

Lecture September 30  
Governance, Governmentality, and Governability

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Abstract

This essay examines China's approach to non-interventionism in world affairs through the prism of 'governability' thought. It argues that Chinese attitudes toward (non-)intervention are not necessarily changing as a result of shifting understandings of sovereignty or the humanitarian imperative. Rather, the decision as to whether China sanctions intervention rests more with governability considerations, which place importance on maintaining – not imposing – order and enhancing the capacity for 'self-governance' of the state. Here, Chinese thinking on governability presents an alternative view of how governance at the interstate level ought to be exercised, going beyond prevailing practices and discourses of global governance as premised upon a liberal governmentality. The essay illustrates how the idea of governability has roots in China's past, flowing from the cyclical historiography inherent in Chinese political thought on the interactions between *zhi* (order) and *luan* (chaos). Blurring the boundaries separating the domestic from the international realm, it advocates a vision of 'global governance' based not on the creation of universalizing norms and values via modes of governmentality, but on the acceptance of diversity and the legitimacy of difference.

I

Ever since its formal admission to the United Nations in October 1971,<sup>1</sup> the People's Republic of China (PRC) has had an uneasy relationship with the extant system of global governance. Described at times as a rule-breaker or a revisionist power, as opposed to a rule-taker or status quo state, China is often accused of not contributing enough to the global public good—or of working against the prevailing international order altogether. Yet as the Chinese leadership has consistently asserted, the PRC remains committed to maintaining a peaceful international environment, with this feeding into the country's enduring imperatives of safeguarding order and stability within its own borders.

But while some observers are inclined to dismiss such statements as mere rhetoric, one should not readily take them at face-value. As we posit in this essay, the Chinese fixation with sustaining order at both the domestic and international levels is

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<sup>1</sup> This came to pass as a result of UN General Assembly Resolution 2758.

fundamentally predicated on a cyclical view of history. Bearing semblance to realist understandings of world politics, where international relations is perceived as ‘the realm of recurrence and repetition’,<sup>2</sup> the traditional Chinese worldview is one defined not only by its Sinocentricism but equally by the iterated interactions between *zhi* (order) and *luan* (chaos) upon which the governance of the Chinese empire—or ‘All under Heaven’ (*tianxia*)—was based. Here, the foremost concern of the Chinese political leader was on restoring order amid the looming specter of chaos.

This worldview is most clearly represented by the theory of dynastic cycles. Epitomized by the famous opening line of the historical novel *Three Kingdoms* (三国演义) which states that ‘the empire, long divided, must unite; long united, must divide. Thus it has ever been’ (话说天下大势，分久必合，合久必分)，<sup>3</sup> classical Chinese historiography was largely preoccupied with documenting the rise and fall of ancient dynasties, as the Mandate of Heaven (*tianming*) was habitually revoked from one emperor and bestowed anew. Of particular importance here was the quality of leadership: ‘immoral’ rulers soon lost their popular legitimacy and invariably went through natural processes of demise.

The implications of such thinking for Chinese international engagement has proven to be long-standing as well as wide-ranging. Debates over the extent to which traditional Chinese philosophy bear upon the PRC’s contemporary policies notwithstanding, this cyclical understanding has since given rise to a distinctive Chinese way of thinking about governance domestically and internationally—albeit one that is frequently found to be at odds with current practices and discourses of global governance. Here, the idea of ‘governability’ is one that proves to be deeply-rooted in Chinese political thought as well as in the country’s contemporary foreign engagement.

The primary aim of this essay is to examine China’s approach to (non-)interventionism in world affairs through the prism of governability thought. It interrogates how notions of governability have influenced China’s engagement with the realm of global governance, as an alternative basis for the management of world affairs is gradually brought into being. Governability is taken here to refer to the condition of being governable (i.e. controlled, regulated or monitored) which is, in turn, closely related to a state’s capacity to exert governing authority.<sup>4</sup> Applied to the Chinese experience, we contend that it serves as a useful analytical concept for making sense of the PRC’s stance toward interventionism, whereby Beijing has espoused, for the most part, a ‘hands-off’ or minimalist approach to what are

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<sup>2</sup> Martin Wight, ‘Why is there no International Theory?’, in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (eds), *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Relations* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), 26.

<sup>3</sup> Luo Guanzhong, trans. Moss Roberts, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, Vol. 1 (Beijing: Beijing Foreign Languages Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent: India’s Growing Crisis of Governability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 24.

commonly deemed to be acts of interference in the affairs of other states. Certainly, this has been the case ever since the promulgation of the ‘Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence’ in the mid-1950s.

Following from this, we advance three key arguments. First, Chinese attitudes toward (non-)intervention are not necessarily changing as the sole result of shifting understandings of sovereignty and the humanitarian imperative. Instead, the decision as to whether China sanctions intervention under certain circumstances rests more with governability considerations, which place importance on maintaining—not imposing—order and enhancing the capacity for ‘self-governance’ of the state in question.<sup>5</sup> This, in part, accounts for why the People’s Republic has engaged in intervention in certain countries, but not in others despite similar humanitarian and/or geopolitical conditions. Second, Chinese thinking on governability presents an alternative view of how governance at the interstate level ought to be exercised, going beyond the practices and techniques of global governmentality. With the blurring of the boundaries that separate the domestic from the international sphere, it puts forward a vision of ‘global governance’ based not on the creation of synchronizing (i.e. universal) norms and values, but on the acceptance of diversity and the legitimacy of difference. Third, and as previously mentioned, the concept of governability has deep roots in China’s quest for relational security, flowing from the cyclical historiography evinced by Chinese thinking on the *zhi-luan* relationship.

From this perspective, the challenge posed by China as a rising power within the international system is seen to center not so much on the contention for the People’s Republic to assume a leading role in global governance; nor is it simply about China’s supposed revisionist impulse to fashion new international norms and rules against the West. Rather, the challenge leveled by the People’s Republic is likewise an ontological one. Here, the Chinese espousal of governability as a ‘standard of reference’ against which international conduct is assessed and consequently legitimized is creating emergent rifts in the very fabric of global governance, as premised upon a liberal governmentality.<sup>6</sup>

## II

China’s adherence to the principle of non-intervention is peculiar in light of its active involvement in global governance and, more specifically, its articulated commitment to the rules, norms and values that undergird this system. Global governance and

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<sup>5</sup> On self-governance, see Chih-yu Shih and Chiung-Chiu Huang, ‘Preaching Self-Responsibility: the Chinese style of global governance’, *Journal of Contemporary China* 22:80 (March 2013), 351-365; and Pichamon Yeophantong, ‘Governing the World: China’s Evolving Conceptions of Responsibility’, *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 6 (2013), 356-361.

<sup>6</sup> According to Iver Neumann and Jacob Sending, it is ‘due to the ever-increasing structural pressure exerted by liberalism...understood as a selector of why certain practices become constitutive of sovereignty...[that accounts for the gradual emergence of] the global polity of the liberal story’. Iver B. Neumann and Ole Jacob Sending, *Governing the Global Polity* (New York: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 158.

intervention are arguably two sides of the same coin, insofar as global governance deals with issues that transcend national borders and which may, at times, entail interventionary action on the part the international community to ensure state compliance with prevailing norms and rules. This prerogative is, of course, evident from the case of so-called failed states, where interventionary acts of rule enforcement is often deemed necessary to the (re)establishment of order.

In light of ongoing processes of globalization, we are also witnessing the rise of a novel cast of non-state actors that are involved in the management of exigent global problems, whilst concomitantly contributing to the increased fragmentation of state authority. Never before have individuals and groups of individuals played such a prominent role in norm diffusion and global governance, more broadly. To China, the rise of individualized agency in global governance remains relatively unfamiliar to a country where the 'top-down' model of governance is still dominant. And it is precisely in this sense that the Chinese case can aptly work to illustrate how the Foucaultian notion of governmentality, which stresses the importance of individualized agency in governance, is germane to explaining China's alienation from interventionism in global governance.

To make sense of Chinese non-interventionism, this directs attention to three key concepts: governance, governmentality and governability. To be engaged in governance is to be involved in the processes of defining and recognizing issues of common concern, as well as to the corollary processes of norm creation and rule enforcement to cope with these issues. At the international level, global governance is concerned with such diverse challenges as environmental pollution, natural disasters, nuclear proliferation, international trade, and terrorism, with an intricate system of institutions and governing mechanisms having been established to tackle these complex problems that affect the international community as a whole. In fact, if one were to go as far back as the Council of Rome in 382 AD, governance was then used to broadly denote 'the command mechanism of a social system and its actions that endeavour to provide security, prosperity, coherence, order and continuity to the system', with the scope of governance 'restricted [not] to the national and international systems but...[also] be used in relation to regional, provincial and local governments'.<sup>7</sup>

The Foucaultian notion of governmentality, in essence, represents the 'rationalization of government practice in the exercise of political sovereignty'.<sup>8</sup> The state itself is understood here to be the product of such iterated practices, such that government 'must be studied as a process, not as an institution'.<sup>9</sup> Just as the state

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<sup>7</sup> Alexander King and Bertrand Schneider, *The First Global Revolution: A Report of the Council of Rome* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991), 181-182.

<sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la biopolitique: cours au college de France, 1978-1979* (Paris: Gallimard/Seuil, 2004), 4.

<sup>9</sup> Ole Jacob Sending and Iver B. Neumann, 'Governance to Governmentality: Analyzing NGOs, States, and Power', *International Studies Quarterly* 50 (2006), 651.

works to proliferate certain forms of knowledge, so is it likewise constituted by political knowledge, becoming imbued with the power derived from the propagation of discourses, worldviews and ‘styles of thought’. These, in turn, work to inform—and are further reinforced by—the practices and strategies used by political actors to attain their specific goals.<sup>10</sup> In this respect, it is possible to view ‘governance’ as one such discourse that rationalizes the attributes, norms and objectives of a governed reality. Stemming from a liberal conception of the state, it places emphasis on achieving, for instance, a common basis for cooperation, social consensus and the harmonization of interests—that is, a liberal progression of political and social relations.<sup>11</sup> Certainly, Alexander Wendt’s claim that a world state is inevitable speaks to this underlying sentiment.<sup>12</sup>

Transposed to the international realm, global governmentality is a concept that has come to gain greater resonance in recent years within the International Relations (IR) discipline. It remains a highly debated term, however, not least due to skepticism over whether governmentality can be justifiably ‘scaled up’ to the global level.<sup>13</sup> Even so, according to Iver Neumann and Jacob Sending, global governmentality can be said to exist in view of how ‘the meaning and role of sovereignty are largely defined by governmental rationalities that now increasingly operate on the global level. The liberal rationality of government exerts structural pressure on states to open more and more interfaces with other agents, preferably on a global scale’.<sup>14</sup> From this perspective, the current system of global governance is arguably predicated upon this liberal governmentality, which subscribes to a teleological view of the evolution of international society. This ‘mentality’, in turn, favors the application of universalizing norms and values to streamline divergent interests, resolve exigent problems and build consensus. The Lockean constitutional state constitutes one illustration this liberal logic, as it aligns domestic processes of governance with the imposition of a synchronizing constitutional order.<sup>15</sup> In like fashion, the democratic peace thesis—in essence, the notion that democracies do not fight other democracies—advances a Lockean vision of international order, to the effect that countries like the United States (especially under the Clinton administration) have used it to, at times, justify

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<sup>10</sup> See Jonathan Joseph, ‘The Limits of Governmentality: Social Theory and the International’, *European Journal of International Relations* 16:2 (2010), 223-246; and Barry Hindess, ‘Liberalism, what’s in a name?’, in Wendy Larner and William Walters (eds), *Global governmentality: governing international spaces* (London: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Lemke, ‘An Indigestible meal? Foucault, governmentality and state theory’ [unpublished manuscript] (2007), 15. See also E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (Camberwell: Penguin, 2008), 114-115.

<sup>12</sup> Alexander Wendt, ‘Why a World State is Inevitable’, *European Journal of International Relations* 9:4 (2003), 491-542.

<sup>13</sup> Another complaint lodged against this concept is based on its insensitivity to non-Western contexts.

<sup>14</sup> Neumann and Sending, *Governing the Global Polity*, 6.

<sup>15</sup> Miguel de Larrinaga and Marc G. Doucet, ‘Governmentality, Sovereign Power, and Intervention: Security Council Resolutions and the Invasion of Iraq’, in Miguel de Larrinaga and Marc G. Doucet (eds), *Security and Global Governmentality Globalization, Governance and the State* (Oxon: Routledge 2010).

intervention for the sake of establishing more stable liberal democracies and, by implication, ensuring world peace.<sup>16</sup>

In contrast to governmentality, the concept of governability does not conjure up any vision of an ideal ‘end state’ or promise of permanent solutions to vexing global problems. Instead, this idea supports the pursuit of *minimum* conditions for the sake of maintaining order—or alternatively put, the quality of being governable. As such, although governability does not guarantee ‘good governance’, it does place importance on the cultivation of popular legitimacy on the part of a regime or leader, with the former considered a crucial component to a government’s capacity to govern. Intervention—whether humanitarian or military in nature—would thus be permissible only insofar as it is undertaken with the aim of restoring, *not* imposing, order-as-governability within a conflict- or disaster-ridden country. Following from this, any asserting of good governance would be approached with caution. This is because attaining good governance requires going beyond minimal conditions to achieve a higher form of socio-political organization, one which entails the imposition of certain norms, rules and values.

### III

‘Global governance’ amounts to both a practical and theoretical enterprise. In practical terms, most global issues will entail a degree of coordination between national governments and, in certain circumstances, between non-state actors as well. Despite China’s adamant adherence to the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity, it has recognized, more or less, the notion that governments are expected to comply with the extant norms, rules and values of international society for the sake of good governance. That said, recognition of the global governance architecture does not necessarily equate to full compliance. China still has its disagreements with the nature and substantive content of the international responsibility that each government is expected to shoulder. And as demonstrated later, this disagreement has centered particularly on the question of whether a state has a responsibility to intervene when external intervention appears to be the solution to restoring good governance within a failing state.

As such, although there are signs suggesting China’s deepening involvement in the governance of world affairs, Chinese engagement with global governance and the institutions underpinning it still remains ‘incomplete’ at best, being riddled with tension and inconsistencies. Some have attributed this to China’s conflicting identities as a great power and a developing country; others have pointed to geopolitical factors

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<sup>16</sup> See Sean M. Lynn-Jones, ‘Why the United States Should Spread Democracy’, *Discussion Essay 98-07* (Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University: 1998), available at: [http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/2830/why\\_the\\_united\\_states\\_should\\_spread\\_democracy.html](http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/2830/why_the_united_states_should_spread_democracy.html) (accessed 10 February 2014).

that make China wary of a supposedly Western-centric governance architecture.<sup>17</sup> However, we would contend that China's inability—not to mention reluctance—to fully engage with global governance derives more from its different conception of the basis for governance.

The concept of self-governance aptly highlights the PRC's preference for minimalist intervention in global affairs. Based on the argument that ensuring socio-political stability and the welfare of its people already amounts to a contribution on the part of a state to international order, self-governance entails governments to pay attention to the resolution of domestic problems first. Here, order is perceived to emanate outwards in concentric circles from the domestic to the international realm, such that the maintenance of internal order and stability comes to serve as the prerequisite for global order.

Past and present Chinese leaderships—most notably, under former President Hu Jintao—have consistently supported this practice through state-led discourses such as those on building a 'Harmonious World' (*hexie shijie*) and harmonious societies (*hexie shehui*), as well as the most recent discourse on the 'Chinese dream' (*Zhongguo meng*), which prioritizes the (domestic) rejuvenation (*fluxing*) of the Chinese nation.<sup>18</sup> Crucially, implicit in the notion of self-governance is an aversion to the forcible enforcement of certain norms and values on other country—such interventionist actions are viewed as being unlikely to generate sustainable outcomes in target states—and conversely, a belief instead in the emulation of models. What this means is that self-governance allows for the creation of a system of exemplarity, whereby countries are free to 'pick and choose' which aspects of another country's governance arrangements that they seek to adopt or avoid. Rather than imposing its own rules, a country can act as an exemplar (i.e. models) for others to emulate. This arguably ensures a greater degree of norm diffusion and internalization, as countries engage in social learning through emulation on their own terms. And as remarked by Raymond Dawson, this constitutes an influential way of thought and long-standing practice in ancient Chinese societies, whereby 'the acts of the famous and of the notorious [were recorded by historians in the hope that they] might provide examples for later men to follow or avoid'.<sup>19</sup>

#### IV

Chinese philosophical attachment to the cyclical historiography of governability can be traced as far back as to Mencius (372-289 BC), who had notably characterized the Three Dynasties Period (c. 2070-771 BC) as being replete with illustrations of the *zhi-luan* cycle. Later historians would share a similar view of history. Crucially, the most

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<sup>17</sup> See David Shambaugh, 'Coping with a Conflicted China', *The Washington Quarterly* 34:1 (2011), 7-27.

<sup>18</sup> Yeophantong, 'Governing the World', 357-358.

<sup>19</sup> This tradition is believed to have been influenced by such historical works as Confucius' *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Raymond Dawson, *The Chinese Experience* (London: Phoenix Press, 2005), 79-80.

recent reference to the relationship between order and chaos by a Chinese leader was made in July 2012, when former President Jiang Zemin observed in his preface to the *Brief Reader of Chinese History*, published by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the necessity of ‘...scientifically understanding and correctly using the law of history and drawing correct lessons from the experiences of order-chaos [and] rise-fall of all dynasties’. That said, some reservations regarding the use of cyclical historiography were voiced by early Republican writers, as intellectuals during this time sought to substitute modernist historiography for cyclical historiography.

While most narratives on the historiography of order-chaos will touch upon the reasons for why history evolves cyclically, some do entertain an explicit focus on the question of history remaining ‘orderly’. In view of the latter focus, classical Chinese texts offer two key explanations—each of which arguably serves as the basis for contemporary perspectives on global governance. The first explanation is derived from Confucian thought and is largely centered on the quality of leadership (or rulership). Interestingly, Confucius once advised that, in order to bring back order from chaos, the benevolent ruler was expected to reward more and receive less—a practice which demonstrated how the ruler was mindful of the need to sustain harmonious relationships with his subjects under heaven.

Mencius was similarly concerned with the maintenance of relationships between the prince and his subjects. According to the philosopher, the only viable way to safeguard order is to enable the population to become ‘self-sufficient’. Mencius believed that a self-sufficient population was more capable of exercising their good nature as human beings and was, therefore, more ‘governable’. Overall, Mencius was optimistic in his outlook, positing that ‘every five hundred years there will be a kingly person and among these kingly persons there will be good governors of the world’. He also saw the people playing a major role in identifying this kingly person, who is able to enlighten the people, win their heart and bring them peace (understood here as a form of order). In this way, Mencius was flexible with regard to the method of succession. It could be through heredity as well as selection, with the people retaining the right to revolt against an ‘unjust’ or ‘incapable’ ruler. Cycles of governability therefore came to pass as authority was bestowed upon or revoked from the leader by the people.<sup>20</sup>

Implicit in Mencius’ argument are references to how economic affluence also constitutes one condition for governability, with it conversely viewed as a consequence of governability. Following from this, the consideration of economic affluence gives rise to alternative viewpoint, based on the inevitability of economic cycles, from which governability cycles can be explained. Significantly, this materialistic understanding of cycles would be succeeded by an even more extreme version, as exemplified by the thought of Wang Chong (27-97 AD) of the Eastern Han

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<sup>20</sup> See Lucian W. Pye, *Asian Power and Politics: The Cultural Dimensions of Authority* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), 64.



Dynasty. Wang Chong suggests that cycles of order and chaos are decided by time, not policy. On this view, order within state proved to be more a matter of fate, than of capable leadership. In this formulation, the political drivers of governability cycles becomes reduced to no more than a superstitious quality. Republican thinker Liang Shu Ming (1893-1988) summarizes the literature on such cycles, concluding with the observation: coming after a period of order, chaos will tend to result from the corruption bred by hereditary institutions, a drop in productivity due to population increases, and the moral decline of the ruling elites. Chaos, in turn, breeds revolution which the new leadership will, more often than not, seek to assuage and accommodate, ultimately paving the way for yet another period of governability.<sup>21</sup> If one were to contrast this outlook with Lockean constitutionalism, the expectation would be that it is only a matter of time before one witnesses the Lockean constitutional state retreating into a non-constitutional state of chaos.

Looking at traditional Chinese thinking on the *zhi-luan* cycle, it quickly becomes apparent that there is no strong distinction between the inner and outer realms, as would be the case if one were to adopt a perspective based on territorial sovereignty. Accordingly, this view allows for the possibility for the cycle of governability to be actualized under various systems, be it a centralized or decentralized system. A determining factor lies with the perception of the population towards the incumbent leadership. Here, the population is considered politically indiscriminate and should remain so, as opposed to being participatory citizens.

It deserves note, however, that the concepts of governability and governmentality do share one noteworthy characteristic: that is, both stress the significance of local initiatives and individual agency in the resolution of the issues at hand. Yet their conceptual differences still result in different prognostications as to the role played by such agency. To begin, governmentality's praise of free individual agency rests upon the prior taming of the population with the framework of a liberal institution. Sited sensibilities of a clan, religious sect, strongman or guild are expected to seek alignment with the liberal state through the rationalities of governmentality. In this way, they do not work to hinder the introduction and assimilation of the liberal norms, rules and values of global governance. Conversely, governability thought encourages the establishment of capable leadership in order to manage global issues that affect the local population. As noted previously, governability advocates for domestic solutions to global problems. For this reason, global norms and rules that require the transformation of local leadership are subject to immediate suspicion from proponents of governability—in this case, China. Moreover, whereas governmentality focuses on the implementation and enforcement of rules to cope with exigent issues, governability places emphasis on first identifying the stakeholders involved and then grouping them into a 'greater self' before any viable solution is attempted. In this

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<sup>21</sup> Liang Shu Ming, *Zhongguo Wenhua Yaoyi* [The Essence of Chinese Culture] (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 2005), ch. 11.

regard, governability focuses more on the restoration of capacity in leadership than in the external imposition of rules.

At this point, the question to be raised here is: how has such thinking on governability featured into the policies and foreign relations of contemporary China? Two key aspects of governability thought continue to stand out in China's international engagement in the present-day. First, if global governance is to transform anarchy into governmentality via acts of intervention aimed at enforcing liberal values, a rising China is inclined to wait until this 'global governance moment' has passed, with conditions of anarchy restored. Global governance, in this sense, is viewed as a transitory achievement—or rather, a temporary solution to the challenge of international anarchy. Just as Western scholars have lamented the inadequacies and indeterminability of the current system of global governance, remaining doubtful of its capacity to keep abreast of the rapid changes taking place across the international landscape,<sup>22</sup> so have Chinese pundits advised Beijing against becoming too entrenched—and therefore holding much stake—in this impermanent and imperfect system.<sup>23</sup>

In accordance with China's spatial-temporal ontology, anarchy becomes an attribute of the status quo that will keep returning regardless of interventionist attempts to control it. It would thus be better for the PRC to, in the time-worn words of Deng Xiaoping, 'bide our time' and pursue self-disciplining through acts of self-governance. To the Chinese mind then, at issue is not the question of which norms and rules should be promoted and proliferated in international society; rather, it is about ensuring the capacity of countries to self-govern. Of course, achieving capable leadership is no easy task. However, from the Chinese perspective, global governance and its implicit support for interventionist behavior merely works to undermine local innovation and spontaneity in the long-term. Whereas proponents of global governance will ask China, 'how much more (human) suffering is to come by waiting and in whose interest does governability ultimately serve under an integrated leadership?', China will tend to focus more on the question of 'how practical can externally-imposed norms and rules be in the absence of a population that has faith in its leadership, which essentially represents the greater self responsible for enforcing these norms and rules?'

Second, unlike liberal governmentality which seeks to reconcile differences and manage 'multiculturalism' through a universal discourse of governance, difference does not possess a particular 'value' from a governability perspective. Contrary to burgeoning scholarship that identifies the pluralism inherent in Confucian

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<sup>22</sup> Lawrence S. Finkelstein, 'What Is Global Governance?', *Global Governance* 1:3 (1995), 368.

<sup>23</sup> See Yu Keping, 'Jingji quanqiu hua yu zhili de bianqian' ('Economic Globalisation and the Transformation of Governance'), *Zhexue yanjiu* (Philosophical Studies) 10 (2000), 17–24; and Qin Yaqing, 'Quanguo zhili shiling yu zhixu linian de chongjian' ('Global Governance Failures and Reconstructing the Idea of Order'), *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* (World Economy and Politics) 4 (2013), 4–18.

political philosophy, the idea of governability does not support nor denounce pluralism. The cited assertion of difference is, as such, seen to be neither a valid explanation of chaos within states or the international system more broadly, and therefore cannot serve as justification for intervention to impose a synchronized liberal order. Nor does it serve as a convincing basis for governments to resist their duties and obligations, the fulfillment of which is necessary to the maintenance of governable relationships irrespective of the nature of the state (that is, regardless of whether it is feudalistic, tribal or authoritarian). Following from this, national identities as defined by ideological, religious and cultural differences also do not constitute a matter of concern. Simply put, difference and diversity is not to be suppressed but respected. Notably, in light of the country's ongoing quest for peaceful development, the Chinese State Council issued a white essay on China's peaceful development in 2011, which had contained the following remark on the pursuit of an 'independent foreign policy of peace':

...[C]ountries should draw on each other's strengths, seek common ground while putting aside differences, respect the diversity of the world, and promote progress in human civilization. Dialogues and exchanges among civilizations should be encouraged to do away with ideological prejudice and distrust, and make human society more harmonious and the world more colorful...[China does not] use [its] social system or ideology as a yardstick to determine what kind of relations it should have with other countries. China respects the right of the people of other countries to independently choose their own social system and path of development, and does not interfere in other countries' internal affairs.<sup>24</sup>

## V

Anarchy is a condition of *luan* (亂). The opposite of anarchy is sovereignty, which in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is underscored by Foucaultian governmentality that prepares as well as disciplines the population under the sovereign jurisdiction for global governance.<sup>25</sup> Sovereignty safeguards against anarchy by dismantling it into distinct pieces of orderly space. However, the Chinese understanding of *zhi-luan*, in contrast, amounts to a dyadic cycle in time. From the Chinese perspective, the opposite of chaos or *luan* is not the creation of synchronic rules of governance. Rather, as stated above, it is the reinstatement of a governable state that respects diversity and difference. As a result, there is no interest in dictating how a country ought to be ruled so long as order is maintained. Beijing's foreign-policy commitments to 'relations of mutual respect' and

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<sup>24</sup> Information Office of the State Council of the PRC, 'China's Peaceful Development' (September 2011), available at: [http://english.gov.cn/official/2011-09/06/content\\_1941354.htm](http://english.gov.cn/official/2011-09/06/content_1941354.htm) (accessed 10 February 2014).

<sup>25</sup> Wanda Vradi, 'Universal but not Truly "Global": Governmentality, Economic Liberalism, and the International', *Review of International Studies* 39:1 (2013), 49-69.

its oft-articulated ‘respect for the diversity of development models’ mirror this attitude,<sup>26</sup> as does its support to authoritarian regimes in Myanmar, Zimbabwe and North Korea.

Taken together, global governance and governmentality make up the global space in which globality and sitedness emerge as two variables whose interactions are negotiated through interventionism. In this way, intervention in failed states, for one, can be seen as marking the limits of the claim of sitedness. It is disciplinary toward the population that fails to follow the practices and discourses of the prevailing govern-mentality. In this sense, intervention serves as both a discourse and a process that allows for the pursuit of synchronizing rules which answer the call for good governance. It defines how global and sited space should be re-divided, not transcended.<sup>27</sup>

As mentioned at the outset of this essay, China’s rise has engendered a fundamental epistemological challenge to the amorphous concept of good governance, which is undergirded by a belief in synchronicity within the global space and a universally applicable standard of the ideal state. Given the cyclical historiography that has long characterized Chinese political thinking, the possibility of progress towards an ideal state—a vision premised upon liberal governmentality—is one that does not carry much normative weight. Indeed, the fact that the very idea of ‘good governance’ remains hotly contested would appear to attest to its inadequacies. To the Chinese mind, the most one can hope for seems to be the (transitory) maintenance or restoration of order within any given society. Certainly, (failed) American conceptualizations of good governance as the establishment of ‘consolidated democracy’ would appear to attest to this. Unresolved problems to do with the implementation of such a mode of governance abound, as evinced by the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan. This has prompted at least one prominent commentator to argue that consolidated democracy is infeasible. Rather, American policy-makers should instead aim for a less-than-perfect alternative—that is, ‘good-enough-governance’.<sup>28</sup>

China’s governability-based approach, more specifically, has further given rise to an ontological challenge, as it situates governable populations within a long cycle of history where any spatially-oriented thinking would consequently appear non-ontological. This, in turn, brings into question the rationale for intervention, which generally involves the transformation of the sited population as a permanent stage of

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<sup>26</sup> Joseph Y. S. Cheng, ‘How China Deals with the “China Threat” Perception’, in Joseph Y.S. Cheng (ed.), *Challenges and Policy Programmes of China’s New Leadership* (Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press, 2007), 239.

<sup>27</sup> David Chandler, ‘Critiquing Liberal Cosmopolitanism? The Limits of the Biopolitical Approach’, *International Political Sociology* (2009), 53-70.

<sup>28</sup> Stephen D. Krasner, ‘Seeking “good-enough-governance”—not democracy’, *Reuters* (23 September 2013), available at: <http://blogs.reuters.com/great-debate/2013/09/22/seeking-good-enough-governance-not-democracy/> (accessed 11 February 2014).

governmentality. In sum, the Chinese challenge essentially epitomizes a view of history that is insensitive to the confrontation between synchronic governance and sited differences. It is also anti-Wendtian given China's alienation from linear historiography, especially from the specification of methods and processes for achieving a world state. As previously mentioned, the oft-cited line of wisdom taken from the *Three Kingdoms*—neither scientifically proven, nor precise in its periodization—speaks not only to an inherent sensibility towards unity and integration, but it also reflects a deep appreciation of 'pragmatism'. What this means, in essence, is that no solution to any issue can be deemed pragmatic unless it comes internally from an integrated leadership. At the same time, an integrated leadership needs to be supported by all affected (i.e. the governed population); only then can order be sustained. The external imposition of norms and rules, by contrast, risks stirring local resistance and, in extreme cases, political struggles, and are therefore subject to eventual failure.

That said, when it comes to failed or failing states, such cases not only exemplify unsuccessful or ineffective governance, but also represent the breakdown of liberal governmentality. Characterized by human rights abuses and weak rule of law, among other problems, these states have the potential to seriously undermine global governance. It is the case that the human populations of these states will not have gone through the 'cultural preparation' required for global governance as well.<sup>29</sup> The acceptance of interventionism, as a discourse proliferated by liberal governmentality, nonetheless relies on these cultural preparations that render intervention possible, indispensable and even desirable. It becomes especially powerful when these cultural preparations are enacted not just by governments, but also by the constituting population. This scenario is normally seen in liberal democratic societies, where the rationale for interventionism, along with the globality of these issues, comes almost 'naturally' to members of these societies. As such, the public will tend to anticipate the need for intervention even before knowing what the exact problems are in the failed states to be intervened. Foreign policy gains familiarity, despite the fact that the foreign policy-making processes in most countries remain obscure and inaccessible to the general public.

By contrast, in failed states where such cultural preparations have not taken place, this means that 'global governance' will tend to be treated with suspicion, with people being unlikely to accept the legitimacy of interventionism (which needs to have been inculcated through daily practices of governmentality) as a consequence.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, America's military intervention in Iraq has since prompted popular backlash,

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<sup>29</sup> Timothy Luke, 'Governmentality and Contragovernmentality: Rethinking Sovereignty and Territoriality after the Cold War', *Political Geography* 15: 6-7 (1996), 491-507.

<sup>30</sup> See Gavin Kendall, 'Global networks, international networks, actor networks', in Larner and Walters (eds), *Global Governmentality*; Alexandria Jayne Innes and Brent J. Steele, 'Governmentality in Global Governance', in *The Oxford Handbook of Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

to the extent that increasing numbers of Iraqis have been visiting Saddam Hussein's grave to pay their respects—a symbolic gesture indicative of growing nostalgia for a strong leader.<sup>31</sup> Even so, while some observers have argued that liberal governmentality is not suitable for certain (non-Western) failed states, these critics ironically point to the necessity of intervention as the only solution. This, in part, speaks to principles like the 'responsibility to protect' (R2P) and 'sovereignty as responsibility'. As anxiety centered on the inability of failed states to enact the minimal agency required for governance, both concepts have come to gain greater resonance among intellectual and policy circles in recent years.

To China as a bystander, the physicality of most interventions problematizes their ostensible 'naturalness', as it serves as a tangible manifestation of the 'alien' forces that seek to influence the target state. This, in part, explains Beijing's constant aversion to engaging in interventions, even when for humanitarian purposes. The recent case of Libya, together with past examples like Kosovo in the 1990s and Congo in the mid-1960s, testifies to this.<sup>32</sup> More broadly, the PRC's reluctance to intervene also parallels attempts on the part of the so-called New Left movement (*Xin Zuopai*) to attack the prevailing governmentality by contesting the naturalness of the extant global governance system, ultimately revealing it to be no more than a control mechanism that favors certain of its proponents at the expense of others.<sup>33</sup>

Even so, the dilemma of whether to intervene was one that China still had to address in light of protracted conflicts like those in Darfur. While most members of the international community attempted to justify intervention in Sudan on the basis of humanitarian concerns, China stood steadfastly against intervention, opting instead for dialogue and, at most, diplomatic pressure. Although amid increasing social pressure, the People's Republic eventually had to conform by supporting the deployment of the African Union-UN Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). A similar story is also seen with respect to the question of humanitarian intervention against the Qaddafi regime in Libya. Although China (along with four other countries, including Russia) opted to abstain from voting on UNSC Resolution 1973, having been unwilling to endorse the imposition of a 'no-fly zone' over Libya, Beijing did finally lend its support to some of the UN's proposed sanctions.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Aaron C. Davis, 'At shrine to Hussein, nostalgia for a strong leader', *The Washington Post* (20 May 2011), available at: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/war-zones/at-shrine-to-saddam-hussein-in-iraq-nostalgia-for-a-fallen-leader/2011/05/18/AFvW7u7G\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/war-zones/at-shrine-to-saddam-hussein-in-iraq-nostalgia-for-a-fallen-leader/2011/05/18/AFvW7u7G_story.html) (15 March 2014).

<sup>32</sup> See Chiung-Chiu Huang and Chih-yu Shih, *Harmonious Intervention: China's Quest for Relational Security* (Ashgate, 2014).

<sup>33</sup> On the New Left, see Pankaj Mishra, 'China's New Leftist', *The New York Times* (15 October 2006), available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/15/magazine/15leftist.html?pagewanted=all&r=0> (accessed 15 March 2014).

<sup>34</sup> See "'China has serious difficulty with part of the resolution," envoy says', *Xinhua* (18 March 2011), available at: [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-03/18/c\\_13784748.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-03/18/c_13784748.htm) (accessed 29 June 2011); and 'Libya sanctions: China's new role at the UN', *The Christian Science Monitor* (28 February 2011), available at: <http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/the-monitors-view/2011/0228/Libya-sanctions-China-s-new-role-at-the-UN> (accessed 5 August 2011).

Chinese tempered approval to intervention in these cases still serve more as exceptions than the norm, however. Understood from the perspective of governability thinking, the Chinese leadership continues to insist that the local populations of target states should retain the power to restore their country's domestic order in their own desired way, irrespective of whether such a decision is deemed acceptable to the international community. As stated earlier, while this mentality might seem to indicate a lack of interest on China's part to support liberal democratic ideals, it is more the case that the PRC remains deeply skeptical of the possibility of success for any attempt to externally-impose rules and policies. This is evident from China's stance on Iraq, as epitomized by the idea of the 'Three Supports' (*san ge zhichi*). According to Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Beijing is committed to: first, firmly supporting Iraq to safeguard the country's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity; second, providing assistance to the country so as to enhance processes of political reconstruction and national reconciliation, whereupon the Iraqi people will be able to 'find a development path suited to their own national conditions';<sup>35</sup> and third, supporting the Iraqi government to oppose all forms of terrorism.<sup>36</sup> Ultimately, what this diplomatic stance underscores is China's enduring minimalist approach to governance—in other words, its commitment to maintaining governable relationships between all stakeholders involved. In this regard then, it would appear that China is less of a 'revisionist' power that seeks to make its own rules, as some commentators would have it, than a 'status quo' one.<sup>37</sup>

## VI

Global governance, as predicated on a liberal governmentality, has largely served as a driving-force behind interventionism in world affairs. Although an active contributor to global governance, China has nevertheless continued to adhere, in most cases, to an 'independent' foreign policy of non-interventionism. This essay argues that to make sense of this attitude, it is important for us to consider China's deep-seated preference for governability: that is, the view that order will—and should—be restored internally, as based on 'bottom-up' local forces, and that external actors should refrain from attempting to reconstruct 'new' (liberal democratic) institutions or impose their own norms and values on target states, lest this leads to even more resistance and instability. Instead, they should only aim at maintaining order by helping to

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<sup>35</sup> Assistance here tends to be focused on the public service and infrastructure sectors.

<sup>36</sup> 'Wang Yi chanshi Zhongfang dui Yilake de "San ge Zhichi" [Wang Yi defines China's 'Three Supports' to Iraq], *CRNTT* (23 February 2014), available at: <http://hk.crntt.com/doc/1030/3/7/7/103037709.html?coluid=202&kindid=0&docid=103037709&mdate=0223212707> (accessed 10 June 2014).

<sup>37</sup> This is not to mention cases like Cambodia in the late 1970s, when China intervened militarily in the country against the Vietnamese incursion. However (and we intend to delve into greater depth on this issue in subsequent versions of this essay), it could be argued that Chinese interventionary action in Cambodia was undertaken as a measure to restore a modicum of order within the region, which was seen as having been jeopardized by Vietnamese 'aggression'.

strengthen local capacity, while leaving the pursuit of resolutions to the national governments in question.

Foucaultian governmentality and global governance work in the same epistemological horizon. One significant outcome is the moral responsibility they create for states that subscribe to global governance. Those who reject global governance, on the other hand, are reduced to peripheral—or even pariah—states who are characterized as not caring enough about international justice or order. In contrast, the notion of governability, as founded upon a cyclical historiography and distinct from the prevailing liberal governmentality, does not view intervention as necessary in most cases. In this sense, it is possible to argue that the epistemological alienation felt by proponents of governability toward contemporary global governance stems from the liberal overtones of governmentality, as opposed to interventionist behavior *per se*. Clearly, Chinese cyclical historiography does not belong on the same epistemological plane as governmentality and global governance. That said, this is not to suggest that China cannot learn the rules of global governance or that there is no potential for China to incrementally adopt the underlying rationalities of liberal governmentality.