

XI JINPING'S FIVE PRINCIPLES OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE YIN-YANG SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

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ABSTRACT

China is being characterized as the sleeping dragon that has been awakened and is starting on its quest on world domination. The rise of China and strengthening of its economic power and military prowess are seen to be a result of this awakening. Given the burgeoning role of China in the global arena, understanding its foreign policy is integral in predicting and observing how it operates and propels itself to be a global power. This paper will be two-pronged in analysis as it will first [1] focus on President Xi Jinping's Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which are: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence; and [2] see how the principle of five elements (wood, water, fire, metal, and earth) is represented and employed within these policies. Each

principle will be dissected using the Yin-Yang school of thought as apparatus, since understanding that these are premised on Chinese philosophical thought will deepen the overall understanding of the said policies. The Yin-Yang school of thought will be employed through determining which of the five principles in the foreign policy represent and correspond to the five elements. In this identification of the five elements in the principles, there will also be a synthesis of how the policy can be seen as a whole and as parts, that will contribute to the overall understanding of how China makes sense of being a global power in the 21st century.

Keywords: *Xi Jinping, Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, Yin-Yang school of thought*

Purpose and Significance

China is a burgeoning power not only in the Asian region, but in the global arena. Given this, it would be important to look into the mechanisms it employs when it comes to interacting with other states. Apart from the actual policies and principles it follows, a commonly glossed over aspect is the values and beliefs sets from which these principles are derived and based. It would be important to identify the philosophy behind these principles, as it may be used to: 1) explain the existing trends in President Xi Jinping's courses of action, and 2) predict where these decisions and policies may lead. China's impact will be a determining factor to how its neighboring states and competition in power, such as

the United States and Japan, will play in the global field. It will then be necessary to understand the root and source of China's rationale.

Scope and Limitations

The researcher is admittedly not a follower nor a practitioner of the Yin and Yang school of thought, but a student of CHN30: Chinese Philosophy. Given this premise, the discussion will be facilitated through presenting data from actual experts of the said field. The paper is limited to contextualizing how the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence are in line with the Yin and Yang school of thought, particularly the five elements.

Contextualizing China's Politics and Governance

China has come from a long history and narrative of tradition, culture, and governance, signified by various prominent leaders, architectural wonders such as the Great Wall, technological discoveries, academic findings, military tactics and strategies and inventions (such as gun powder and other weapons), and influential philosophies. Within this stretch of over thousands of years, China was able to survive and thrive with the help of its leaders who take into heart their own principles, beliefs, and ideologies.

In current times, China is fervently pressing on to exude greatness and influence in the global arena. It does not only focus on its internal and domestic affairs, but it has recognized the

significance of globalization and the need to foster relations with other states, given the interdependent nature of the fast-paced world of development and growth. In China's attempt and initiatives to reach out to the world and posit itself as a responsible state, it employs foreign policy that is guided by the principle of peaceful coexistence. What is being studied then is where these principles are rooted in.

The Harmony of Chinese Philosophy and Politics

Politics and governance go hand in hand with a state's principles and values, since the policies are merely reflections of the collective sentiments and beliefs the nation's constituents. With this presupposition, it would be important to understand how Chinese ideology and philosophy have seeped into the process of policymaking (for both domestic and local) of China's government, as it will become a starting point to further understand its current policies.

Considering the long history of China and its dynasties with great and revered emperors and rulers, values are inseparable from governance because these sets of values are used as the guiding principle to govern and lead. During the Warring States Era, several leaders were vying for their own set of principles and ideologies – it was not only a war of weapons and brawns, but it was also a war of ideologies and brains. The Yin and Yang school of thought flourished during this era and has then become a basis for consequent and succeeding theories and philosophies. In a

sense, its principles became a standard that has been adapted and modified by the likes of Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, Mohism, and other prominent philosophies then.

The Yin and Yang school of thought primarily stems from the want and yearning of philosophers, scientists, astrologists, politicians, and even the commoners to understand, describe, and explain everything. From this thirst of wanting to learn, the Ancient Chinese have hypothesized that the changes in everything are brought about by the interaction and relationship between the Yin (characterized by the negative and the dark, and also associated to women) and the Yang (which on the other hand is characterized by the positive and the light, which is associated to men). These two when combined, constitute balance.

The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence

Xi Jinping is a leader who is making a name for himself. Although it is a given that when one becomes a president of a state, he/she is recognized, Xi Jinping takes being recognized by other states to a whole new level. He makes sure that his military prowess and economic power are very-well showcased and paraded. An example of this would be the continuous strengthening of the People's Liberation Army and its persevering and unyielding quest to make its presence in the contested South China Sea territories felt. Given this scenario of demonstrating what he can give, Xi Jinping takes a balanced approach through upholding the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, introduced by his predecessor

Zhou Enlai; this then makes China's foreign policy a tempered kind of aggressive. These Five Principles are as follows:

1. mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity
2. mutual non-aggression
3. non-interference in each other's internal affairs
4. equality and mutual benefit
5. peaceful coexistence

These five principles were birthed out of a process of consultation among China, India, and Myanmar in 1954, by Zhou Enlai. China has been the major proponent pushing for the principles to be the fundamental principle followed in the field of diplomacy, as they emanated universal significance. These principles were vital and integral in China's transition from a revolutionary type of diplomacy to one which is open to interaction with external actors, which is state diplomacy. It had also helped China implement its open-door policy, which gave way to the construction of a comprehensive pattern of diplomacy among states. The five principles do not only posit China as a responsible power, but it makes a leeway for other states to test the waters when it comes to partnering with China through peaceful and cooperative development (Yuan, 2015).

Xi modifies these and re-contextualizes the whole set to suit his agenda and platform which is the Great Rejuvenation, an attempt to reinvigorate and reassert China's greatness in the global arena. Xi incorporated the economic aspect in this paradigm, giving rise

to projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative and other financial activities such as lending money (which accumulate to debts and concessions). Xi also integrated and further developed these five principles by strengthening the socio-cultural pillar by providing a soft power approach, inclusive of education campaigns through Confucius Institutes and all-expense paid and funded China study tours, as well as introduction of Chinese pop culture in foreign media, and even employing Panda Diplomacy. Despite these additions and modifications, Xi Jinping still stays true to the premises embodied by the Five Principles. The difference lies on the manner of execution given the branding of peaceful rise and peaceful development.

The Five Elements of Yin and Yang (五行 Wǔ Xing)

Before delving straight on into the Five Elements, it is deemed necessary to first discuss the prominent symbol of the Yin and Yang school of thought, which is presented in Figure 1 below. As mentioned previously, the Yin and the Yang symbolize two principles which are opposing and have contradicting themes, and all the happenings in the universe can be reduced and categorized into either of these two (China Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2014). With this characterization, the changes that occur are made possible by the Five Elements.



Figure1. The Yin and Yang Symbol

The Yin and Yang school of thought has provided five elements which are namely: wood, fire, earth, metal, and water, which undergo the five phases. These five elements embody and signify changes that transpire in the universe, as they depict the producing and overcoming of one another (China Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2014). Each element has its own distinct characteristic that is derived from the very material it symbolizes. These elements are usually associated with medicinal use, but the principles are also applicable to fengshui, martial arts, politics, and governance (Wang, 2018).

This section will expound on describing each element, then proceed to how these interact with each other to result to a balanced system. The interactions of these elements constitute

different relationships that signify and explain sequences of change. The five elements have greatly helped and contributed to Chinese philosophy and culture because it was used by the rulers and advisers to assess and study certain phenomena (Peterson, 1980).

Below is a brief summary and description of characteristics and concepts associated with the five elements (Tse, 2017):

Wood - The element of wood is commonly attributed to the characteristics and emotion of anger and being energetic. Wood is also linked to benevolence because of its growing and giving characteristic. It is also closely associated with production and movement.

Fire - The element of fire, similar to wood, is also linked to emotions, just like any other of the elements. In this element however, it is tied to joy, passion. It is also deemed a symbol of vitality and growth. Fire is also used as a symbol of wisdom because of the visual of its brightness.

Earth - The element of earth is connected to pensiveness and on one extent, overthinking. However, it is also a representation and symbol of stability and practicality, and even integrity for the image of being grounded that it evokes. Furthermore, it also embodies the action of transformation.

Metal – The element of metal is linked to sorrow, but it is also seen as an embodiment of integrity and endurance, and righteousness because of the material's strength. Some interpretations also link the concept of harvest to metal.

Water – The last element of water is associated with the emotion of fear. Though this association holds, it also becomes a symbol and representation of serenity and being all-encompassing. Water is also linked to the concept of a storage and propriety (associated with its deferential and yielding characteristic).

Each of these elements constitutes a characteristic that allows it to form a relationship with the other elements. Figure 2 below provides a way to visualize and trace these mentioned relationships. There are two general relationships that can be stratified into the generating and overcoming interactions (Liang, 2002). The generating processes delve into inducing development, while the overcoming processes aim to control development (Tse, 2017). The two types are seen to be complementary, in a sense that both are happening simultaneously in an interdependent manner (Liang, 2002).

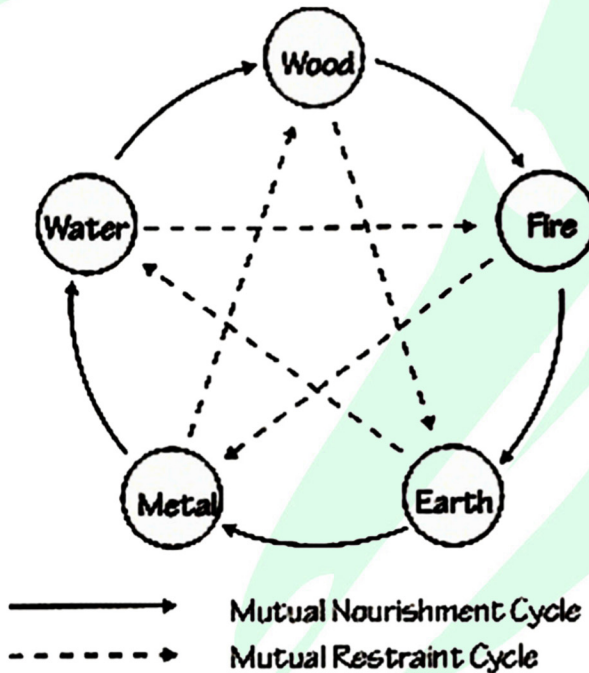


Figure 2. The Five Elements and Interactions

The first interactions which fall under the generating category are as follows: fueling, forming, containing, carrying, and feeding. These movements and interactions can be seen as Wood fueling Fire; Fire forming Earth (ash, etc.); Earth containing Metal; Metal carrying Water (through use of pails, containers, pipes, etc.); and Water feeding wood (trees, plants, etc.). It is observable how these characteristics form a cycle where the snake bites its tail (Liang, 2002).

The second set of interactions which fall under the overcoming spectrum are as follows: melting, penetrating, separating,

absorbing, and quenching. Elements-wise, these are observed in Fire melting Metal; Metal penetrating Wood (through actions of chopping, sawing, drilling, nailing, screwing); Wood separating Earth (instances where tree roots break up soil/rock); Earth absorbing Water; and Water quenching Fire. The same observation holds for the second set, where the interactions come to a full cycle (Liang, 2002).

From these mentioned interactions, Grandmaster Shou-Yu Liang discusses how the five interactions that transpire among the elements embody the concept of mutual growth and mutual inhibition, where each element promotes one while it inhibits the other (2002). He tackles how there are two normal and three adverse interactions within this paradigm. Mutual Nourishment (inter-promoting) and Mutual Restraint (interacting), are considered the normal cyclic patterns, while Mutual Over-Restraint (encroachment), Reverse-Restraint (violating), and Mutual Burdening are the conditions considered as adverse.

Yin and Yang Contextualized in Xi Jinping's Five Principles

To understand how Xi Jinping's Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence play a role in the context of the Yin and Yang school of thought, it would be necessary to dissect the relationships between the five elements that were mentioned in the previous section, and possibly assign and appropriate each to correspond to each of the principles.

Below is a run-down of suggestions regarding how each of the elements can be attributed to a specific principle. This section will be discussing how each principle represents an element and the interactions and relationships it entails. In all these appropriations of principle-to-element, it can be observed that not only one element is applicable to one principle. More than one element can represent one principle as it has numerous facets, and some characteristics may not represent some aspects, but only one of these countless permutations will be discussed.

1. Mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity as earth
2. Mutual non-aggression as wood
3. Non-interference in each other's internal affairs as water
4. Equality and mutual benefit as fire
5. Peaceful coexistence as metal

Mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity as earth. The principle behind mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity is premised on mutual acknowledgement and respect of what each state is due. It can be likened to the element of Earth, since the material is often attributed the characteristic of integrity and being grounded. As leaders who will practice this, it is important to have one's feet grounded in his/her own soil, to establish integrity with who he/she will be dealing with. When dealing with the types of interactions, in line with the characteristics of the element, it aims to contain and absorb. The

principle of having mutual respect contains and limits possible courses of action and becomes the first line of defense as it already absorbs preliminary impact due to tensions arising from disputes. This understanding coming out of the process of containing and absorbing can lead to transformation of dispositions held by states.

Mutual non-aggression as wood. The principle of mutual non-aggression is an agreement between the states to have a settlement not to use violent means and denouncing war as means to deal with disputes. The element of wood is likened to this principle as wood signifies the emotion of anger and energy being tempered for the sake of growth. In the call to lay down arms and violent means, what is being done is the tempering of capabilities and potentialities to produce harm. Since the element of wood is related to the virtue of benevolence, it can be derived that the act of agreeing to mutual non-aggression is an act of benevolence itself. Wood also signifies fueling and separating. In China's context, although mutual non-aggression is proposed, international paranoia is something that cannot be helped. Even states agree to this, the state is limited to generating weapons, they will still continue to innovate and invent in the name of defense. For China, it continues to fuel and streamline its army and other ballistic weapons. Being likened to the element of Wood, mutual non-aggression has the facet of separating. In this paradigm, separating can be interpreted as partitioning and allocating what is due, in a sense that this military force is only for controlling domestic affairs and not for waging wars and exerting pressure to threaten other states.

Non-interference in each other's internal affairs as water. Non-interference in each other's internal affairs is similar to the principle of respect for sovereignty. It relies on the premise that each state is capable enough to handle its own affairs, and the head of state is legitimate enough to be able to address its domestic concerns. It also gives the presupposition that each leader is responsible for his/her own situation. This can be likened to the element of water because by acknowledging the capability of each state to address its internal affairs; it gives the leader an image, a representation in the international sphere. Since water is associated with serenity and being-all encompassing, this can be applied to this principle in the context that each leader should be responsible for his/her backyard, and by doing this, in general, each of the leaders will be held accountable. This mechanism becomes a check-and-balance system more of a passive one, because it aims to hold the leaders accountable. The element of water is also tied to the idea of propriety, and this idea is contained within the non-interference principle.

Equality and mutual benefit as fire. The fourth principle which is equality and mutual benefit leans towards the economic side as it deals with having equitable and equal profit and gains for all the stakeholders involved. The element which this principle embodies is fire because both exude the vibe of passion and zest. When economics and finance are being discussed, vitality and growth are very much involved, in the same way that the fire element entails these. In another sense, this fire element is linked with wisdom

because it gives the image of brightness. The same can be applied for the concept of equality and mutual benefit, as these would require wisdom and discernment from the leaders in order for it to be achieved. The interaction tied to this is forming, and it can be directly applied to equality and mutual benefit since the trajectory of a state's economics forms and molds the future of its production and dealings.

Peaceful coexistence as metal. The last principle, which is peaceful coexistence, is the umbrella concept where all of the previous ones are encapsulated. It is the general concept which pushes for a peaceful coexistence in the region through the promotion of peaceful rise and peaceful development. Metal is associated with integrity as well, along with endurance and righteousness. Peaceful coexistence is based on a foundation of integrity as well. Interactions which the metal element entail are carrying and penetrating. This can be seen in the context of this principle as the principle being able to cut across all of the themes.

Within this specific permutation, the two main concepts of mutual nourishment and mutual restraint are embodied and symbolized. It is seen how the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence have the nature of nourishing since they present and evoke mutuality and a sense of accountability from each stakeholder involved, and also offers benefits to them. In the same way, the Five Principles have a nature of inhibiting and restraining, as the states involved in this agreement subject themselves to limitations and boundaries that they are responsible to stay within

(such as mutual non-interference, which limits other state's abilities to partake in discussions and decisions about another's internal affairs).

Conclusion

In summary, what is being presented is an analysis of how Chinese philosophy, particularly the five elements from the Yin and Yang school of thought, has its influence and manifestations on Chinese foreign policy. Through the implementation of this policy, this ideology is not only practiced and embodied exclusively to the Chinese, but there becomes an act of transcendence of values and ideas through the continuous dialogue and exchange of interaction between the states that are within the scope of these policies. From a Chinese ideology, consciously or subconsciously, it becomes a global and universal idea that is embraced by states for its practicality.

Chinese philosophy finds itself not obsolete but practical and useful, as its principles are widely spread and very much used and applied in contemporary era, in different fields and expertise, especially including governance. The values and lessons from the relationships the five elements present are still reflected on and applicable to the context of modern governance and Chinese way of living.

China has come from a long history of political turmoil and economic instability, but it found its way back through the help of guiding principles. Currently, China pushes on and strives forward

with determination and pride, backed up and supported by its principles. If China is to go far and high, it should acknowledge its roots and keep its feet grounded. This is exactly what is presented through recognizing that the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence are rooted in deep thought in the principle of the five elements from the Yin and Yang school of thought.

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