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GLOBAL LEADERSHIP IN A POLYCENTRIC WORLD

Event Report

3 November 2021

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SCHOOL OF
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UNIVERSITY**
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GLOBAL LEADERSHIP IN A POLYCENTRIC WORLD

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Report of a workshop organised by China Programme Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore

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This report summarises the proceedings of the seminar as interpreted by the assigned rapporteur(s) and editor(s) appointed by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University. Participants neither reviewed nor approved this report.

This workshop adheres to a variation of the Chatham House Rule. Accordingly, beyond the paper presenters cited, no other attributions are included in this workshop report.

Executive Summary

I. The next 20 years is likely to witness significant changes, particularly in the overall configuration of the international order. One key challenge lies in the issue of global leadership. With the United States' international primacy increasingly challenged and questioned, and the rise of China's geopolitical influence generating considerable anxiety, smaller states have to carefully consider how best to navigate the new international environment. With a more polycentric global structure as the likely outcome, issues of international leadership and the rules and norms governing the global order are likely to come under heightened stress and challenge in the medium to long term. This workshop seeks to provide important insights into the structural shifts in the global order by identifying the key drivers, players (or countries), and emerging theatres of conflict (either regionally or globally). Specifically, it will consider new threats and opportunities that smaller states will have to confront in the international operating environment in the coming two decades and chart out possible strategies to respond. These points were the focus of the China Programme's November 2021 workshop, which brought together a diverse group of scholars from China, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The meeting was conducted online with about 40 other participants.

II. It was shared that China's view of global governance is very much related to its ability to lead, which at present remains somewhat partial. While China is likely to want to take a more active role in global economic issues, it is reluctant to assume the same mandate as the United States' in dealing with security issues. And although China could potentially be a leader in multilateral forums, a global leadership transition from Washington to Beijing still remains unlikely. Moreover, it seems that China's present goal is to secure regional leadership instead of pursuing global leadership.

III. It was also observed that China seeks global governance as a shared responsibility, one that all major powers contribute to. China's preference is for decisions to be made at the United Nations (UN) and for countries to abide by the UN laws. While China's rise has caused anxiety in many countries, China's participation and support for the UN were said to be key indicators of its willingness to help and cooperate with others, a sentiment particularly widespread among those in the developing world.

IV. Given China's prominence, it is likely that American unipolarity is no longer sustainable in the long run and that a multipolar order will emerge as a result. However, many countries view China's rise with anxiety and, as such, seek to constrain Beijing's power. On China's part, the country wants to dominate Asia and establish itself as the region's primary power.

V. At the same time, small states are not without agency as great powers are unable to fully impose their will and preference on regional governance, no matter how strong they are. Through plurilateral arrangements, small states can obtain greater flexibility and choice in their external engagements, and contribute to regional governance while achieving their own national interests.

VI. While China's increased material capabilities has brought with it the means to play a leading role in international affairs, it is not ready to lead globally in the same comprehensive manner as the United States has, given China's primary focus on domestic developments. The United States is currently perceived as being less interested in global affairs, and as China is not prepared to fully assume the responsibilities of a global leader, other countries have to step in and bear the greater burdens of global leadership and governance.

VII. China is likely to utilise the United Nations to further its international objectives and project its global influence. It will continue to champion the rights and voice of the Global South and challenge Western dominance and influence. The challenge for China's leadership is to pursue its international objectives without compromising its domestic interests.

Session One: China's Vision of Global Governance

Associate Professor Pu Xiaoyu argued that there is a need to expand our perspectives on China's vision of global governance by adopting a more nuanced assessment of China's intentions and capabilities to lead. This is because there exist contesting perspectives of China's objectives in global governance and there is no one singular interpretation of what a Chinese vision might be. Nonetheless, these visions stand in contrast to American perspectives on issues such as the legitimacy of international order. One way to illustrate the differences in American and Chinese foreign policy is to examine how each power defines what a "rules-based" system is. Assoc Prof Pu illustrated that while the United States and China both indicate intentions to adhere to a rules-based order, there are stark differences when it comes to defining the types of rules and orders that the international community should preserve and adhere to. For example, the United States prefers an adherence to alliances and partnerships while China defends a "UN-centred" international system.

Assoc Prof Pu said China's approach to global governance comprises three main stages: the "learning stage," the "shaping stage," and the "leading stage." The learning stage took place from the 1990s to early 2000s and featured a tendency for Chinese leaders to learn about incumbent international norms, or the "rules of the game," as described by Assoc Prof Pu. The shaping stage occurred after the global financial crisis in 2008, during which China actively increased its involvement in international affairs, despite an initial reluctance to assume global leadership. Assoc Prof Pu argued that while China's position has now shifted towards increasing acceptance of greater leadership roles, hesitations and/or inhibitions remain in its leadership. To this end, Assoc Prof Pu argued that China's *intentions* and *capabilities* in assuming greater responsibilities in global governance are two factors with which to evaluate the extent of China's role in global governance.

Assoc Prof Pu observed that China's intentions and capabilities to assume a greater role in global leadership have grown since the 1990s. However, there still exists reluctance within Chinese leaders toward taking on a greater role in global governance on certain international issues because doing so also requires the shouldering of greater global responsibilities, which might prove costly for the emerging power. Regarding Chinese capabilities to govern, Assoc Prof Pu observed that he expects China to assume greater leadership roles in global economic governance, especially via international economic institutions. However, he expects China to be limited in projecting leadership in soft power, defining international norms as well as global security issues.

On China's interactions with existing international rules and norms, Assoc Prof Pu suggested two crucial factors to China's global governance, namely, the shifting balance of power and international legitimacy. In his view, China could define its role as a co-leader, supporter, new leader or a shirker in the international system, but its approach would be based on the extent to which it can exercise power and how it perceives the legitimacy of the international order. Assoc Prof Pu argued that the ideal situation would not be for China to seek to replace the United States but to, instead, assume a global leadership role together with the United States.

On the implications of China's greater presence in global governance, Assoc Prof Pu observed that as China actively engages with the international community, it will not only provide more public goods but also present more options for development in less developed countries. Furthermore, a more engaged China need not necessarily replace the incumbent US-centric security architecture. Assoc Prof Pu argued that in the long-term, the imminent challenge lies in balancing an "Asia for Asians" framework with an "open regionalism" approach, especially in light of an evolving economic and security environment. In summary, Assoc Prof Pu argued that China could be a more active leader in multilateral forums as well as in the developing world, but that a global leadership transition is unlikely.

Professor Sun Xuefeng's discussion addressed three main points: (i) understanding global governance; (ii) China's current approach to global governance; and (iii) China's strategies in moderating the dilemma of rising powers in a partially hierarchical system. In summary, Prof Sun concluded that China seeks to promote a just (*gong zheng*) and equitable (*he li*) system of global governance, especially as a major power that seeks to lead by example.

First, Prof Sun discussed differences between the concepts of global governance and international order. While "global governance" refers to sharing responsibilities in tackling global issues and challenges, "international order" refers to setting rules to shape cooperation patterns in international relations. Prof Sun noted that it is important to understand both global governance and international order amidst ever-evolving global issues like the pandemic, trade, and climate change, as well as the debates around how countries can equally and fairly share the responsibilities of global governance.

Prof Sun argued that China intends to promote a just (*gong zheng*) and equitable (*he li*) system of global governance, primarily through three methods. The first will utilise a law-based system of international relations. Specifically, this means that international rules are established collectively by UN member states and are centred around the principles of the UN charter. The second approach will see major countries lead by example, especially in providing global public goods such as those needed to address climate change. Prof Sun noted that China has a long-standing tradition of advocating for the rights of developing countries.

Third, Prof Sun provided an explanation in which China could moderate the “dilemma of rising powers” in a partially hierarchical world, especially considering how its rapid rise and capabilities in challenging the existing international system has raised concerns among both its neighbours and the United States. Prof Sun argued that as a great power, China will strive to assume a more active role in global governance, potentially leading towards greater cooperation with the United States — especially when addressing transnational challenge — and enhanced cooperation with America’s allies. Prof Sun concluded by saying that a more active China in global governance engenders greater cooperation with developing countries in shaping fair international rules, while also increasing their representation in the United Nations.

Discussion

Assistant Professor Benjamin Ho questioned how Prof Pu’s proposed models of Chinese leadership in global governance fit in with arguments that China does not seek global but regional hegemony. Expanding on Prof Sun’s arguments regarding China’s ambitions, Dr Ho also probed what the obligations are for China and the United States as global leaders, as well as the obligations they would expect of their followers.

Prof Pu said that though there are ambiguities in China’s long-term strategic intentions regarding its foreign policy, the dominant narrative — at least within Chinese bureaucratic circles — is that China is not aiming at securing global hegemony. Rather, Prof Pu explained that China’s geostrategic ambitions are more focused on emerging as a regional leader and securing its own domestic stability. Responding to Asst Prof Ho’s questions about China’s obligations as an international leader, Prof Sun said that China intends to lead by example by shouldering greater global responsibilities, and in doing so, hopes to spur the international community to take on responsibilities of providing global public goods.

Another question was posed on the issue of pushback from countries like the United States, Europe, Japan, and Australia towards China's growing ambitions. In response, Prof Pu remarked that it will be more prudent to understand *how* China has transformed into an active leader in global governance. On a separate question of whether China had committed a strategic error with its more assertive approach compared to the past, Prof Sun suggested a number of reasons underpinning the perceived decline of China's international image. First, China has remained firm on its claims and bargaining positions on international disputes which will inevitably complicate its relations with the international community. Second, Prof Sun suggested that the perceived decline could be attributed to narratives perpetuated by scholarship that remains largely focused on the perspectives of Western liberal democracies. He argued that a more nuanced approach is needed when framing perspectives of China's international image in global governance.

On the topic of China's preference for building security partnerships versus the alliance-style structure pursued by the United States, Prof Pu said that China will remain reluctant to engage in military alliance, and continue to pursue security partnerships. In his view, the establishment of military alliances — especially if undertaken by great powers — will be viewed by other countries in East Asia as provocative.

A question was posed on the trajectory and legitimacy of the international order, as well as factors that might weaken it. Prof Sun posited three possibilities, the first being that the trajectory of the international order could follow a more liberal approach, while a second path could lead to a more bipolarised world, with a deepening divide between the United States and China. However, the most probable outcome would be a partially-decoupled relationship between the two major powers, though cooperation and engagement could still be expected due to domestic political issues and transnational challenges.

On China's role and objectives in the United Nations, Prof Pu said that the Chinese government feels very comfortable with the body because it can exercise its veto power and privileges as a member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Furthermore, because the United Nations works on the principle of "one country, one vote," they are able to attain the support of a large portion of member countries, most of whom are developing countries.

On how future transnational challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and other “black swan” events could affect the trajectory of China’s global governance objectives, Prof Sun remarked that China’s cross-straits relations with Taiwan remains a contentious issue. He cautioned that a failure to balance the interests of all parties — China, Taipei, and the United States — could lead to military confrontations that could dramatically shift China’s approach to global governance.

Regarding the specific challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Prof Sun explained that China faces severe headwinds for global cooperation due to intensifying domestic political challenges and contentious strategic agendas with the United States. However, the nature of global governance has to remain adaptable in the face of these multifaceted challenges. Prof Pu said that a more favourable domestic and international environment will encourage China to engage more cooperatively with the international community, especially other major powers.

Session Two: Leadership in a Multipolar World

In his presentation, **Professor Hugh White** argued that the current international order was a multipolar one, though such a view may not be universally accepted by some who believed in a unipolar vision. He explained that Asia is experiencing a crisis in the international order due to underlying tensions and pressures on questions such as how leadership ought to be exercised and what the objectives should be. As a result, the transition from a unipolar regional order based on long time US primacy to whatever will come next is unlikely to be smooth. In fact, the transition might even be bumpy amidst strategic rivalries and escalating risk of real conflicts. All these raised questions for Asian countries — particularly small and mid-sized states — about how leadership or agency should be exercised in managing the transition process, posing a big diplomatic challenge.

Prof White sketched out three possible scenarios, emphasising that it was important for stakeholders to understand their desired outcomes. The first scenario is the maintenance of a status quo based on US primacy, both regionally and globally, without the need to move from a unipolar to multipolar order. In Prof White's view, this is the preferred option for the United States and many major powers in Asia, though important implications have to be noted. For Prof White, the United States cannot sustain such a unipolar order. Furthermore, there has also been no attempt on their part to articulate a vision for the United States' role in Asia in the future. This is materially different from the role it has played since China's opening in 1972. In fact, the act of trying to completely contain China's powerful and resolute ambitions — as well as revert to the old order in which China accepted US primacy as the foundation for Asia's order — was a huge challenge that imposed immense costs and risks that none of the key players were prepared to bear, despite Washington's insistence.

The second scenario posed the possibility of a multipolar order that was attractive and seems to be the most likely outcome. Despite the fact that it can take many different forms, Prof White emphasised the importance of envisioning an international order that satisfies China's interests while also preserving the essential interests of other countries in the region, including the maintenance of the United States' significant role. With so many key players intertwined in the region, some kind of multipolar regional order would have emerged more or less spontaneously.

Prof White noted that it is difficult to imagine how such a regional order would work given the challenges that other regional stakeholders would face in pushing back against China's clear ambition to establish itself as the region's primary power. Persuading the Chinese to step back from its regional ambitions to accept some broader, multipolar order will not be easy as Beijing would not want to be limited or constrained by others. Moreover, the United States has not engaged in thinking about such a possibility as it has always assumed itself as central to Asia's order-making efforts. Tangentially, it is not clear that ASEAN has either the will or the cohesion among its member states to play a part in building an effective, multipolar order.

As such, Prof White expressed the belief that the best, most practical, and achievable outcome is the establishment of a regional multipolar order in which China's growing power is recognised and accommodated, but balanced and constrained by the effective action of other states. However, this outcome is an immense challenge, and requires considerable regional and leadership efforts to achieve.

Prof White floated the possibility of a third scenario, a unipolar regional order in East Asia under Chinese leadership. He argued that while China is not strong enough to establish a unipolar *global* order, it could instead achieve a regional one. He argued that, notwithstanding the past successes of East Asia premised on ASEAN centrality, there was a need to consider new models of regional interaction between small and middle powers to navigate a very different world order.

Professor Andrew Yeo laid out four possibilities of a future global order which were related to regional orders and explained how small states could navigate the future world order.

The first scenario was a modified version of the liberal international order led by the United States and the West. This is best described as a continuation of the current rules-based order but with more inputs and influences from non-Western countries including those in the developing world.

The second scenario was a Chinese-led order, in which China would replace the United States and the West as the preeminent global power. In practice, China would become the centre of global finance — where international currency is led by the yuan rather than the US dollar — and step up as a major provider of global security. However, this seems unlikely given the expected pushback from Western states who view a Chinese-led order as marked by illiberal characteristics. Prof Yeo argued that if the West were to acquiesce to Chinese global leadership, this would be due to some degree of convergence of Chinese interests with Western rules and norms, thus leading to an extension of the liberal international order.

The third scenario would be a bifurcated order predicated on the idea of a new “cold war” between the United States and China, including economic and political decouplings. However, there is a great degree of inter-dependence between states both economically and politically, making true bifurcation unlikely or (at best) a temporary or passing stage until the dust settles.

The fourth scenario would be a “multiplex” order, in which a different set of powers, or a configuration of great and small powers, provide order and governance concerning specific issue areas. Under such arrangements, global leadership would no longer rest on a single power. With a plurality of orders — which could be competitive or complementary — there would be no single power dominating the globe or the Asia-Pacific region.

Regardless of which scenario becomes the reality, Prof Yeo stressed that the West would have to contend with more resistance and allow for greater input from other powers. There would be no going back to unipolarity, and the extent to which the order is a liberal or a multiplex one depends on how much the United States wishes to engage internationally, and the degree to which China and other powers continue to resist or push back against Western leadership. He further argued that a multipolar world would result in a more complicated global order, one without clear cut poles. Should poles come to matter less in the 21st century, there would be evidence of global leadership being played out within various plurilateral groupings and more diverse actors (including small powers) taking on leadership roles.

The combination of the first and fourth scenarios provided a new perspective on understanding regional architecture and its relationship with the international order. One of the reasons why there is continued growth in overlapping institutions in Asia and elsewhere is that regional governance cannot be simply imposed by great powers and requires legitimisation of rules and institutions. Hence, plurilateral groupings give smaller states greater strategic flexibility and choice by engaging different actors in a range of regional policy dialogues so policymakers can contribute to regional governance while serving their own national interests. This has enabled smaller states to punch above their weight by giving them additional voice on regional issues and also offering middle powers a greater role in regional affairs. Prof Yeo opined that plurilateral groupings are likely to grow in significance as a signal of strategic intent and, in some cases, to fulfil a functional purpose for dealing with issues like vaccine supplies, cybersecurity, or water problems in the Mekong River.

This complex patchwork of bilateral, trilateral, and other plurilateral arrangements suggest a different way of thinking about regional order that goes beyond polarity. Great powers still carry significant weight and influence, but this is not exclusive as middle and smaller powers also attempt to resolve regional governance issues through collective action and coordination around specific problems.

Professor Evelyn Goh argued that the multipolar frame is an inadequate one and introduced several alternative ways to think about the kind of order the world is hurtling towards. In her view, the world is transitioning to a multi-pillared kind of order in which power and authority are distributed among many players. Terming this as a “multi-nodal” world, Prof Goh described such a system as one in which multiple actors and regimes play varying roles in the governance of the international order depending on specific issues and geographical locations. This is because the international order does not simply operate based on the principle of “might is right.” Instead, there are layers of regimes, institutions, and other sorts of governance structures that ultimately affect the kind of order that emerges.

Prof Goh suggested that no single group of states are capable of unilaterally enforcing their will on the rest. In this respect, neither the United States nor China are able to wield the kind of hegemonic control that characterised the earlier bipolar or unipolar eras. Rather, the diffused inter-dependence created by globalisation gives every state in the system broader alternatives and raises the costs of hostile actions. She emphasised that, during the order transition, it is important to debate and discuss what the imagined new order would look like. How such an order was being envisaged would in turn shape the manner in which stakeholders are willing to negotiate and fight against (or about) an issue during the transition period. This idea of a multi-pillared, multi-nodal world is one that would offer potential agency for different combinations of actors while still acknowledging that there would be some hubs that are more important than others. It is also a vision that most pragmatic Asian states and policymakers can envisage and attempt to negotiate.

On the issue of how small states could navigate the changes and opportunities available, Prof Goh said that the states which succeed would be those who are able to define their goals, interests, and values in a flexible way, while being adaptive to new contexts. The ability to network across a range of issues, functional areas, and levels will be helpful for building coalitions and power bases among both potential allies and adversaries. These countries will also have a greater chance of success if they are strategic when it comes to coordinating and organising at an international level, while simultaneously pursuing a variety of transnational policies and institutionally-brokered agendas. In conclusion, Prof Goh argued that the idea that only great powers can exercise leadership is a flawed notion as they are unable to meet the needs of changing geopolitical contexts, regionally and globally.

Discussion

Professor Ralf Emmers questioned if there was room for the concept of “zones of influence” and whether this could help mitigate risks in the world. Prof White responded that ultimately the world would reach a multipolar or multiplex order since no single power was going to be remotely strong enough to achieve unipolarity. As power becomes more evenly distributed among nations compared to in the past, he believes that global unipolarity will not happen, which is why the focus should be on what will happen at the regional level. In Prof White’s view, the Indo-Pacific, for example, is not thought of as a single, integrated region and it is not likely Asia will be divided into different spheres of influence. At the same time, countries will also seek opportunities to further their own interests even if there are attempts to draw clear lines regionally. While one cannot rule out the possibility of Chinese and US spheres of influence, there is a preference for a “concert of powers” model among countries in East Asia.

On the topic of the circumstances that could lead Japan to realign with China, Prof Goh said this could happen if Japan loses confidence in the United States’ commitment on issues such as Taiwan or the Korean peninsula. Such circumstances could see Japan pivot from its current position to a new one. Additionally, if China decides to pacify Japan in the region, it could encourage Japan to work *with* China rather than remain a pivotal state outside its fold.

On how the prospect of bipolarity is being evaluated both regionally and globally between the United States and China, Prof Yeo responded that it’s a correct assessment that states are avoiding choosing sides as many want to continue to hedge their bets between the two sides. Yet, as bilateral tensions and rivalries intensify, he thought that some are being forced to choose and that it is becoming harder for states to stay on the side lines.

Session Three: China's Ambition for Global Leadership

During this presentation, **Professor Chen Dingding** highlighted three issues of importance when considering China's ambitions of global leadership.

First, concerning China's ability to lead, Prof Chen said that though China has experienced rapid growth in the last 20 years and will continue to do so, this would eventually slow down. China's increased material capabilities have provided it with the necessary tools and means to lead globally in terms of economic, financial, and technology governance. Despite these capabilities, Prof Chen argued that, unlike the United States, China is not ready to take on global, comprehensive leadership. In order to do so, China will need to push itself to the top ranks of areas such as economic, military, and technology capabilities, as well as in the realm of soft power.

Second, strategic competition with the United States would also affect China's ability to be a global leader. Prof Chen observed that, in recent years, the United States has retreated from its global obligations as compared to the past. The emphasis on domestic issues had led the United States to take a step back from its global commitments, which were viewed as unnecessary burdens. This was not unlike the period between the First and Second World Wars during which Great Britain became reluctant to lead and the US was unprepared to assume the mandate of global leadership, thus resulting in a power vacuum at the global level. Similarly, the United States has become less interested in global affairs and China is unprepared to take up the responsibilities of a global leader. As such, there is a need for other countries to step up and co-share responsibilities over global leadership and governance.

Third, should China engage in intense competition with the United States or other Asian countries, the world could witness an absence in global governance as countries become disinterested in coming together to work with one another and provide significant solutions for global problems. Stressing that domestic politics trumps international issues, Prof Chen argued that states would ultimately choose to focus on resolving their own internal issues before deciding to take on matters of global governance.

Professor Kerry Brown argued that it is difficult for states to dominate the international system, and neither are there issues where countries can naturally cooperate on. He said that China and the United States are forced to cooperate on climate change and health pandemics *despite* tensions with one another.

In Prof Brown's view, there is no clear consensus on what kind of power China will become. One view posits that China harbours ambitions to change the world, much in the same way the United States does. Towards this end, China will seek to proselytise its values to the world and have its views accepted by others. These views will be seen as necessarily competitive and have the potential to replace the present international order. To effectively manage their relationships with China, Prof Brown said that stakeholders should first arrive at some consensus on the kind of power that China is. At present, for instance, the West views China as a threat to its values and way of life.

A second perspective takes an "exceptionalist" view, one where China is primarily focused on itself and its own interests, and has no intention of exporting its values. According to Prof Brown, China has often emphasised its uniqueness without behaving in a manner that would imply it wanted to impose its own set of values on others. While tensions between China and the West will continue, policy responses ought to be practical.

Prof Brown added that the European Union has conceived China in three different ways: as a collaborator, a competitor, and an adversary. Collaboration can be seen in the field of climate change while competition can be seen in the economic realm. The adversarial perspective is most pronounced in the area of security and values. That being said, different countries will perceive China differently, depending on their own interests.

Prof Brown also foregrounded the notion of "narcissistic diplomacy," in which countries engage in criticism of China mostly to feel better about themselves, while also being unable to affect any impact on China. Conversely, China had implemented its policies in a consistent and predictable manner, unlike the somewhat haphazard approach taken by the United States. For many countries in Asia, the biggest dilemma they face is balancing China as their biggest economic partner and the United States as their security guarantor. Difficult choices will have to be made regarding how best to position themselves amidst US-China competition.

Professor Zhang Feng shared that the Chinese government has placed great emphasis on global governance. For example, back in 2015 and 2016, there were efforts to organise two collective study sessions to examine global governance system and reforms. This surge in interest was explained by a single Chinese word: *shi* (势), which is often translated as "trend" or, more aptly, "the propensity of things" or the "potential of the situation."

The first *shi* that prompted China to lay such great emphasis on global governance is the perceived fundamental change in the international balance of power, namely the relative decline of the West or the rise of emerging economies in developing countries, particularly those in Asia and (most consequentially) China itself. The rise of these emerging economies led to the wide diffusion of power, wealth, and cultural authority beyond the Western core.

The second *shi* is the changing nature of politics, especially in terms of how power and influence are acquired and maintained. Competing for national interests and establishing international hegemony through war, colonialism, and spheres of influence are no longer relevant. Instead rules and institutions for coordinating relations as well as mediation are more relevant in the 21st century. The third *shi* is the multiplicity of global challenges facing the world, such as climate change and health pandemics. These challenges require a collective global response, not solutions proffered by one or few countries.

Prof Zhang pointed out that there is no neat answer to what China wants in seeking global governance. In his perspective, China seeks to achieve shared growth through discussion and collaboration while standing up for democracy and equality for all countries. China is also a strong supporter of the United Nations and aims to play an active and responsible role by contributing Chinese wisdom and strength, all while championing the efforts of developing countries to increase their representation and strengthen their voice.

In examining the language used by President Xi, Prof Zhang said a more significant way of framing China's new attitude towards global governance is the phrase *yin ling* (引领), a declaration of China's intention to play a leadership role in global governance. The second keyword is "equality," referencing China's quest for an international order that is just and reasonable. From their view, there should be more equality between traditional Western powers and developing countries in the Global South, rather than too much weight for the West. This is crucial so developing countries can protect their interests and realise their goals.

He added that the Chinese conception of global governance is not just about meeting global challenges and solving problems but also making rules and determining directions for a future international system. China not only takes pride in the rise of its material power, it is also concerned with its institutional position, especially the power and ability to make and shape rules in the international world order. It also wants to export Chinese ideas and power on matters of global governance.

Prof Zhang put forward that Western countries tend to dismiss China's normative ideas in their interpretation of Chinese foreign policy. He said China's aspiration of constructing a shared future for the community of humankind is built upon the basis of international justice and fairness, one with a "correct conception." A correct conception requires prioritising justice while trying to achieve interests, and rejecting a short-term, utilitarian approach for quick results. He noted that the idea of justice is a dominant value which China hopes to uphold in its process of global governance reform so as to demonstrate the country's sense of responsibility for great power. That said, there is an ongoing tension between balancing common interests and self interest in China's pursuit of global governance and this will continue to be the case.

Discussion

Associate Professor Hoo Tiang Boon observed that many scholars of international relations hold the view that capabilities matter more than intentions, and asked how this might impact what people think about China's leadership. Prof Chen responded that states — like individuals — have different basic needs to take care of, and as a result, China has exercised its power in some unique respects for various historical, cultural, and other domestic reasons. He related China's actions to those of the United States, observing that the United States has behaved differently and was in a less dominant stage compared to the Chinese when Great Britain ruled the world. As such, it is difficult for countries to imagine different forms of global leadership as each would have different leadership characteristics.

Asst Prof Benjamin Ho asked whether China would be able to play a greater role in global governance without having to assume the burden and challenges of global leadership. In response, Prof Brown said that the notion of global norms is a myth and that the world is more fragmented and complicated than that. As to whether China intends to challenge the West, Prof Brown said that China has moved from its 2000s view of the West as a positive model to an inept one. Events such as the storming of the US Capitol and Brexit have showed the lack of consensus in the West, leading to China's current attempts to articulate its own solutions to global problems in response to its perception of the West's inability to do so.

In response to a question as to the specific domains in which China is likely to push for dominance or emerge as a global leader, Prof Zhang said the first obvious area is in the global economy, and China has already created some very impressive initiatives. One example is the highly-regarded Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which has been praised for being an effective institution of high standards. China has paired the AIIB with its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a grand, ambitious project to shape regional and international rules, norms, and practices through economic and infrastructure development. Prof Zhang added climate change as another area in which China is actively participating in response to calls from the West. In his view, the security domain is deemed the most difficult since it can propel tensions, and place different powers in competition and conflict with one another.

Biographies

Biographies of speakers

**In alphabetical sequence, according to last/family names*

Kerry Brown is Professor of Chinese Studies and Director of the Lau China Institute at King's College London. He is an Associate of the Asia Pacific Programme at Chatham House, London; an adjunct of the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) in Melbourne; and the co-editor of the Journal of Current Chinese Affairs, run from the German Institute for Global Affairs in Hamburg. He is President of the Kent Archaeological Society, and an Affiliate of the Mongolia and Inner Asia Studies Unit at Cambridge University.

From 2012 to 2015 he was Professor of Chinese Politics and Director of the China Studies Centre at the University of Sydney, Australia. Prior to this, he worked at Chatham House from 2006 to 2012 as Senior Fellow and then Head of the Asia Programme. From 1998 to 2005 he worked at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office as First Secretary at the British Embassy in Beijing, and then as Head of the Indonesia, Philippine, and East Timor section. He lived in the Inner Mongolia region of China from 1994 to 1996. He has a Master of Arts degree from Cambridge University; a Post Graduate Diploma in Mandarin Chinese (Distinction) from Thames Valley University, London; and a PhD in Chinese politics and language from Leeds University.

Between 2011 and 2014, Prof Brown directed the Europe China Research and Advice Network (ECRAN), giving policy advice to the European External Action Service. He is the author of almost 20 books on modern Chinese politics, has written for every major international news outlet, and has been interviewed by every major news channel on issues relating to contemporary China.

Chen Dingding is Professor of International Relations and Associate Dean of the Institute for 21st Century Silk Road Studies at Jinan University, Guangzhou, China. He is a non-resident fellow at the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi) Berlin, Germany, and a Non-Resident Research Fellow at the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at Johns Hopkins University. He is the Founding Director of Intellisia Institute, a newly-established independent think tank focusing on international affairs in China.

His research interests include Chinese foreign policy, Asian security, Chinese politics, and human rights. His articles have appeared in *International Studies Quarterly*, *International Security*, *Journal of Contemporary China*, *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, and *The Washington Quarterly*. He is the co-editor of a book on international engagement with human rights in China. Before teaching at university of Macau between 2009 and 2016, he was a visiting instructor in the Department of Government at Dartmouth College, as well as a China and the World Program fellow at Harvard University. He holds a bachelor's degree in international economics from the Renmin University of China, and a master's degree and PhD in political science from the University of Chicago.

Ralf Emmers is Dean of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) and President's Chair in International Relations, Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore.

He completed his MSc and PhD in the International Relations Department of the London School of Economics (LSE). His research interests cover security studies, the international institutions in the Asia Pacific, and the security and international politics of Southeast Asia. Prof Emmers is the author and editor of 11 books and monographs. His authored books include *Cooperative Security and the Balance of Power in ASEAN and the ARF* (Routledge Curzon, 2003); *Geopolitics and Maritime Territorial Disputes in East Asia* (Routledge, 2010); *Resource Management and Contested Territories in East Asia* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); and *Security Strategies of Middle Powers in the Asia Pacific*, co-written with Sarah Teo (Melbourne University Press, 2018). He is also the co-editor of the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook on Peaceful Change in International Relations* (Oxford University Press, 2021).

Prof Emmers has published articles in peer-reviewed journals such as *The Pacific Review*, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, *Asian Survey*, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, *Global Change, Peace & Security*, *Asian Security*, *TRaNS*, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, *Asia Policy*, *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding*, *Asian Politics and Policy*, *Political Science* and *Contemporary Politics*, as well as numerous book chapters in edited volumes.

Evelyn Goh is the Shedden Professor of Strategic Policy Studies at the Australian National University, where she is also the Deputy Director (Research) of the Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs. She is an expert on both the theory and practice of Asia-Pacific security and international relations. Her latest book is *Rethinking Sino-Japanese Alienation* (Oxford, 2020, with Barry Buzan); and her current projects study the interactions between Chinese investment and influence, and domestic politics in Southeast Asia. Recent policy publications include RSIS Working Paper #330, “The Asia-Pacific’s Age of Uncertainty: Great Power Competition, Globalisation, and the Economic-Security Nexus.”

Benjamin Ho is Assistant Professor at the China Programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore. He obtained his PhD from the Department of International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science, the United Kingdom. His research focus includes the study of China’s international relations, with an emphasis on Chinese political worldviews and exceptionalist thinking. Other research interests include security multilateralism in the Asia Pacific region with a focus on regional institutions and fora, national security (intelligence), the sociology of religion and public theology (Christianity). His research articles have been published in the *America Journal of Chinese Studies*, *China Quarterly*, *Journal of Contemporary China*, *East Asia: An International Quarterly*, *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political, Asia Policy*, *Australian Journal of International Affairs* and the *Yale Journal of International Affairs*. Since joining RSIS, he has been involved in a number of think tank events and conferences including the Track II Network of ASEAN Defence and Security Institutions (NADI), the Pacific Young Leaders programme and CSCAP meetings.

Hoo Tiang Boon is Associate Professor and Coordinator of the China Programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore. He is also the Coordinator of the Masters in Asian Studies Programme at RSIS; as well as a Faculty Fellow with NTU's University Scholars Programme. He holds a PhD in International Relations from the University of Oxford.

Dr Hoo is the author of several publications on China, cross-strait relations and US-China relations. His most recently authored or edited books include *China's Global Identity: Considering the Responsibilities of Great Power* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2018–2019); *Chinese Regionalism in Asia: Beyond the Belt-Road Initiative* (New York & London, Routledge, 2021, forthcoming); and *Chinese Foreign Policy under Xi* (New York & London: Routledge, 2017). His book, *China's Global Identity*, has been positively reviewed by several leading international relations and China studies journals, including *Political Science Quarterly*, *The China Quarterly*, *The China Journal*, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, *H-Diplo*, and *Ethics and International Affairs*.

Dr Hoo has been involved in several diplomatic initiatives, including the Singapore-US Strategic Dialogue, the Vietnam-Singapore Security Dialogue, the Singapore-France Dialogue on China, the Korea-Singapore Forum, and the Network of ASEAN Defence and Security Institutions. Dr Hoo was formerly a visiting fellow at the China Foreign Affairs University, a visiting scholar at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, and a visiting researcher at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies.

Pu Xiaoyu is an Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Nevada, Reno. He is a Public Intellectuals Program Fellow with the National Committee on United States-China Relations (NCUSCR). Previously he was a non-resident senior fellow at the Inter-American Dialogue; a Stanton fellow at Fundação Getulio Vargas (FGV) in Brazil; and a postdoctoral fellow in the Princeton-Harvard China and the World Program. Pu is the author of *Rebranding China: Contested Status Signaling in the Changing Global Order* (The Studies in Asian Security Series, Stanford University Press, 2019). His research has appeared in *International Security*, *International Affairs*, *The China Quarterly*, and *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*. He is an associate editor of *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* and an editorial board member of *Foreign Affairs Review* (Beijing). Dr Pu received his PhD from Ohio State University.

Sun Xuefeng is Professor of International Relations at the Department of International Relations and the Executive Deputy Dean of the Institute of International Relations, Tsinghua University. He also serves as Editor-in-Chief of *Chinese Journal of International Politics* (CJIP); Executive Deputy Secretary of World Peace Forum; and Vice-President of China National Association for International Studies. He was Chair of the Department of International Relations, Tsinghua University from 2015-2018. His current research focuses on international relations theory, China's foreign policy, and international relations in East Asia. He is the author or co-author of dozens of academic papers and books, including *Zhongguo jueqi kunjing* (*Dilemma of China's Rise*, first edition in 2011; second edition in 2013), *Guoji hefaxing yu daguo jueqi* (*International Legitimacy and the Rise of Great Powers*, 2014), *Dongya anquanzhixu yu Zhongguo zhoubian zhengce zhuanxing* (*East Asian Security Order and Transformation of China's Neighbourhood Policy*, 2017) and *Goji guanxi yanjiu shiyong fangfa* (*Practical Methods of International Studies*, first edition in 2001; second edition in 2007; third edition in 2021). He has won Tsinghua University Distinguished Young Scholar Award (2012), Tsinghua University Outstanding Young Teacher Award (2010) and Tsinghua University Annual Teaching Excellence Award (2016/2018/2019).

Hugh White AO FASSA is Emeritus Professor of Strategic Studies at the Australian National University in Canberra. He spent much of his career in the Australian Government, including stints as International Relations Adviser to Prime Minister Bob Hawke and Deputy Secretary for Strategy in the Department of Defence. He was the founding Director of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, and was Head of ANU's Strategic and Defence Studies Centre from 2004-2011. His major publications include *Power Shift: Australia's future between Washington and Beijing* (2010); *The China Choice: Why America should share power* (2012); *Without America: Australia's future in the New Asia* (2017); and *How to defend Australia* (2019). He studied philosophy at the University of Melbourne and the *University of Oxford*.

Andrew Yeo is Professor of Politics and Director of Asian Studies at The Catholic University of America. He is also the SK-Korea Foundation Chair at Brookings Institution's Center for East Asia Policy Studies. Yeo is the author or editor of five books including *Asia's Regional Architecture: Alliances and Institutions in the Pacific Century* (Stanford University Press 2019); and *Activists, Alliances, and Anti-U.S. Base Protests* (Cambridge University Press 2011). His most recent book, *State, Society and Markets in North Korea* was published in 2021 with Cambridge University Press.

Yeo is currently working on a project examining South Korea's role in the Indo-Pacific region and how South Korea can support a rules-based order outside its traditional focus on Northeast Asia. His other research interests include the Indo-Pacific strategies of the United States and its allies; Asia's regional architecture and institutional change; United States' grand strategy and force posture; Chinese influence in Southeast Asia; the role of narratives and discourse in US foreign policy; and civil society and democracy.

He currently serves on the Governing Council of the International Studies Association's International Security Studies section and is the Treasurer-Secretary of APSA's International History and Politics section. Yeo's scholarly publications can be found in *International Studies Quarterly*, *European Journal of International Relations*, *Perspectives on Politics*, *Comparative Politics*, *Comparative Strategy*, *Journal of East Asian Studies*, and *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* among others. His other writings and commentary have appeared in outlets including MSNBC, Channel News Asia, CBS Radio, Voice of America, RTHK-Hong Kong, *Foreign Affairs*, *Global Asia*, *The Diplomat*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *South China Morning Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Washington Post*. He received his PhD in Government from Cornell University.

Zhang Feng is Professor of International Relations and Executive Dean of the Institute of Public Policy at the South China University of Technology in Guangzhou. He is also editor of the book series *IPP Studies in the Frontiers of China's Public Policy*, published by Palgrave. He studies Sino-American relations, Chinese foreign policy in East Asia, international relations in East Asian history, and international relations theory. He is the author of *Chinese Hegemony: Grand Strategy and International Institutions in East Asian History* (Stanford, 2015); *Taming Sino-American Rivalry*, with Prof Richard Ned Lebow (Oxford, 2020); and the forthcoming *Justice, East and West, and International Order* (Oxford, 2022). His articles have appeared in leading journals including the *European Journal of International Relations*, *Pacific Review*, *Political Science Quarterly*, *Review of International Studies*, *Survival*, and *Washington Quarterly*. He previously held positions at Tsinghua University in Beijing, and Murdoch University and Australian National University in Australia. He received his master's in comparative politics and PhD in international relations from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Workshop Programme

Wednesday 3 November 2021 (Singapore Time / UTC+8)	
09:45 – 10:00	<i>Administrative Brief for Panel 1 Speakers & Moderators</i>
10:00 – 11:30	<p>PANEL 1: CHINA'S VISION OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE</p> <p><u>Moderator</u></p> <p>Asst Prof Benjamin Ho <i>China Programme, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, and Deputy Coordinator MSc (International Relations), S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)</i></p> <p><u>Speakers</u></p> <p>Assoc Prof Pu Xiaoyu <i>Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Nevada, Reno</i></p> <p>Prof Sun Xuefeng <i>Professor of International Relations, Department of International Relations, and Executive Deputy Dean, Institute of International Relations, Tsinghua University, China</i></p>
11:30 – 12:00	BREAK

Wednesday 3 November 2021 (Singapore Time / UTC+8)

11:45 – 12:00

Administrative Brief for Panel 2 Speakers & Moderators

12:00 – 13:30

PANEL 2: LEADERSHIP IN A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

Moderator

Prof Ralf Emmers

*Dean, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, and
President's Chair in International Relations,
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore*

Speakers

Prof Hugh White

*Emeritus Professor of Strategic Studies,
The Australian National University*

Prof Andrew Yeo

*Professor of Politics, and
Director of Asian Studies,
The Catholic University of America; and
SK-Korea Foundation Chair, Center for East Asia Policy
Studies, The Brookings Institution, United States*

Prof Evelyn Goh

*Shedden Professor of Strategic Policy Studies, and
Deputy Director (Research), Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific
Affairs, The Australian National University*

13:30 – 16:30

BREAK

Wednesday 3 November 2021 (Singapore Time / UTC+8)

16:15 – 16:30 *Administrative Brief for Panel 3 Speakers & Moderators*

PANEL 3: CHINA'S AMBITION FOR GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

Moderator

Assoc Prof Hoo Tiang Boon

*Coordinator of China Programme, and
Coordinator of MSc (Asian Studies) Programme,
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies,
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore*

Speakers

16:30 – 18:15

Prof Chen Dingding

*Professor of International Relations, and
Associate Dean, Institute of 21st Century Silk Road Studies,
Jinan University, China*

Prof Kerry Brown

*Professor of Chinese Studies, and
Director, Lau China Institute,
King's College London, United Kingdom*

Prof Zhang Feng

*Professor of International Relations, and
Executive Dean, Institute of Public Policy,
South China University of Technology, China*

18:15

END OF WORKSHOP

About the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS)

The **S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)** is a global think tank and professional graduate school of international affairs at the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. An autonomous school, RSIS' mission is to be a leading research and graduate teaching institution in strategic and international affairs in the Asia Pacific. With the core functions of research, graduate education, and networking, it produces research on Asia Pacific Security, Multilateralism and Regionalism, Conflict Studies, Non-traditional Security, Cybersecurity, Maritime Security and Terrorism Studies.



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