: Lessons for China and the United States," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 11, no. 3 (2018): 237–270, p. 52–57.

[59] Robert Jackson, "Sovereignty in World Politics: A Glance at the Conceptual and Historical Landscape," *Political Studies* 47 (1999): 431–456, p. 443.

[60] Shunji Cui and Barry Buzan, "Great Power Management in International Society," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 9, no. 2 (2016): 181–210, p. 186.

orders were bounded ones.[61] The US and the Soviet hierarchic orders had different legitimacy. The decrease of power for the Soviet Union led to the collapse of the Soviet-led order; the US order had greater legitimacy, and it attracted smaller European powers to join NATO. Historical examples suggest that the Westphalian world order and regional orders exist in parallel, and states simultaneously conduct their activities within multiple orders.

After the Second World War, the growing importance of international organizations led to the advocacy for applying particular norms in domestic policies, and seeking the universalization of those norms. However, such an approach does not modify the principles of the Westphalian order. The most powerful states try to expand their normative power through international organizations because "[h]egemonic states often aspire to redesign the world order in their own domestic image, thereby shaping the governing logic of international relations in line with their internal values and institutions."[62] Such an approach falls in line with the explanation that political communities with significant power try to expand their norms, which result from their political imagination. It is worth noting that the universal application of some norms does not replace the Westphalian order, which still defines core actors and the principles of their interactions.

Furthermore, international organizations do not significantly modify the Westphalian order because states continue to be the leading players in deciding on any interactions. An increasing number of cross-border issues and a growing dependency force states to participate simultaneously in the overlapping networks, but this does not replace the importance of sovereignty. Even the formation of supranational international organizations, such as the EU, and a gradual increase in supranationalism do not replace the Westphalian order.

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61   John J. Mearsheimer, "Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order," *International Security* 43, no. 4 (2019): 7–50, p. 18–21.

62   Taesuh Cha, "Competing Visions of a Postmodern World Order: The Philadelphian System versus the Tianxia System," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 31, no. 5 (2018): 392–414, p. 392.

Sebastian Schmidt rightly states that sovereignty is a foundational habit of the modern state system, and once the habit is established, it will likely persist.[63] The Westphalian order can be characterized in the following way: its constant transformation of order retains sovereignty at its center; it is capable to allow multiple orders within it at the same time; it pursues an uninterrupted practice of sovereignty in the relations of political communities. There would be a need for a revolutionary change of norms and perceptions to replace the Westphalian order with *Tianxia* order, but the continuity of the Westphalian orthodoxy is favored.

The relative decline of the West and the growing power of the PRC suggests that the latter increases its capabilities to shape norms on a global level, but in order to set them, it has to achieve global hegemony. Hegemony rests on the distribution of power and ideas at the elite and mass levels.[64] According to Charles Kupchan, hegemonies "press outward the norms that shape their domestic orders because hegemonies, just like unitary states, are social entities, not just material instruments of control; they reflect the hegemon's own values and norms as well as its preponderant power."[65] The PRC already has the world's biggest economy (in terms of purchasing power parity). It is expected that, by 2050, the PRC will generate 20% of the world's GDP, while the US will generate only 12%, and the EU-27 only 9%.[66] Such increasing economic, financial, trade, military, soft, and normative power will allow the PRC to shape collective ideas globally.

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[63] Sebastian Schmidt, "Foreign Military Presence and the Changing Practice of Sovereignty: A Pragmatist Explanation of Norm Change," *American Political Science Review* 108, no. 4 (2014): 817–829, p. 822, 828.

[64] Allan B. Bentley, Srdjan Vucetic, and Ted Hopf, "The Distribution of Identity and the Future of International Order: China's Hegemonic Prospects," *International Organizations* 72 (2018): 839–869, p. 844.

[65] Charles A. Kupchan, "The Normative Foundations of Hegemony and The Coming Challenge to Pax Americana," *Security Studies* 23, no. 2 (2014): 219–257, p. 226.

[66] PricewaterhouseCoopers, The Long View. How Will the Global Economic Order Change by 2050? PWC, 2017.

Setting norms is essential because secondary players should consider authority as being legitimate.[67] Without the supporting ideology providing legitimacy, it is challenging for the hegemony to lead and attract followers.[68] The position of dominant power should be achieved by ideological, religious, or other values, which are common for a set of states.[69] For the PRC, it is essential to promote its traditional norms, philosophy, and collective imagination to increase its legitimacy. The PRC heavily invests in the Confucius Institutes, promotes Confucian philosophy and the Chinese language, cooperates with universities worldwide, and provides an alternative vision and a point of view in the media.[70] However, it seems unlikely that the PRC will become a hegemon because Western powers show capabilities to compete with the PRC, at least according to what economic projections suggest. At the same time, there are other states whose power increases, and they can have their visions of world order based on their cultural elements. It also has to be considered that support for the Westphalian order does not necessarily decrease with the relative decrease of Western power, because the Westphalian order became a global rather than regional phenomenon and is accepted by most political communities.

When the Westphalian world order expanded, it expanded to relatively isolated regions. The power of the Western states allowed them

[67] David C. Kang, "International Order in Historical East Asia: Tribute and Hierarchy Beyond Sinocentrism and Eurocentrism," *International Organization* 74 (2020): 65–93, p. 69.

[68] Allan B. Bentley, Srdjan Vucetic, and Ted Hopf, "The Distribution of Identity and the Future of International Order: China's Hegemonic Prospects," *International Organizations* 72 (2018): 839–869, p. 845.

[69] Robert Gilpin. *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 34.

[70] For the discussion, see: Milos Popovic, Erin K. Jenne, and Juraj Medzihorsky, "Charm Offensive or Offensive Charm? An Analysis of Russian and Chinese Cultural Institutes Abroad," *Europe-Asia Studies* 72, no. 9 (2020): 1445–1467; Claude Zanardi, "China's Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics: The Cases of Confucius Institutes and Chinese Naval Diplomacy," *Journal of Political Power* 9, no. 3 (2016): 431–447; Wen-Hsuan Tsai, "Enabling China's Voice to Be Heard by the World: Ideas and Operations of the Chinese Communist Party's External Propaganda System," *Problems of Post-Communism* 64, no. 3–4 (2017): 203–213.

to become regional hegemons or at least to enforce their norms, which defined how a political community could become a state, thus becoming the subject of such order. The Westphalian world order became global by connecting regions into a single network. International organizations further legitimized its norms. Because of its gradual expansion, the Westphalian order met less resistance than it would if it had to replace the existing world order globally. In contrast, the replacement of the Westphalian order has to happen in a well-connected world – globally – meaning that it is a much more difficult challenge. The PRC must accumulate much more power (material and normative) to replace the existing global world order with *Tianxia*.

Finally, the second factor – the domestic support for *Tianxia* has to be discussed. Modern *Tianxia* order is supported in the PRC. According to Yan Xuetong, the government understands that it needs first to establish a popular ideology at home before promoting it globally. Hence, it tries to establish a universal ideology that combines traditional Chinese values with Marxism.[71] Nationalistic feelings provide domestic support, because ambitions to shape the new world order place the PRC at the center of global politics as the core definer of the world's future. Zhao Tingyang's published *The Tianxia System: An Introduction to a World Philosophy* in 2005 became a bestseller in the PRC. Such popularity can be explained thanks to *Tianxia's* equation with China, which is fueling interest in his proposed order.[72] Zhao also has strong links with the PRC government. He is a political philosopher with the Institute of Philosophy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences – China's largest think-tank. This heavily politicized and doctrinal Marxist institution represents the classical and conservative component of Chinese International Relations.[73] The

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[71]   Yan Xuetong, *Leadership and the Rise of Great Powers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

[72]   Chishen Chang, "Tianxia System on a Snail's Horns," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 12, no. 1 (2011): 28–42, p. 33.

[73]   Thuy T. Do, "China's Rise and the 'Chinese Dream' in International Relations Theory," *Global Change, Peace & Security* 27, no. 1 (2015): 21–38, p. 23; David Shambaugh, "International Relations Studies in China: History, Trends, and Prospects," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 11, no. 3 (2011): 339–372, p. 359.

leading Chinese political theorist Wang Huning (a professor in international politics) became the First Secretary of the Secretariat of the Chinese Communist Party in 2017 and is believed to be a close advisor of Xi Jinping and the architect behind Xi's "Chinese Dream" idea. His connections to Xi give relevance to *Tianxia's* idea in the governmental approach.[74] The modern Chinese intellectuals, in fact, always express nationalistic concerns when they embrace cosmopolitanism or any other worldview with universal pretensions.[75]

In addition, the *Tianxia* discourse parallels the expanding scope of a Chinese grand strategy, from Deng Xiaoping to Xi Jinping, one which constantly suggests the Chinese vision of alternative world order.[76] At first glance, it seems that the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (since 2012) and the President of the PRC (since 2013), Xi Jinping was ambiguous about expressing support for the *Tianxia*. On the one hand, President Xi underlined respect for sovereignty, equality among states, and multilateralism, presenting the PRC as the determined defender of the Westphalian world order.[77] On the other hand, there are somewhat indirect references to the *Tianxia* concept in Xi's speeches and the One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative (initiated in 2013).[78] The *Tianxia* is an idea, while

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[74] FIIA Briefing Paper 243: Xi Jinping thought and China's future foreign policy: Multipolarity with Chinese characteristics, *FIIA* (2018), accessed 16 May, 2022, https://www.fiia.fi/sv/publikation/xi-jinping-thought-and-chinas-future-foreign-policy-3?read.

[75] Yiqun Zhou, "Greek Antiquity, Chinese Modernity, and the Changing World Order," in *Chinese Visions of World Order: Tianxia, Culture, and World Politics*, by Ban Wang (Duke University Press Books, 2017), 106–128, p. 106.

[76] Taesuh Cha, "Competing Visions of a Postmodern World Order: The Philadelphian System versus the Tianxia System," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 31, no. 5 (2018): 392–414, p. 402.

[77] Xi Jinping, Work Together to Build a Community of Shared Future for Mankind, Geneva, 18 January 2017, *Xinhuanet*, accessed 12 May, 2022, http://www.xinhuanet.com//english/2017-01/19/c_135994707.htm. Xi Jinping, Keeping Abreast of the Trend of the Times to Achieve Common Development, BRICS Business Forum, 26 July, 2018, *Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Vienna*, accessed 12 May, 2022, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ce/cgvienna//eng/zgbd/t1580493.htm.

[78] Since 2016 title of the OBOR was changed to Belt and Road Initiative.

the OBOR has practical aims.[79] The OBOR expands the PRC's economic clout all over Eurasia, putting the PRC at the center of trade routes and creating formal and informal political links between different states and the PRC. The OBOR contributes to what is a soft approach to *Tianxia* expansion. It expands normative influence and Chinese characteristics and indirectly promotes *Tianxia*. Bruno Macaes argues that the OBOR does not have fixed rules and is deliberately intended to be informal, unstructured, and opaque.[80] Jeffrey Mankoff suggests that the OBOR erodes Eurasia's post-Qing borders, "recreating something like the ambiguous territorial arrangements characteristic of the traditional tianxia paradigm."[81] Even the title of the project, "One Belt One Road," has connotations with *Tianxia*.[82]

Simultaneously, OBOR promotes the concepts of the "Grand Unity," the "Great Communality under Heaven" (*tianxia datong*), and the "Community of Common Destiny," which are connected to the *Tianxia*. In 2018, Xi claimed that:

> Jointly building the "Belt and Road Initiative" is the platform for promoting the construction of community of common destiny for mankind, it stems from China's Reform and Opening and long-term development, and it accords to the Chinese people's ideal of the Grand Unity, as well as the Chinese worldview of caring for those far away and harmonizing all nations, and it also allows us to occupy the commanding heights of international morality.[83]

According to Stephen S. Smith, it was the first time that President Xi "clearly and deliberately connected the PRC's major diplomatic

[79]   Bruno Macaes, *Belt and Road: A Chinese World Order* (London: Hurst, 2019), 27.

[80]   *Ibid*., p. 35.

[81]   Jeffrey Mankoff, *Empires of Eurasia: How Imperial Legacies Shape International Security* (Yale University Press, 2022), p. 253.

[82]   How the Belt and Road Initiative got Its Name. It sounds Better in Mandarin, *The Economist* (6 February 2020), accessed 13 May, 2022, https://www.economist.com/special-report/2020/02/06/how-the-belt-and-road-initiative-got-its-name.

[83]   Xi Jinping: Promoting the Joint Construction of the "Belt and Road" for the Benefit of the People, *People's Daily* (2018) [translated from the Chinese], accessed 13 May, 2022, http://politics.people.com.cn/n1/2018/0827/c1024-30254173.html.

initiatives with the old Chinese ideal."[84] Xi unifies the two dominating ideas among PRC's international scholars of *Tianxia* (Zhao Tingyang) and the superior morality of the PRC (Yan Xuetong). Zhao criticizes the Westphalian world order precisely because of a lack of understanding of the "Common Destiny."

Though President Xi stresses the importance of sovereignty and multilateralism, the PRC has a selective approach, considering the issues in the South China Sea, neo-colonialism, debt traps, pressure on smaller countries, etc. The PRC practices hierarchical approaches in its diplomacy, which are not necessarily forced but agreed upon. Also, it is worth noting that concepts of "Grand Unity," "Community of Shared Future of Mankind," "Great Harmony," "win-win," and "Community of Common Destiny" have a broad interpretation and carry different meanings among different cultures. From the Chinese perspective, they have connections to the *Tianxia*. Therefore, the mentioned concepts have elements of doublespeak. According to Nathan and Zhang, the themes of Chinese moral authority and international hierarchy "are often hidden in the official discourse."[85]

Overall, the PRC's government and intellectuals cooperate to ensure *Tianxia*'s acceptance both domestically and internationally, be it directly (domestically) or indirectly (globally). The promotion of *Tianxia* globally is not necessarily implemented in the form outlined by Zhao Tingyang but has connotations with it. Despite the domestic support for *Tianxia*, the PRC is not ready to openly challenge the Westphalian world order and begin its replacement with the *Tianxia*.

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84 Stephen N. Smith, "Harmonizing the Periphery: China's Neighborhood Strategy under Xi Jinping," *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 34. Issue 1 (2022): 56–84, p. 75, DOI: 10.1080/09512748.2019.1651383.

85 Andrew J. Nathan and Boshu Zhang, "'A Shared Future for Mankind': Rhetoric and Reality in Chinese Foreign Policy under Xi Jinping," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 31. No. 133 (2022): 57–71, p. 68, DOI: 10.1080/10670564.2021.1926091.

5. More than Imagination: Anarchy as an Essential Element in the Interaction between Political Communities

The discussion on anarchy and hierarchy between the Westphalian and *Tianxia* orders suggests that at the center of the debate is the question regarding whose primacy is at the heart of politics. In Western culture, an individual is at the center of political philosophy. Therefore, this approach is transferred to the collective political imagination, and because of it, sovereign states are the main players when defining relations between political communities.

Zhao Tingyang is not entirely right about the non-existence of a global *polis*. If we think of states as individuals, as Zhao or Hobbes does, it can be assumed that the Westphalian world order is a global *polis*. States, like individuals, compete for resources to improve their well-being or increase their power over other individuals, and sometimes they fight. The interests of the polis emerge from the interests of the individuals who are living in a *polis*. Joint actions emerge from mutual challenges only if they are perceived as mutual. Most of the time, politics within a *polis* remain tied to a competition between individuals based on mutually agreed norms.

The Westphalian order accepts competition between political communities, which is something that happened before the order was even established. Such competition does not threaten to disrupt the order. On the contrary, the competition between political communities re-enforces it. At the same time, the Westphalian order allows hierarchical orders between states to exist within it. It allows for states to operate within multiple orders simultaneously, allowing them to share and pool sovereignties or establish new forms of sovereignty depending on the choices of individual states. Finally, the Westphalian order does not shape domestic politics or regimes, which increases its appeal. Some states can punish other states for their domestic policies, but states and not hierarchical institutions decide. The history of the Westphalian world order shows its ability to evolve and adjust while maintaining its core principles.

Alternatively, Zhao Tingyang's romanticized re-imagined approach of all-inclusiveness and harmony in a *polis* is an idealized order that has never existed. The history of regional orders, which declared themselves universal or universal empires, shows that internal competition for power within them never stopped. The competition was not necessarily waged militarily, but it never ceased within the Roman Empire, amongst the Muslim leaders of the Islamic order, or within the Roman Catholic order in Medieval Europe. The hierarchical structure of the orders does not prevent conflict. Zhao states that *Tianxia* under the Zhou "waned because it was too good to exist."[86] He continues that the limited power of the "all-under-heaven" world government, institutionally designed in favor of the independence and interests of the sub-states, proved incapable of coping with the ambitions of the latter's stronger elements. The very ideal of *Tianxia* collapsed due to anarchic elements within it. According to the Chinese Academy of Military Science, Chinese states fought 3,756 wars between 770 BC and AD 1912, an average of 1.4 wars a year.[87] The conflicts and wars between China's political communities in the Spring and Autumn period, not to mention the Warring States period, and the imperial period, show an inevitable element of anarchy in the *Tianxia*. The break of hierarchy because of anarchic elements is just a matter of time.

Conclusions

In conclusion, an analysis based on Legro's theoretical approach to the change of collective ideas applied to the study of the replacement of world order suggests that *Tianxia* cannot replace the Westphalian world order. Zhao Tingyang's criticism of the Westphalian order aims to speed up the erosion of orthodoxy and provide an alternative. Still,

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[86] Zhao Tingyang, "A Political World Philosophy in Terms of All-under-Heaven (Tian-xia)," *Diogenes* 221 (2009): 5–18, p. 9.

[87] Peter C. Perdue, "The Tenacious Tributary System, Journal of Contemporary China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 96, no. 24 (2015): 1002–1014, p. 1005.

the criticism partially results from the competition with the US and the aim to de-legitimize Western norms. The need to replace norms of the interaction between political communities challenges the possibility of world order replacement. The Westphalian world order does not experience an existential crisis. In its 400-year history, the Westphalian order showed its ability to evolve, adapt and cohabitate with other orders (primarily regional) while maintaining its core principle – sovereignty. Sovereignty remains the foundational habit of interactions between political communities and is the basis of international organizations, including supranational ones.

The adaptability of the Westphalian world order suggests that Legro is correct in that the change of ideas favors continuity, gradually incorporating new elements. The Westphalian world order became perceived as a "natural" state of interaction for political communities. It has to be taken into account that the PRC's growing relative power and the domestic support for the core ideas increase its capabilities to shape norms globally. As a result, the PRC's ideas and norms, like those of the *Tianxia*, can be gradually incorporated into the Westphalian world order, modifying it over time but not replacing it. Regardless of the development of the Westphalian world order or the replacement of it by any other order, the element of anarchy must be accepted as the norm of interactions of political communities, which defines the practical functioning of the order. From this perspective, the *Tianxia* order has significant structural flaws within it.

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