

Chinese Global Orders:
Socialism, Tradition, and Nation
in China-Russia Relations

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Outline

- Two lectures today
- Global Politics of China
- China-Latin America relations
- We'll make some memes about China
- Enough time, we'll talk about Chinese science fiction, and its ideas of global strategy



Who is this?



Lu Shanye, China's ambassador to France

- Ukraine & others: not sovereign states
- 2 days later corrected by China's foreign ministry
- One true, the other false?
- Or both views of sovereignty necessary and true at the same time
- Physicist Shroedinger's box: the cat is both alive and dead



Summary

- My argument: take a similar view of Chinese foreign policy
- Chinese elites make contradictory statements that coexist because they are all necessary, useful, and true
- Explore how Chinese elites understand foreign policy in terms of the overlapping contradictory narratives of socialism, tradition & nation
 - socialist concept of united front work
 - traditional ideal of tianxia (all-under-heaven)
 - historiography of national humiliation
- Comparison with Russia shows China as not exotic or exceptional,
- overlapping views of global order that is not just post-American, but post-Westphalian

Neo-socialism

- Chronological understanding of post-socialist China
- Neo-socialism (Pieke): PRC keeps reinventing itself by mixing the often contradictory ideologies of Chinese tradition, capitalist modernity & socialist modernity
- Me: neo-socialism of socialism, tradition & nation that are joined together in dynamic tension
- research question: “which is true” → “how do socialism, tradition, and nation interact,” & “which one is dominant now”
- In China, socialism is still dominant



Xi Jinping at Central Party School

China-Russia-US strategic triangles

- Realist IR theory:
1970s
- Rational actors in a
game
- Non-ideological



Strategic triangles to united front work (UFW)

- Communist party tactic by Lenin (1920)
- historical change from contradictions & struggle
- the logic of UFW: join with “friends” to isolate “enemies”



- temporary alignment: today’s friend can become tomorrow’s enemy
- Back in force again with Xi Jinping
- UFW is short- and medium-term “tactical triangles,” not long term “strategic triangles”

2nd narrative: tradition

- Tianxia map 天下圖
- (All-under-Heavens map)
- Territorial, civilizational, cosmological
- Early 19th century
- Tianxia system for 21st century
- Chinese empire then and now



All under Heaven

THE TIANXIA SYSTEM FOR A POSSIBLE WORLD ORDER

Foreword by Odd Arne Westad



Zhao Tingyang



2021: Xi Jinping declares “Great Harmony under Heaven” [*tianxia datong*] is the goal of the “Community of Shared Fate for Mankind”

Russo-centrism

- Eurasian ideology
- Concentric circles of Russian Orthodox civilisation
- Rise of Chinese and Russian civilization: fall of western decadence
- “Clash of Civilizations” logic
- Xi Jinping’s Global Civilization Initiative



3rd narrative: nation

- Historiography: make sense of the mass of historical facts by telling a story
- Historiography of national humiliation and lost territories
- Ukraine is a fake country
- Humiliation of the break-up of Soviet Union
- Cleanse humiliation through irridentism
 - reclaim lost territories



1. Armenia 2. Azerbaijan 3. Belarus 4. Estonia 5. Georgia 6. Kazakhstan 7. Kyrgyzstan 8. Latvia 9. Lithuania
10. Moldova 11. Russia 12. Tajikistan 13. Turkmenistan 14. Ukraine 15. Uzbekistan

“Europe in 2035” (published in 2012 in a Russian tabloid)



Western Europe fragmented, Russia expands to former Soviet Union

China Dream & National Humiliation 國恥



- Xi Jinping's 'China dream' is the 'great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation'
- National Humiliation 國恥 historiography revived in 1990s to fight the West
- Need to correct national humiliations in order to promote Tianxia system

- Xi's view of national humiliation and lost territories
- HK and Taiwan: not real places with different languages, cultures, histories, identities and nationalities
- Like Putin's view of Ukraine, Xi sees them as 'fake countries' that need to be recovered, and reunified with China, and by force if necessary

Map of China's National Humiliation (1927)





Czarist Russia's occupation of China's sovereign territory map (source: *Maps of the Century of National Humiliation of Modern China*, 1997/2005)

Conclusion: Singapore and Southeast Asia

- Socialism: Singapore not seen as an independent country with its own national interests
 - Site for united front work (inter-state and domestic)
- Tradition: Xi: Global Chinese civilization based on PRC official culture
 - Shared civilization with peranakan and ethnic-Chinese in SE Asia?
- Nation: historiography of national humiliation: South China Sea as a "lost territory"
 - Unlikely that it would extend to land territories in SE Asia



Thank you!

Questions and comments

- Three research themes:
- Chinese Global Orders: Socialism, Tradition, and Nation
- China Visualizes the World: Identity and Foreign Policy
- Comparative International Theory