

Chinese-Style Modernisation: Promoting Chinese Morality and Civilisation as Alternatives to Western Liberalism

Friday 24 November 2023

9:00am for 9:30am-3:30pm AEDT | Level 13, 356 Collins Street Melbourne 3000
(Hybrid Mode - Online Participation is Available)

Attendance is free but pre-registration is essential. Please book online [here](#).

Over the last decade China has proposed both a model of 'Chinese-style governance' and more recently at the 20th Party Congress in late 2022, 'Chinese-style modernisation'. Chinese-style modernisation carries the claim that China has created a 'new form of human civilisation'. It contains a number of discursive similarities to Chinese-style governance that centre around the idea that Chinese (including Confucian, revolutionary and advanced socialist) governance thinking can reshape society by moulding the behaviour of its citizens. This workshop explores points of intersection and divergence between Chinese-style governance and Chinese-style modernisation. It examines two main questions:

- What is the nature of Chinese-style moral governance and Chinese-style modernisation?
- How do they initiate new conceptions of state and citizen as ideological and 'civilisational' alternatives to modern liberal democracy?

MORNING SESSION SPEAKERS (9:30AM -12:10PM AEDT)

Susan Trevaskes - *The Culturalisation of Governance under Xi Jinping*

Delia Lin - *The Road to Moral Unfreedom*

Rowan Callick - *"There is great order under heaven; the situation is excellent."*

Q & A and Roundtable - *Chair: Zhiyuan Guo*

AFTERNOON SESSION SPEAKERS (1:00 PM - 3:30PM AEDT)

Samuli Seppanen - *Production and Global Dissemination of Chinese Legal Ideology*

Haig Patapan - *Chinese-style Modernisation: Civilisation as Soulcraft in Contemporary China*

Q & A and Roundtable - *Chair: Kim Sungmoon*

(Speaker bios and abstracts overleaf)

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Sponsors: Centre for Governance and Public Policy, Griffith University, in partnership with the Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research and the Asia Institute, University of Melbourne.

This is a Free Event.

Session Chairs

Morning Session



Guo Zhiyuan is a professor of Law at China University of Political Science and Law (CUPL) in Beijing, where she specializes in Criminal Procedure, Evidence, International Human Rights Law and Law and Society Studies. She is the Vice Dean of the College of Criminal Justice, Deputy Director of the Center for Criminal Law and Justice, CUPL, Adjunct Professor at Buffalo State College, US and Chinese University of Hong Kong. She is also a Non-resident Senior Research Fellow at US-Asia Law Institute, New York University School of Law. Her research interests include Exclusionary Rules of Evidence, Plea Bargaining, Lay Participation, Effective Counsel, Criminal Mental Health Law and Anti-Corruption Policies in China.

Afternoon Session



Sungmoon Kim is a professor of political theory at the City University of Hong Kong, where he also serves as Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences and Director of the Center for East Asian and Comparative Philosophy. He specializes in Confucian democratic and constitutional theory and East Asian political thought, and is the author of six books, including *Confucian Constitutionalism: Dignity, Rights, and Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 2023), *Theorizing Confucian Virtue Politics: The Political Philosophy of Mencius and Xunzi* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), and *Democracy After Virtue: Toward Pragmatic Confucian Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

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Presenters and Topics

Morning Session



Susan Trevaskes is a professor of Chinese Studies at Griffith University and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities (FAHA). Her research includes the first books in English on criminal courts in contemporary China (2007), policing serious crime in China (2010), and death penalty reform in China (2012). Her co-edited volumes include *The Politics of Law and Stability in China* (2014), *Legal Reforms and Deprivation of Liberty in Contemporary China* (2016), *Justice: the China Experience* (2017) and *The Party and the Law in China: Ideology and Organisation* (2020). Her current Australian Research Council (ARC) project (with Delia Lin) is on Chinese governance in the Xi Jinping era.

The Culturalisation of Governance Under Xi Jinping: Ideological terms such as 'spiritual civilisation' and 'rule by moral virtue' have been part of the Chinese Communist Party's moral governance repertoire since the 1980s. But moral governance under Xi Jinping today has taken a more 'comprehensive' turn; indeed, comprehensiveness is what Xi intends to achieve by embedding moral governance into the Party's overall social governance design. Here, moral governance plays a central part of a wider program of Chinese-style social governance first introduced at the 18th Party Congress in 2013, which seeks to 'modernise national governance' and 'enhance governance capacity'. This paper looks at three ways in which the Party is currently making moral governance increasingly central to its comprehensive governance ambitions. First the Party is institutionalising moral governance programs into municipal and rural social governance plans. Second, it is creating spaces for civil society volunteers to participate in the governance of their peers and third, it is bolstering the Xi Jinping era 'discourse power' of China-style governance by basing the Party's legitimacy increasingly on civilizational discourse in an effort to dominate the discursive space of 'values' and restrict the spread of alternative (western) values.

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***Delia Lin** is Associate Professor of Chinese Studies at the University of Melbourne. She is a Deputy Director of the Centre for Contemporary Chinese Studies in Asia Institute. Delia's research centres on discourse, ideology and social governance in a changing China. Her current Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation project (with Sue Trevaskes) focuses on ideology and education in Xi Jinping's China. She is a Chief Investigator in two ARC projects, one on China's governance revolution and the other on the nexus between elite and public opinions.*

The Road to Moral Unfreedom: One of the key developments in social governance in the Xi era has been the ramped-up role that state-sanctioned 'socialist' moral codes—such as patriotism—plays in the shaping of theory and practice of law and justice. This new development works hand in glove with an intensified anti-West discourse. We suggest that the Chinese Communist Party's obsession with anti-Westernism in ideology essentially derives from a rejection of individualism as a philosophical option and fear of the return and popularisation of individualism (which does have its roots in China's own philosophical tradition) brought by increased economic freedom and social mobility. As moral judgement prevails, self-worth is obliterated and personal freedom to pursue one's own conceptions of the good diminishes, which in turn damages respect and self-respect in social relations.

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Rowan Callick OBE FAIIA is an Industry Fellow at Griffith University's Asia Institute, and an expert associate at the Australian Security College at the Australian National University. He grew up in England, then managed a publishing group in Papua New Guinea for 10 years. He was China Correspondent for both *The Australian Financial Review* and for *The Australian* (twice), and Asia-Pacific Editor for each paper. He is an advisory board member of the National Foundation for Australia-China Relations and of *La Trobe: Asia*. He won two Walkley Awards and the Graham Perkin Award for Australian Journalist of the Year, and received the OBE, commended by the PNG government. He has written three books on contemporary China, each published in English and Chinese, including *Party Time: Who Runs China and How* (titled by Palgrave Macmillan *The Party Forever: Inside China's Modern Communist Elite*).

"There is great order under heaven; the situation is excellent" : Mao Zedong, driving the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution: "There is great disorder under heaven; the situation is excellent." In contrast for Xi Jinping, his family banished from the Zhongnanhai Eden during that chaos but now seeking full redemption from Mao's spirit by rejuvenating the Party, only order matters. He embodies his own Thought's "Chinese Characteristics," which essentially comprise locking eyes with him and following his orders as he strips back now-redundant layers of government to enable his complaisant Party to rule directly. The resulting infantilising of decision-making causes a swingeing between hierarchic immobilism and bursts of radical reconstruction, as the Emperor – no longer far away, with mountains being razed – lours over all in this sacerdotal New Era during which struggle offers a welcome opportunity for sacrifice such as Xi's own family made earlier, and eating bitterness enables all to dedicate themselves humbly to the Party's apotheosis.

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Presenters and Topics

Afternoon Session



***Samuli Seppänen** is an associate professor at the Faculty of Law of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. His research interests include Chinese legal and political thought and developmental and China-related aspects of international law. He holds an S.J.D. degree from Harvard University and an LL.M. degree from the University of Helsinki.*

Production and Global Dissemination of Chinese Legal Ideology: The leaders and ideologues of the Chinese Communist Party profess an interest in increasing the impact of Chinese social sciences and governance ideology in foreign countries. On its face, this project amounts to an ambitious, even radical, ideological challenge against liberal legal thought. Nevertheless, these attempts can also be seen to highlight various challenges that illiberal regimes face in the production and global advocacy of governance ideology. First, the domestic priorities of illiberal ideological speech may not support ideological advocacy in foreign contexts. Second, characteristically illiberal argumentative strategies may be less effective in front of foreign audiences than they are domestically. Third, illiberal ideological sensitivities may impair, or make unavailable, certain advocacy strategies, which could be effective in front of foreign audiences. Despite such challenges, Chinese ideological speech has had effects in foreign contexts. Among other things, Chinese ideological advocacy has made it easier for foreign politicians and legal scholars to criticize Western promotion of the rule of law and human rights.

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***Haig Patapan** is Professor in the School of Government and International Relations, Griffith University. His research interests are in democratic theory and practice, political philosophy, political leadership and comparative constitutionalism. His recent books include *A Dangerous Passion* (SUNY 2021) examining the importance of honour for political leaders and *Modern Philosopher Kings: Wisdom and Power in Politics* (Edinburgh University Press, 2023), exploring modern attempts to resolve the enduring question of whether it is possible to combine wisdom and power to secure justice. Professor Patapan is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia. He has received a number of awards, including an Australian Prime Ministers Centre Fellowship, a Senior Fulbright Scholarship at the Center for Public Leadership, Harvard Kennedy School of Government, an Isaac Manasseh Meyer Fellowship, the National University of Singapore, and most recently a Visiting Fellowship, Australian Center for Federalism, Australian National University.*

Chinese-style Modernisation: Civilisation as Soulcraft in Contemporary China:

Chinese-style Modernisation is distinguished by its recent emphasis on 'spiritual civilisation'. The paper examines prominent contemporary initiatives, such as socialism with Chinese characteristics, China Dream and Tianxia to explore the nature of this 'new' civilisation and evaluate the extent to which it represents a credible alternative to the universalism of contemporary liberal democracy. The core argument of the paper is that these civilisational approaches do provide a form of soulcraft, but to the extent that they are either too general, or too distinctly Chinese, or indeed implicitly recall an older conception of Chinese empire, they will not represent a viable alternative model to replace liberal democracy. Nevertheless, these civilisational claims are significant in two important ways. They will be theoretically influential by their corrosive effect on liberal universalism and the institutions founded on its principles. More ambitiously, they seek to demonstrate the insufficiency of 'performance' legitimacy for modern states. Chinese modernity with its civilisational claims therefore represents a lesson for 'smart' authoritarian regimes on why they should be proud of their own cultural and ideological heritage and how they can combine technological advances with their unique religious, nationalistic or ethnic principles to fashion distinctive modern ideologies that can resist the challenges of modern liberal democracy.

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