

8-1-2012

What does Harmonious Regionalism mean? 和谐地区主义的含义？

Rosita Dellios

Bond University, rosita_dellios@bond.edu.au

Follow this and additional works at: http://epublications.bond.edu.au/eassc_publications



Part of the [International Relations Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rosita Dellios. "What does Harmonious Regionalism mean? 和谐地区主义的含义？" East Asia Security Symposium and Conference 东亚安全座谈谈论会. Beijing. Aug. 2012.

http://epublications.bond.edu.au/eassc_publications/26

What does Harmonious Regionalism mean? Insights from Chinese Philosophy and Western International Relations Theory

和谐地区主义的含义？来自中国哲学和西方国际关系理论的见解

Rosita Dellios
Associate Professor
[Bond University](http://www.bond.edu.au)

Peer-reviewed Conference Paper
2012 East Asia Security Symposium and Conference
http://epublications.bond.edu.au/eassc_publications/

For information about this paper or the East Asia Security Symposium and Conference
Peer-reviewed publishing site please contact the Editor-in-Chief [Jonathan H. Ping](mailto:jping@bond.edu.au)
jping@bond.edu.au

What does Harmonious Regionalism mean? Insights from Chinese Philosophy and Western International Relations Theory

和谐地区主义的含义？来自中国哲学和西方国际关系理论的见解

Abstract

Harmonious regionalism from the perspective of Chinese philosophy is best expressed as an anti-hegemonic discourse that privileges *wu-wei* (actionless action) and *yin-yang* correlativity. These are framed within a larger Confucian-Socialist hybrid narrative, such as “win-win” policies that are advanced in various white papers, be they on China’s “peaceful development”, foreign aid or national defence. Through the use of social constructivism in Western International Relations theory, it is possible to ask whether China is a constructivist state in search of a correlative region. If so, this would render the meaning of “harmonious regionalism” as a process (*dao*, the way) based model rather than a highly institutionalized one. The Confucian concept of harmony in which diverse interests prevail in a dynamic balance accords with this notion of process. China’s participation in regional organizations on its periphery is examined through this conceptual lens.

摘要

从中国哲学角度出发，和谐地区主义最佳解读是：推崇无为和阴阳相互关系的反霸权理论。这个理论包含在一种更高层次的儒家-社会主义混合理论框架中。中国推出的“和平发展”、对外援助或者国防等白皮书中，都极力宣扬“双赢”政策。这个政策就是混合理论的一个例子。运用西方国际关系理论的社会建构主义，我们可以提出这个问题：中国是不是一个寻求地区联系的建构主义国家？如果答案肯定的话，那么“和谐地区主义”就是一个以过程（道）为基础的模式，而不是一个高度制度化的模式。在儒家学说中，和谐指的是不同的利益能够维持动态平衡，并得以实现。这与“道”的含义是一致的。我们就从这个概念的角度，来审视中国参与周边地区组织的情况。

Key Words: China’s foreign policy, harmonious regionalism, Chinese philosophy, social constructivism

What does Harmonious Regionalism mean? Insights from Chinese Philosophy and Western International Relations Theory

“Harmonious region” derives from “harmonious world” which was formally introduced by the then Chinese president, Hu Jintao, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the United Nations (UN) in 2005. His proposal for a “harmonious world” included: (1) security cooperation for peace, (2) economic cooperation for prosperity, (3) inter-civilizational dialogue for mutual respect, and (4) reforms to the UN for strengthening its global governance role. He later adjusted this to include cooperation on transnational problems (regimes).¹

“Harmonious Region” does not have a singular official definition. However, the second (2011) white paper on *China’s Peaceful Development* comes close with the phrase, “promoting regional cooperation and good-neighborly relations”, which is elaborated as follows (with emphasis added to points discussed below):

China actively enhances friendly cooperation with its neighbors and works with them to promote a harmonious Asia. China calls on countries in the region to respect each other, increase mutual trust, seek common ground while putting aside differences, safeguard regional peace and stability, and settle *disputes including those over territorial claims and maritime rights and interests* through dialogue and friendly negotiation. Countries should increase trade and mutually beneficial cooperation, promote *regional economic integration*, improve the current regional and sub-regional *cooperative mechanisms*, be open-minded to other proposals for regional cooperation, and welcome countries outside the region to play a constructive role in promoting regional peace and development. *China does not seek regional hegemony or sphere of influence, nor does it want to exclude any country from participating in regional cooperation.* China’s prosperity, development and long-term stability represent an opportunity rather than a threat to its neighbors. China will uphold the Asian spirit of standing on its own feet, being bold in opening new ground, being open and inclusive and sharing weal and woe. It will remain a good neighbor, friend and partner of other Asian countries.²

The common refrain that the People’s Republic of China (PRC) does not seek “hegemony” is found here along with the features of *regionalism* such as “regional economic integration” and “cooperative mechanisms”. Where “harmonious region” becomes “harmonious *regionalism*”, as indicated in the title of this paper, is in the multilateral and bilateral diplomacy the concept entails. In other words, a “harmonious region” is not to be taken for granted. It needs to be worked at through the processes of “harmonious regionalism”. In light of *disputes including those over territorial claims and maritime rights and interests* which

¹ Xinhua, “President Hu Makes Four-Point Proposal for Building Harmonious World,” *China View*, September 16, 2005, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2005-09/16/content_3496789.htm (accessed January 5, 2011); Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the United Nations, “Statement by President Hu Jintao at the General Debate of the 64th Session of the UN General Assembly,” September 23, 2009, <http://www.china-un.org/eng/hyyfy/t606150.h> (accessed January 5, 2011).

² State Council Information Office of the PRC, *China’s Peaceful Development*, White Paper (Beijing: Xinhua, September 2011), section 3 (emphasis added).

have embroiled China in negative publicity in the East and South China Sea, it is not clear whether “harmonious region” as a slogan will endure under the new Xi Jinping leadership. On the other hand, a China that does not profess peace and harmony would likely be branded as a regional bully that needed to be constrained by the United States in its “pivotal” Asian role. Hence “harmonious regionalism” represents an ongoing project of considerable significance for China’s own security, as well as for arresting growing threat perceptions amongst China’s neighbours.

Far from fading out, the harmony message from Beijing may indeed strengthen through greater efforts at multilateral region-building – not only as a response to rising regional tensions but also as a result of China’s changing profile in the global order. Even if the PRC does little more than continue to grow at more than twice the rate of global growth, as predicted in 2012,³ then it will stand out even more at a time of prolonged economic downturn in the developed world. This is despite China’s fortunes being tied to the rest of the world and hence a slowing of its own, though still impressive, economic growth rate.

If economy propels China to global heights, it will be the role of diplomacy to carry the persuasive powers of “harmony” (*hexie*). A stronger commitment to cooperative regionalism externally, and China’s own image as a more humane nation internally, would help alleviate the credibility problem associated with Beijing’s harmony rhetoric to date. Already the term “being harmonized” connotes censorship internally. This relates to the domestic form of the harmony discourse, that of “harmonious society”, which was introduced to address the social and environmental dangers of uneven development. “Harmonious world” is the external variant that has led to concerns that what it really means is “harmonizing the world” – a form of Pax Sinica – that would provide a relative peace based on hegemonic order.

A “hegemonic harmony”, if such a term can be employed, is difficult to justify when examining the dominant Daoist and Confucian discourses in traditional Chinese philosophy. These have influenced China’s modern strategic culture and foreign policy.⁴ Daoism’s most renowned teacher was Laozi (Lao Tzu), meaning Old Master, thought to have lived in the sixth century BCE. The major tenets of Daoism are in the *Daodejing* (the *Book of the Way and Its Power*), derived from Laozi’s teachings. It speaks of the *dao* (the Way) as eternal and nameless. To follow the *dao* requires an attitude of *wu-wei*, which can be translated as “non-action”, “spontaneous action” and “non-interference”. According to the *Daodejing*, the *dao* “never acts yet nothing is left undone”.⁵ Confucianism, named after China’s most influential philosopher, Confucius (551-479 BCE), calls for the proper cultivation of relationships between people as the basis for society to function in a manner beneficial to its members. Under such conditions, it is not necessary for a leader to rule with an iron fist, but through example. This, in turn, allows for a non-intrusive form of governance. In the *Analects* 15:4,

³ In 2012, China’s growth was projected at 7.8 percent and global growth at 3.3 percent. IMF, *World Economic Outlook*, October 2012, <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2012/02/pdf/text.pdf> (accessed October 9, 2012).

⁴ See Rosita Dellios, “Chinese strategic culture: Part 1 - The heritage from the past” *CEWCES Research Papers*. Paper 1 (1994), http://epublications.bond.edu.au/cewces_papers/1; and Rosita Dellios and R. James Ferguson, *China’s Quest for Global Order: From Peaceful Rise to Harmonious World* (Lanham Md: Lexington Books, 2013).

⁵ Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching [Daodejing]* I.37, trans. D. C. Lau (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963).

for example, Confucius praises the legendary sage king Shun for governing through non-assertion or *wu-wei*.⁶

Another deeply embedded concept in Chinese philosophy concerns the archetypal emblem of harmony, the *yin-yang* circle with intertwining black and white hemispheres. The *yin* (dark) and *yang* (light) represent complementary difference, not opposition or Hegelian clash. For this reason it is also known as “Chinese dialectics”, “correlative thinking”, and “*bianzheng siwei*” (dialectical thinking).⁷ An ancient text on harmony explains the role of difference in creating harmony as follows: “If you would try to give water a flavor with water, who would care to partake of the result? If lutes were to be confined to one note, who would be able to listen to them?”⁸

So, too, Daoism and Confucianism, which stress different aspects of Chinese culture, may find agreement in a *wu-wei* style of governance but their contributions to an anti-hegemonic discourse are distinctive. In its concern for human-to-nature relations in a private world, Daoism may be thought of as the *yin* to Confucianism’s *yang*-like interest in human-to-human relations and political order. Each, however, contains the seed of the other as represented in the “dots” in each hemisphere of the *yin-yang* symbol. Daoism carries a *laissez-faire* political message; Confucianism regards the private world of self-cultivation as the beginning of global harmony.

Because Confucianism is typically associated with political order rather than Daoism’s naturalistic orientation, “Confucian” is often the term employed to represent China’s harmony-based political philosophy. In reality, a synthesis of Daoism, Confucianism and other schools of thought shaped Chinese attitudes to harmony. Hence when engaging socialist concepts, the term “Confucian-Socialist” is used as short-hand to capture the complexity of Chinese philosophical schools that advance the harmony discourse as well as the idiosyncratic nature of Chinese socialism that includes such “Chinese characteristics” as traditional culture and capitalism.

In combining traditional and socialist values into a hybrid narrative, certain key principles emerge in Beijing’s policy guidelines. Among the most pervasive is “win-win”, which reflects the Confucian principle of reciprocity (*shu*). The above-mentioned 2011 white paper on *China’s Peaceful Development* speaks of promoting the “win-win spirit in international relations”, while economically, “countries should cooperate with each other, draw on each other’s strengths and make economic globalization a balanced and win-win process that benefits all countries”.⁹ The 2010 defence white paper states in its preface: “Pulling together in times of trouble, seeking mutual benefit and engaging in win-win cooperation are the only ways for humans to achieve common development and prosperity.”¹⁰ Relatedly, a sense of solidarity often associated with socialist values is conveyed in another common term: “South-

⁶ See *Analects* translation in Wm Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, comp., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 2nd edn, Vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 59.

⁷ See Chenshan Tian, *Chinese Dialectics: From Yijing to Marxism* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2005) 21.

⁸ Dainian Zhang, trans. Edmund Ryden, *Key Concepts in Chinese Philosophy* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2002), 272, citing *Zuo’s Commentary* (10).

⁹ *China’s Peaceful Development*, section 3.

¹⁰ State Council Information Office of the PRC, *China’s National Defense in 2010* (Beijing: *Xinhua*, March 2011).

South cooperation". This echoes the post-colonial "spirit of Bandung" by which Asian and African nations sought to advance their common interests. China's 2011 white paper on foreign aid emphasizes South-South cooperation of "mutual help between developing countries".¹¹ However, as pointed out by Sven Grimm:

. . . what the paper does not clarify is how much of the "mutual" gain is to fall on either side, so that win-win situations find the balance between the two extremes of purely altruistic aid and mere export promotion."¹²

Clearly, "win-win" and "South-South cooperation" need to be in *yin-yang* balance if they are to promote harmonious relations. (Extremes of *yin* or *yang* are said to be destabilizing and hence to be avoided.) In other words, Chinese correlative thinking fosters understanding of mutuality as a serious philosophical proposition, rather than an empty slogan. It finds common ground with social constructivism in Western International Relations theory. Both are intersubjective, process based perspectives. Indeed, it is possible to ask whether China is a constructivist state in search of a correlative region.¹³ If so, this would render the meaning of "harmonious regionalism" as a process (*dao*, the Way) based model rather than a highly institutionalized one. "Harmonious regionalism", like the concept of "governance" (as distinct from government), would display both interactive and fluid properties. Such an order provides, in the words of constructivist pioneer, Alexander Wendt, the ground for "the micro or bottom-up process of self-organization, and the macro or top-down process of structural constitution."¹⁴ In *yin-yang* terms, this means finding a balance between the people and government, or else too much populism risks ushering short-sighted and chaotic politics; while over-regulation by government can be stifling.

In Search of a Correlative Region

China might regard itself as a constructivist state but it has yet to find a "harmonious" correlative region. There is more than one region to which the People's Republic belongs, and the one with a similar culture is, ironically, is the least "harmonious". Northeast Asia, which forms part of the Confucian cultural area, is also the least "regionalized". Hopes were raised in the past that member states of the Six-Party Talks on the North Korean nuclear issue represented an embryonic regionalism for Northeast Asia. Not only is North Korea's nuclear program an aggravation to all, but historical disputes still figure prominently. Sino-Japanese relations, fragile even at the best of times, had become fraught over the contested Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in 2010 through to 2012. This period was bracketed by the detention in 2010 of a Chinese fishing boat captain and the Japanese government "buying" in 2012 three of the five contested islands from a private Japanese "owner".

¹¹ State Council Information Office of the PRC, *White Paper on China's Foreign Aid* (Beijing: *Xinhua*, April 2011).

¹² Sven Grimm, "China's Aid Policy White Paper: Transparency Now?" *Devex*, May 20, 2011, <http://www.devex.com/en/news/blogs/china-s-aid-policy-white-paper-transparency-now> (accessed October 7, 2012).

¹³ Rosita Dellios, "The PRC's Governance Diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific Region," in *International Governance, Regimes, and Globalization: Case Studies from Beijing and Taipei*, edited by Peter Kien-hong Yu, Emily Chow, and Shawn S. F. Kao (Lanham Md: Lexington Books, 2010), 97.

¹⁴ Alexander Wendt, "Why a World State is Inevitable," *European Journal of International Relations* 9, no. 4 (2003): 498.

Northeast Asia is also home to the divided nations of Korea and China. North and South Korea are still technically at war. Theirs is reputedly the most militarized border in the world. As for the PRC and the Republic of China (ROC), their disunity comes from a civil war which Mao Zedong won on the mainland in 1949 but failed to extinguish the old republican China on Taiwan dating from 1911. Worse still, from Beijing's perspective, the civil war-derived narrative of "reunification" was largely overtaken by the Taiwan independence narrative of the late 20th Century. Any moves to formalize what is already a de facto independence would entail a swift reaction from Beijing – its threat to take Taiwan by force. So Northeast Asia lacks a unifying regionalism but abounds in fissures of potential conflict: the two Koreas, China and Taiwan, China and Japan, Japan and South Korea over disputed maritime territory, Japan and North Korea over the abduction of Japanese citizens, as well as dismay by Koreans and Chinese over Japanese prime ministerial visits to the Yasukuni Shrine that includes World War II war criminals.

Southeast Asia, though regionally more coherent through the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) which was formed in 1967, also lacks harmony when it comes to territorial claims. China is regarded as the main culprit in sovereignty disputes over the Spratly/Nansha archipelago in the South China Sea, though a number of Southeast Asian states also dispute sections of the Spratlys amongst themselves. The adjacent Paracel Islands, which are controlled by China, are still disputed by Vietnam which shares China's Confucian culture and socialist politics but retains historically-based animosity that goes back to antiquity. Moreover, the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese border war was China's last major war.

A more "harmonious region" may be found in Central Asia. China has had a direct hand in influencing post-Soviet regionalism across its land borders and has largely succeeded compared to distrustful relations with its Confucian cultural cousins in maritime Asia. A certain *wu-wei* orientation of non-assertion may be detected in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) whose members are Russia and the Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Originally formed in 1996 to demilitarize the old Sino-Soviet border and resolve border demarcation disputes, the "Shanghai Five" became the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in July 2001 with the addition of Uzbekistan. This organisation has blossomed into a multifaceted regionalism in which security, economic, political and cultural relations have developed. Indeed Beijing hails the SCO as a success story in its "harmonious region" discourse:

By following the 'Shanghai Spirit' featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for diversified civilizations and pursuit of common development, the SCO has expanded and deepened its cooperation in all fields as never before.¹⁵

It is notable, however, that the two biggest members of SCO are China and Russia which have tended to cooperate despite their historical rivalry in Eurasia and ideological split during the Cold War. In Northeast and Southeast Asia, however, the strategic presence of the United States has tended to cause consternation rather than solidarity among the big powers. Where China and Russia cooperate in joint military exercises within SCO and tend to support one another in the UN Security Council, the same cannot be said about China and the United States. Their military relations are beset with problems, including the long standing

¹⁵ Cheng Guoping, PRC Vice Foreign Minister, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: A Cause Worth Ceaseless Efforts," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, May 29, 2012.

disagreement over US arms sales to Taiwan, the rights of US military ships and aircraft to operate in the South China Sea, and American complaints about Beijing's "lack of transparency" in its rising defence budget.

South Asia, which China abuts across the Himalayas, is less volatile for Beijing than maritime Asia but also less cooperative than its carefully cultivated Central Asian regionalism. This is largely because China relies on bilateral relations with India to maintain any semblance of "harmony" – an often elusive task in view of its unresolved border dispute with India. However, both India and Pakistan hold "observer" status within SCO. Full membership would theoretically extend the "Shanghai spirit" to South Asia, subsuming bilateral sensitivities within the larger framework of regional regimes and norms.

Despite a number of high profile disputes, especially between China and Japan, Beijing has promoted harmonious "regionalism" directly through SCO, and indirectly through dialogue relations with ASEAN, as well as through membership of the East Asia Summit (EAS) which includes the United States. Moreover, by hosting and chairing the Six-Party Talks in Northeast Asia, China has shown a willingness to shoulder responsibilities in regional affairs in a *wu-wei* manner – through non-assertion. There was no sense of a nascent hegemon in China's role, and even though progress has been halting it has not exhausted China's patience. This, the most difficult of China's regions, holds the promise of being its most rewarding if a Northeast Asia nuclear weapons free zone (NEA NWFZ) eventually emerges.¹⁶ This would indeed constitute an instance of "harmonious regionalism".

Prospects of *Wu-Wei* Political Integration

If the political sphere can match advances in economic regionalism,¹⁷ then a "harmonious region" would have strong foundations for its construction. Thinking beyond the interests of the nation-state is no easy task, as the European Union (EU) has found. However, if the EU's subsidiarity principle is adopted, then a higher level of political integration towards harmonious regionalism could become more palatable. Subsidiary, defined in Article 5 of the Treaty of the European Union, resembles *wu-wei* philosophy in that "the Union should not undertake action (except on matters for which it alone is responsible) unless EU action is more effective than action taken at national, regional or local level".¹⁸ This may appear a remote possibility when factoring in distrust among a number of East Asian neighbours and the poor example the EU has set with the post-2010 eurozone debt crisis.

However, social constructivism's attitude to change would argue that norms and identity do alter, even without EU-style institutionalization. China's own identity shows a stark contrast from Mao's forbidding "Red China" to Deng Xiaoping's more relaxed China of market reforms. Such was the impact of "capitalism" that China became known as the "workshop of the world". It is true that Confucianism and socialism are poles apart ideologically and

¹⁶ Chung-in Moon, "The Six-Party Talks and building a nuclear-free Northeast Asia," *East Asia Forum*, May 20, 2012. <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2012/05/20/the-six-party-talks-and-implications-for-a-northeast-asia-nuclear-weapons-free-zone/> (accessed October 7, 2012).

¹⁷ See Vikram Hehru, "Southeast Asia: Will Markets and Geography Trump the TPP?" Commentary, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, July 9, 2012.

¹⁸ Eurofound, *European Industrial Relations Dictionary*, Updated November 30, 2010, <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/industrialrelations/dictionary/definitions/subsidiarity.htm> (accessed August 1, 2012).

historically, but like the introduction of a market economy, the current Confucian revival serves the socialist cause. Their apparent “clash” may be reconfigured as *yin-yang* “harmony”. Confucian values are framed, of course, by the requirements of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for its own survival and hence the prevailing Leninist political system. Chinese philosophy could be used to criticize the CCP’s rendition of harmony if it is one that sacrifices – through over-zealous domestic control – the crucial element of diversity. One cannot impose harmony in a hegemonic fashion. Rather, harmony is a far more complex affair. Difference, even discord, cannot – should not – be banished, but balanced in *yin-yang* fashion. Harmony, it has been argued, is a dynamic balance of elements of which discord is one; conflict occurs when an imbalance results in dynamic harmony breaking up into chaos, or when diversity is overwhelmed by a totalizing force destroying its independent comprehensive nature.¹⁹

“The Name that can be Named is not the Constant Name”

Perhaps China’s saving grace is its ability to change without denying the power of its past. China had not abandoned its civilizational identity any more than it had stopped being “communist” with the introduction of “capitalism”. The lesson here is that names do not always convey the process of change and transformation as well as a particular era’s label might initially intend. The “name that can be named” may not be the “constant name” for Daoists.²⁰ For Confucians, names needed to be rectified so roles and actions can be reformed.²¹ For social constructivists like Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is what states make of it.”²² So, too, harmony is intersubjective.

Joining these together, the meaning of “harmonious region” may remain even if the name changes. This occurred with the officially sanctioned term to describe China’s ascent in the global order as “peaceful rise”. Within months of its introduction it was replaced in early 2004 by “peaceful development”. Among the reasons for the self-corrective change was that the word “rise” was still deemed threatening compared to the more reassuring “development”.²³

¹⁹ Robert C. Neville, “Between Chaos and Totalization,” in *Harmony and Strife: Contemporary Perspectives, East & West*, edited by Shu-Hsien Liu and Robert E. Allinson (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1989), 49-58; Jesús Solé-Farràs, “Harmony in Contemporary New Confucianism and in Socialism with Chinese Characteristics,” *China Media Research* 4, no. 4 (2008): 17.

²⁰ Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching [Daodejing]* 1.1, trans. D. C. Lau.

²¹ In *Analects* 12.11, trans. D. C. Lau (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), Confucius is asked about government by a certain Duke Jing of Qi. Confucius replied: “Let the ruler be a ruler, the subject a subject, the father a father, the son a son.” In other words, a ruler should take on the responsibilities of acting like a ruler and not like a thief, a parent should not act like a child and vice versa.

²² Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391-425.

²³ See Bonnie S. Glaser and Evan S. Medeiros, “The Changing Ecology of Foreign Policy-Making in China: The Ascension and Demise of the Theory of Peaceful Rise,” *The China Quarterly* 190 (June 2007): 291-310; Dellios and Ferguson, *China’s Quest for Global Order: From Peaceful Rise to Harmonious World*, Ch. 4.

“Harmonious region” has already changed, for this paper’s purposes, to “harmonious regionalism” in order to highlight its meaning of active diplomacy to overcome disputation and engage in region-building. This relates to the Confucian need to rectify terms. Whatever the term that is used, it must be acted upon sincerely and not be employed as a cover for lack of policy or hegemonic behaviour in the form of aggression. If it is, others will notice and will not cooperate with, but seek to thwart, the new hegemon’s rise. “Harmonious region”, then, is not a “one-way street”. It would have to be mutually undertaken through common guiding norms in a regionalized setting.

To paraphrase Wendt, “harmonious region” is what participants within regional politics make of it. It may well become a forgotten phrase from a previous Chinese administration. Or it may endure in a determined joint effort to realise a condition that resembles harmony – even if by another name or names to retain its vitality. After all, “harmonious region” belongs to the harmony discourse that includes “harmonious society” and “harmonious world” in order to fulfil a need. This need was for a “rising” China to represent itself as a peaceful and cooperative country rather than an ideological and quarrelsome one. Additionally, the CCP is more likely to survive when it is perceived as supporting harmonious order at home and abroad rather than revolutionary struggle.

How China acts with others in a regional setting and how others engage with it will determine whether “harmonious region” is accepted as a reality-in-the-making, or discarded as mere rhetoric. This, in turn, will impact on the legitimacy of China’s quest for a “harmonious world”. A regionally misbehaving Middle Kingdom is unlikely to elicit confidence at the global level. The key Daoist and Confucian schools of Chinese philosophy, however, provide cause for optimism. They suggest that harmony constitutes an ingrained value to be applied to those near and far. Confucius said: “Ensure that those who are near are pleased and those who are far are attracted.”²⁴

Western International Relations theory, too, has developed ideas of power and order that go beyond the classic narrative of state survival in an anarchic world. To account for today’s global complexity and the need for cooperative security, regional organizations and regimes have developed, along with the social constructivist perspective that sees cooperative practices evolving. This state of affairs can be recognized as *yin-yang* correlativity. The mutually-determining relationship of harmonious region-cum-regionalism calls for a *wu-wei* approach of non-assertion. It would not be necessary to call a region “harmonious”, or to say that China does not seek “hegemony”, if this was already the steady state environment. The *dao*, we are reminded, “never acts yet nothing is left undone”.

Rosita Dellios, PhD, lectures and writes on the themes of Chinese defence policy and philosophy, concepts for world order and future trends in global politics. As of 2012, Rosita has published one book on China’s defence strategy; co-edited a book on Confucian humanism; co-authored a book on China’s quest for global order, published 19 book chapters, 13 journal articles (some co-authored); and presented numerous conference papers. She has engaged in original research on ‘mandalic regionalism’ that employs traditional and contemporary forms of regional governance in Asia; as well as the philosophical basis of Chinese strategic thought in the 21st century. For more information see http://works.bepress.com/rosita_dellios/

²⁴ *Analects* 13.16, trans. D. C. Lau.

â° fçš,,ī¼·â'CEè° çš,,arranged together in a pleasing way so that each part goes well with the others. a harmonious combination of colours. â° fçš,,è%²â½©æé... 3. â'CEè° çš,,ī¼·è° è° fçš,,very pleasant when played or sung together. adj. 1. â'CEè° çš,,èžæ ½çš,,â'CEç|çš,. 2. è° fâ'CEçš,,ç> ç§° çš,. Do these phrases have exactly the same meaning? Accountability, liability and responsibility çš,,âCE°â^«. Episode 160428 / 28 Apr 2016.Â What does it mean if traffic is 'backed up'? Learn how to use 'back up' and 'back out'. Four unrelated phrases â>ä,³âè-çŸè-è-|è§£.