

Chinese Hegemony: Grand Strategy and International Institutions in East Asian History, by Feng Zhang. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015. xv+261 pp. US\$65.00 (cloth).

Precise, methodical, nuanced, original, insightful, engaging, deliberately provocative, insistently revisionist, and at times didactic, *Chinese Hegemony* is what the music business calls a crossover hit. One part diplomatic history, one part international relations theory, it fits within a growing intellectual movement that aims not just to connect the two fields but to transform them both while making a contribution to policy practice as well. This is an ambitious project in the tradition of the scholarship of Iain Johnston, Amitav Acharya, and David Kang.

The diplomatic history component is an analysis of early Ming diplomacy (1368–1424) in its interactions with Korea, Japan, and the Mongols. Rather than a comprehensive history, it focuses on a narrow band of events, issues, and documents that amount to case material for the exploration of a specific theme. History here is a specimen in the laboratory of critical international theory. Ming historians may not be enthralled, but nor will they be disappointed.

Feng Zhang's subject is what John K. Fairbank and subsequent generations of historians have called China's world order. Zhang aims to modify the Fairbankian understanding of the tribute system, not so much by rejecting what it described and explained but by embedding it in a larger idea of Chinese hegemony, of which the tribute system was only one component.

Zhang's theoretical aim is to advance an alternative to neorealist explanations of Chinese foreign policy behavior, then and now, that focus on power maximization. With roots in the English school's hybrid of constructivism and traditional realism, he develops a relationalist theory to understand Chinese behavior better than neorealist accounts. What he calls "ethical relationalism" grows out of Confucian thinking about the polity and external affairs, with humaneness as the central moral purpose of international relations.

His formulation is innovative and anything but a mechanical application of static and essentialist moral principles of statecraft. Defining hegemony as a combination of material primacy and international legitimacy, Zhang tells a pointed story of the recurring interaction of two main strands of relationality, one instrumental in advancing immediate Chinese interests and power and the other expressive in pursuing right conduct and propriety sensitive to the needs of others. Relations are not just a means to a goal but can be an end in themselves. As he notes, relational rationality emphasizes mutual relations rather than maximization of individual interests.

What does the book say about the contemporary world in which material circumstances are immensely different from 700 years ago and in which the fabric of ideas and interests that animate policy makers in Beijing are woven of a different cloth? Are Chinese policy makers not all realists who have learned well

how to play the state-centered games of power and interest? His short answer is that they are this and something else at the same time.

For those who have come close to Chinese officials and policy analysts in action, aspects of Zhang's account certainly ring true. This surfaces in a concern about principles, a reliance on coercion combined with propriety and right conduct in relationships, an abiding sense of hierarchy combined with a search for win-win cooperation. Even if skeptical about the sincerity of the higher moral impulses, the expressions of self-restraint and the embrace of multilateralism sometimes show through the veneer of immediate self-interest. These are the foundations for a distinctive form of Chinese exceptionalism based on "the promotion of a universal ethical world order based on Confucian propriety and underpinned by China's relational authority" (158).

China's views of world order matter a great deal, especially for those living in its immediate neighborhood, who are acutely sensitive to both China's immediate behavior and long-term intentions. The book offers some reassurances: when relations are amicable, China is capable of restraint and magnanimity, the *qing-ganxing yuanze* of expressive relationality containing the *gongjuxing yuanze* of instrumental relationality. Zhang hopes that China "will deepen and expand ethical relationalism and the outside world will help the relational cause of the wise segment of China's political and intellectual communities by reciprocating with a similarly relational response" (189). This leads to the distinctive prediction that East Asia's future stability rests "not on a material balance of power or economic interdependence, but on the actual forging of a new type of relationship between China and its neighbors in accordance with ethical relationalism" (190).

Before we become too comfortable about that possibility of a new regional order based on ethical relationalism, Zhang concludes with the observation that China today is unclear about its international purpose and what it stands for. China's world order can be hierarchical, assertive, and coercive. His book is about Chinese hegemony, not a regional or world order after hegemony.

With this innovative account in hand, we may think more clearly and deeply. But we will not necessarily sleep any easier.

Paul Evans
University of British Columbia

Understanding China: The Silk Road and the Communist Manifesto, by Peter Nolan. London: Routledge, 2016. vi+174 pp. £95.00 (cloth).

This book consists of four distinct chapters. The first two focus on aspects of China's external relations, and the second pair delineate the Marxist view of history and its relevance to China today. While the first two certainly help us understand