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Balancing in Ancient China

Qi Haixia

1. QUESTIONS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In comparing China's history with that of Europe's, a salient issue emerges: Why did China's Spring and Autumn and Warring States (SAWS) periods conclude with unification under the Qin Dynasty, while for a long period of time Europe remained fragmented? This paper seeks to unravel why, during the rise of the Qin, other states were not able to balance effectively against it, yet were successful in their balancing efforts vis-à-vis the rise of the Wei and Qi kingdoms, which were also major powers. Case studies include balancing directed toward the Wei kingdom—e.g., the "besiege Wei to save Zhao" and the "besiege Wei to save Han" campaigns; balancing directed toward the Qi—e.g., the "six-nation attack on Qi"; and the series of coalitions that arose to balance the Qin kingdom. Statistical analysis is then utilized to discuss and verify the significance of each hypothesis. The paper concludes that the Qin kingdom's success in uniting six nations into one derived not from any ability to avoid other nations' attempts to balance it, but rather due to its striving to avoid catastrophic balancing coalitions directed against it. Through measures that included annexing rather than destroying rivals, its "horizontal alliance" foreign policy, and allying with faraway states while attacking those nearby, the Qin kingdom was able to minimize the degree to which other states perceived it as a threat, making its eventual unification more inexorable.

1.1 Domestic Reform and Unification

Looking back millennia into the past, to the history of pre-Qin China, we will note a phenomenon that distinctly separates its history from that of modern European international relations: the emergence of a unified Qin state

following centuries of SAWS warfare, and China's entrance into a period of overall unity. Although Europe's history has seen attempts at unification by a number of powerful countries—most notably Napoleonic France and WW2-era Germany—all eventually fell short. Chinese history notably diverges from that of the West in this regard, and this divergence has been the subject of much scrutiny.[1]

Victoria Hui has posited "reform from strength" and "reform from weakness" as the primary factor behind the differences in East and West.[2] This being so, we should first ask: What, logically speaking, do the two terms mean? We can see that, in Hui's view, the Qin kingdom's unification of China at the close of the SAWS exemplifies "reform from strength," while Napoleonic France's failure to do so in Europe was "reform from weakness." This logic, however, seems to confuse cause and effect; or, rather, it offers different reasons to explain diverging results. Hui's distinction between the two kinds of reform has been criticized by Dingxin Zhao, who states: "Obviously, the measures taken by feudal kingdoms in their struggles for supremacy during the early Spring and Autumn period were archetypically self-defeating."[3] "But who are we to say that the 'self-defeating' road taken in Europe reduced its nations' power in any way?"[4]

Jorgren Moller also analyzed this issue from the perspective of domestic politics. Based on comparing the failure of the Habsburg dynasty in Europe and the success of Qin's unification of China, Moller found that interest groups played a key role here. The strong privileged class in European states directly led to the powerful restriction of governmental power. However, the lack of a middle class led to strong governments in the Warring States and at last the unification of Qin.[5]

It is apparent that the "reform from strength"/"reform from weakness" or "strong government"/"weak government" dichotomy is not sufficient to explain Qin Dynasty unification versus European fragmentation. We can find many differences between ancient China and the Habsburg dynasty in domestic political fields. However, it is not sufficient to say these differences are the real cause. In reality, although both periods saw efforts to balance against would-be hegemons, this chapter asserts that the key difference between Qin unification and long-term European conflict lies in the unifying strategies used by the Qin kingdom.

1.2 Balance of Power

The balance of power is one of the classic, traditional theories of international relations. Kenneth Waltz has pointed out that in anarchy, should one state's strength rapidly increase, other major states would seek to balance this rising state, either solely or together with other countries, so as to bring

the broken balance of power back into alignment. Thus, in the international system, we repeatedly observe states confronted with the choice of balancing or bandwagoning.[6]

Stephen Walt's "balance of threat" hypothesis represented an adjustment of the classic balance of power theory. Walt pointed out that in an anarchic system, countries choose balancing not only for the sake of power but also from the perception of threat.[7] Walt went on to point out that "threats" emerge from four factors: aggregate strength, geographical proximity, offensive capabilities, and offensive intentions.[8]

Randall Schweller has further pointed out that there exist two kinds of countries: status-quo powers and revisionist powers. Status-quo powers are, simply put, those countries who are satisfied with the existing order, while revisionist powers are those who are dissatisfied with the existing order and wish to tear it down.[9] Where motives are concerned, balancing is done in search of security, while bandwagoning is done to maximize a country's interests. Revisionist powers dissatisfied with the status quo therefore seek to bandwagon with larger revisionist powers, whereas only status-quo states seek to balance.[10]

The Warring States period did see efforts by other powerful nations to unite in an effort to balance the hegemon—the Qi state's campaign to "besiege Wei and save Zhao" during the reign of King Hui of Wei, the campaign to "besiege Wei and save Han," and coalitions directed at the Qin kingdom were all examples—but the issue lies in the diverging results of this balancing. This paper seeks to unravel why, during the rise of the Qin, other states were not able to balance effectively against it, yet were successful in their balancing efforts vis-à-vis the rise of the Wei and Qi kingdoms. This in turns breaks down into three subsidiary questions: Why did other states seek to balance the Wei kingdom? Likewise, why did balancing efforts directed at the Qi emerge? And why were efforts to balance the Qin kingdom unsuccessful in preventing its drive to unification? To answer these questions requires thoroughgoing analysis of the specific balancing, bandwagoning, and influences that emerged.

2. INTRODUCTION OF BALANCING AND HEGEMONY IN ANCIENT CHINA

From the Spring and Autumn period to the Warring States period, the interaction between the princes became increasingly disordered, diplomatic etiquette was gradually abandoned, and the system culture turned to tyranny. The profound change from "respecting courtesy and respecting trust" in the Spring and Autumn period to "combining deception and falsehood" in the Warring States period has been recognized generally by historians.[11]

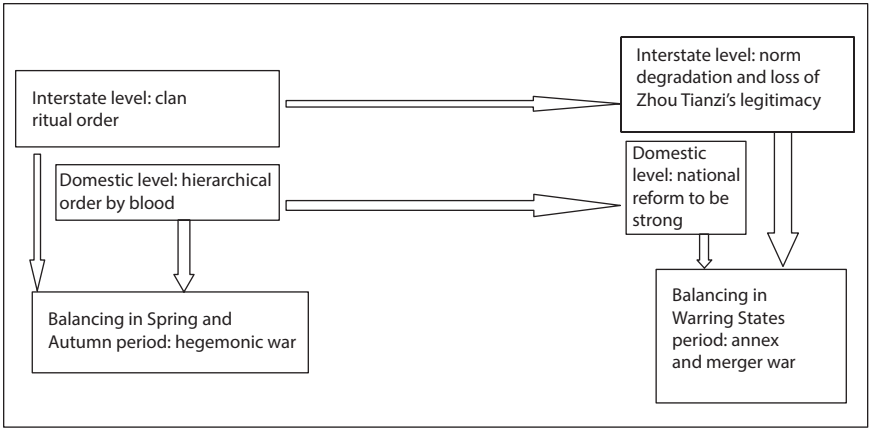

FIGURE 13.1. Transition from the Spring and Autumn period to the Warring States period.

2.1 Interstate Level: Norm Degradation and the Loss of Zhou Tianzi's Legitimacy

In the process of international social degeneration from the Spring and Autumn period to the Warring States period, the patriarchal clan ritual order left over from the Western Zhou Dynasty, with the core of "relatives-respect," gradually collapsed. This is the key to the deterioration of the international community in the Spring and Autumn period and to the more disorderly Warring States period. The collapse of the patriarchal clan system eventually led to the collapse of the international community in the Spring and Autumn period.

The Zhou Dynasty had built a feudal network by blood and marriage ties. There were two backbones to support the order of the world in the Zhou Dynasty: feudalism and the patriarchal clan system. The princes, who mainly bore the obligation of paying tribute to the royal family and helping Zhou Tianzi to expel barbarians and to relieve suffering, were not only political entities established by the Zhou Dynasty but also strategic partners for Zhou. According to the patriarchal clan system of the Western Zhou Dynasty, Zhou Tianzi (周天子) was the majority of the world and the supreme patriarch of the aristocracy with the same surname. The son of Zhou Tianzi was divided into princes (诸侯). The sons of the princes were feudalized as Qing (卿大夫), minor princes to the princes, and major presences in their families.[12] Hence feudalism and the patriarchal clan system were intertwined, with the feudal princes governing their feudal lands by serving their people and paying tribute to Zhou Tianzi.

The system of separation inevitably led to the continuous decentralization of political power and the downward shift of social power. This process is closely related to the development of production and the change of power caused by the feudal system.[13] Over the centuries, with the development of production,

technological innovation, and population multiplication, the society greatly expanded. The competition for resources and power among states became increasingly prominent. However, the patriarchal hierarchy, based on the fixed criteria of kinship and consanguinity, had difficulty accommodating and regulating these changes. As the result, increasingly fierce competition and an unbalanced power structure gradually bred attempts to break through the original arrangement and identity order.

2.2 Features at the Unit Level: National Reform

In the Western Zhou Dynasty, the patriarchal clan principle was established. The patriarchal head was also the political leader of different ranks. Tianzi was the majority of the world, the princes were the majority of a country, and the Qing Doctor (卿大夫) was the bulk of a family. Dazong (大宗) had the responsibility to safeguard Xiaozong (小宗), and Xiaozong had the obligation to support Dazong. The patriarchal and monarchal unification was integrated through patriarchal power and each of the regimes supported the other.

The legitimacy of the patriarchal clan system was based on the spiritual appeal of ancestor worship, which was no less important than compulsory means. Blood relationship was the natural social cohesion, and the kinship relationship marked by surname became the basic social cohesion and organizational mode. Thus the rights and obligations of the ruling classes were inseparable from their identities in the patriarchal network. The patriarchal blood relationship was inferred to different surnames, hence patriarchal feudalism was not only applied to the same family name of the Zhou Dynasty but also to the different family names of the princes. With patriarchal consanguinity and marriage as a link, Zhou Tianzi established a social network of common interests with various states. Zhou Tianzi was not only the patriarch of Dazong（大宗）but also the common owner of the world. The patriarchal feudal order with Zhou Tianzi as the core and different kinship states competing to defend each other was formed in the Cathaysian system.[14]

Interstate norms and clan norms were inseparable, and the legitimacy of power depended on these norms. Family network and patriarchal clan rules constructed the common identity, interests, and values. Supported by the belief and emotion of "respecting ancestors and ancestors" and based on "relatives and respecting ancestors," a series of etiquette norms restraining political elites were derived, which strengthened, maintained, and ornamented political order through ritual and music rituals such as sacrificial feasts. There were two prominent features of Zhou rites: first, emphasizing kinship; and second, emphasizing hierarchical superiority and inferiority. A series of rules of etiquette and custom supported and embodied the patriarchal spirit. During this period, patriarchal clan ideas and the rules of etiquette, and the order derived therefrom, were deeply rooted in the hearts of the people and shared by all the states in China. They were established and declared

through proclamation and oath, and constructed the "civilization standard" of the pre-Qin Chinese system.[15]

However, with the expanding population, the extension of intergenerational lineage, and the alienation of later subordinates, the consciousness of kinship community tended to be indifferent. As a result, the bond of clan identity was loosening day by day.[16] The practice of hegemony, which called for the maintenance of the old order, exacerbated the disorder. Competition for power, conflict of interests, and emotional resentment that led to tension and conflict between clans were often manifested by destroying the existing order. The accumulation of discontent and resentment further depleted the emotional ties of "relatives" and gave rise to a vicious cycle.[17]

The dissipation of patriarchal clan system rules and the disintegration of the international community created a complex dynamic. In the process of repeated wars, the states who took the lead in efficiency-oriented change had an advantage in war, a case in point being the Qin state that won many wars after the Shang Yang's reform.[18] With the transition from feudal system to county system, patriarchal clan rules also collapsed at the unit level. The social ties, legitimacy, and value consensus among countries were also broken. Finally, the original order foundation was destroyed.

In the Spring and Autumn period, due to the restrictions of social development, it was difficult for governments to legitimately monopolize the use of violence and to achieve effective control over their own people.[19] Compared with the large-scale wars in the Warring States period, the war mobilization ability of noble regimes in the Spring and Autumn period was limited because of the characteristics of aristocracy. Repeated war promoted a tendency toward political centralization, a case in point being the emergence of the county system. While the aristocratic feudal system survived, the county system appeared in some countries in the Spring and Autumn period. At the same time, some countries adopted a series of land rent and tax policies and military levy measures. Such tax policies represented the collapse of the old feudal system. In addition, with the innovation of war technology,[20] the old military service system that relied mainly on clan armed forces was abandoned and the universal military service system began to be implemented. Countries that adopted military reform greatly enhanced their war capabilities.

This series of changes impacted the patriarchal order. At first, under the original order, the political legitimacy of nobles at all levels, such as Zhou Tianzi, princes, and Dafu (大夫), was closely bound up with the patriarchal principle and mutually supportive common interests. With the increasingly centralized power of the princes, authority and political legitimacy were increasingly divorced from the old political principles based on patriarchal clan law. The common interests and value ties based on legitimacy were also ineffective.[21]

Secondly, in order to win the war of hegemony, the rulers of all countries recruited talent and promoted the disintegration of traditional hereditary official

system based on blood relationships. A group of people from humble backgrounds stepped onto the political stage, relying on their talents. Driven by this, social mobility intensified, family networks were destroyed, and kinship levels gradually collapsed. The rise of new social relations, values, and moral concepts further broke the patriarchal hierarchical order within the princes. Emerging strata strove for success and profit, and the ruling elites were increasingly alienated. With the disappearance of the aristocratic community, social intimacy and communication ethics, which had been used to maintain order, could no longer restrain diplomatic behavior as they had done before.

At last, the emergence of continued implementation of feudalization and efficiency-oriented reform resulted in crises at the state level. Under the pressure of war, the monarch increasingly handed over the general power and diplomatic leadership to the officials. Ultimately, the complete subversion of the old domestic order and the nature of the feudal units of the Cathaysian system occurred. In many states, the ruling ranks of government officials gradually controlled the power of the state and then coveted the regime. By the middle and late Spring and Autumn period, with the fierce struggle inside the state between officials and monarch, the international disputes were also triggered and the patriarchal hierarchical order was destroyed.[22] Just as Mencius said, "Today's ministers are the sinners of today's princes."[23]

2.3 Features in Balancing Strategy: From Hegemony War to Annex War

2.3.1 Spring and Autumn Period: Hegemony War. After the establishment of the Western Zhou Dynasty, the government designed a complicated feudal system to protect the status of the Zhou Dynasty. The stability of this system was based on the leadership of Zhou Tianzi. To secure the status of Zhou Tianzi, the hierarchical order of rites were strictly emphasized. At the same time, Zhou Tianzi ensured the dominant position by militarily mobilizing local forces to fight against common enemies such as "barbarians" and "savages" who were not civilized. Within the vision of "the world" as a common body and under the interrelatedness of blood ties, each state was connected with the other rather than being isolated. "Prosperity and extinction followed by extinction" ("兴灭继绝") was the concrete embodiment of this principle.[24]

However, once the Zhou king failed in military expeditions, the dominant status of Zhou Tianzi was weakened. As a result, the prestige of the Zhou fell into decline. At last, the ritual system was facing a serious challenge. The declining of Zhou Tianzi's control over states resulted into repeated wars. In the Spring and Autumn period, the system of hegemony gradually developed as a result. To protect themselves from invasive war by the barbarians, the most powerful and influential state become the hegemon in the system. On the one hand, the hegemon

state respected the leadership of Zhou Tianzi and gained legitimacy from Zhou Tianzi. On the other hand, the hegemon state provided the public goods for all member states in the system to aid in resisting foreign enemies, sustaining the order and rules in states, and avoiding civil wars in states. Due to the hegemon state's inferior strength and moral appeal, the system was relatively stable.

In the Spring and Autumn period, hegemony war was the predominant form of war. The hegemony states were expected to declare the safeguarding of Zhou Tianzi and etiquette. But in the Warring States period, Zhou Tianzi had completely lost the co-dominant position and the so-called "etiquette" had long been abandoned. The princes cared only about their own interests and the new predominant form of war was merger war.

From the Spring and Autumn period to the Warring States period, the deterioration of order was not only confined to the frequency and scale of wars but also to the norms of war, especially the transition from "justicial and benevolent war" to "treacherous and victory-oriented war." The spirit of military etiquette in the Spring and Autumn period of the Western Zhou Dynasty was mainly manifested in the following aspects: first, upholding the legitimate reasons for the war and emphasizing "invigorating armored troops to fight against injustice"; second, requiring courtesy and benevolence in the process of war; and third, the cessation of fighting once the goal was achieved. Before the middle of the Spring and Autumn period, there was still the restraint of worshipping etiquette and benevolence even in hot-blooded fighting. In the late Spring and Autumn period, military etiquette gradually declined. The custom of advocating deceit and utilitarianism replaced the tradition of respecting rituals and trust. In order to win, ignoring rules became the "only rule."

In the Spring and Autumn period, military ritual norms were still valid. War was an aristocratic affair and the importance of justice was stressed, not swindling.[25] Although many states collapsed in this period, the wars took place mainly between the states in Zhou and barbarians. Common interests and values still existed among states. Hence the question facing each of the strong states in the Spring and Autumn period became, how can I gain legitimacy? One of the ways to gain legitimacy was by respecting Zhou Tianzi and providing public goods such as fighting against the barbarians.

Coinciding with the weakening of Zhou Tianzi's power, the central government of Zhou could neither protect itself nor protect the member states. This power vacuum called for new leaders. The process of seeking hegemony also required that the major states respect Zhou Tianzi, who was still the nominal co-owner of the world. So in the process of power transition, major powers tried to rebuild the political and social rules to strengthen political principles, ethics rules, and the basic institutional status of order and legitimacy.

The leading hegemonic states in the Spring and Autumn period were often expected to meet the following requirements. First, the hegemonic state must

have superior national strength. States that were not strong enough could not lead the system's member states to fight against common enemies. Second, the hegemonic state must be legitimized and able to provide institutional arrangements for the interstate system. Third, hegemonic states should not annex other states in the system casually. The hegemonic state should maintain the basic system of Zhou and protect other states from foreign aggression.

At the same time, although the hegemony states in the Spring and Autumn Period put forward slogans such as "respecting Zhou Tianzi and banishing the barbarians," they indeed weakened Zhou Tianzi's authority. There existed the competition for authority between Zhou Tianzi and the hegemony. Most of the member states respected the hegemony states more than they respected Zhou Tianzi. When legitimate strategies such as "respecting Zhou Tianzi" became gradually ineffective, states tended to compete according to the principle of utilitarianism. The great powers then frequently conspired against each other and bullied the smaller powers. International society was getting worse and worse.

According to its rising pattern, the hegemony war period in the Spring and Autumn period can be divided into three stages. The first stage was mainly the Qi Huangong (齐桓公) and Jin Wengong(晋文公) periods. Their ascendant strategies were basically the same. In the Spring and Autumn period, the power transition from Qi(齐) to Jin(晋) did not directly symbolize war. Zheng Zhuanggong (郑庄公), who had defeated Zhou Tianzi, did not become the hegemon because the challenge to Zhou Tianzi's authority could not be accepted by states then. On the contrary, the humiliation of Zhou Tianzi weakened the hegemonic foundation of Zheng Zhuanggong. In fact, different from Zheng Zhuanggong(郑庄公), Qi Huangong's hegemony was based on the protection of Zhou Tianzi's legitimacy and safeguarding member states against the barbarians.

The second stage was mainly represented by Qin Mugong (秦穆公). In this stage, although the legitimacy of Zhou Tianzi still played a role, its effectiveness decreased because the power transition depended less on Zhou's legitimacy and more on the ascendant state's defeat of the former hegemony. The symbol of Qin Mugong's hegemony was the success in war with Jin (晋). At the same time, Qin expanded to the West and dominated Xirong (西戎), which was hailed by Zhou Tianzi.

The third stage was Chu's hegemony. In this stage, Zhou Tianzi's legitimacy was also neglected. After military victory, Chu Zhuangwang (楚庄王) even challenged Zhou Tianzi's authority by asking the weight of nine great tripods (九鼎), which is the symbol of the Zhou Dynasty. Hence Chu Zhuangwang's inquiry here was regarded as the signal of challenging Zhou Tianzi's legitimacy. It is clear that Chu Zhuangwang's hegemony was different from the previous leading states. While challenging the legitimacy of Zhou Tianzi, Chu sought to appease the other states to gain more international support. Unlike previous hegemonies, Chu Zhuangwang did not annex other states after military success. A case in point was

the experience of Chen (陈), who had been defeated by Chu and then recovered with the help of Chu. Therefore, in the third stage, Zhou Tianzi's legitimacy had obviously declined and the main source of hegemony legality was the recognition of other states.

It is clear that in the Spring and Autumn period, there were not many great wars in the power transition process. To achieve hegemony, a rising power needed to fulfill at least one of three requirements: victory in the hegemonic war; the supply of public goods such as security to all states; and/or legitimacy through Zhou Tianzi's recognition.

2.3.2 Warring States Period: Annex War. European states had organized six anti-Napoleonic alliances, in which Great Britain played a mainstay role by reducing the probability of defeat of European countries and funding European states who dared to take risks to join the alliance. Great Britain's behavior eventually contributed to the success of the anti-Napoleonic alliance. There is little doubt that without the consistency of Great Britain's balancing, France would have become the hegemon of Europe in the eighteenth or nineteenth century, and Germany would have become the leader of Europe in the contemporary era.[26]

However, closer analysis reveals that none of the Chinese states discussed above played as central and dominant a role as the United Kingdom played in Europe. Far from remaining passive in the face of the Qin drive to unification, the six-kingdom coalition made multiple attempts to balance. Why did these fail?

During the Warring States period, Qin, Qi, and Chu were three major powers of similar strength. Although Chu was active in organizing balancing against Qin, Qi rarely balanced Qin with Chu. From the perspective of strength, geography, and historical influence, Qi was more similar to Britain: a first-class power in strength, geographically on the edge of the mainland, and with the glory of hegemony in its history. Historically, in the early Warring States period, when the state of Wei tried to seek hegemony, the two wars of Qi besieging Wei to save Zhao and Han were classical balancing wars that successfully prevented the rise of Wei. However, in the later stage of the Warring States period, Qi was absent until finally the other five major states were destroyed by Qin.[27] Viewing the anti-Napoleonic alliance, we can see the importance of Britain in maintaining the balance of power. Hence the key to the failure of the Warring States cooperation lay in the lack of a firm counterbalance.[28]

The Qi kingdom's behavior in these coalitions was somewhat anomalous. Under kings Xuan and Min, the Qi state was aggressive in seeking to balance rising hegemons, as in the "besiege Wei to save Zhao" and "besiege Wei to save Han" campaigns, as well as its two coalitions of 298–296 BC and 287 BC. However, during the successive coalitions of the late Warring States period we find no trace of Qi. We can see that Qi state elites were not strongly threatened by the Qin process of unification. Indeed, it consistently adopted what we might term "anti-balancing" strategies. Our question therefore is, Why didn't Qi decision

makers agree to balance during the last four decades of the Qin campaign to unite the six kingdoms?

(1) The Five Kingdoms' Assaults on Qi and the Qi "Anti-balancing" Strategy: As described in the preceding analysis, we find that under the rules of the Min and Jun kings, Qi state policy underwent an enormous transformation, moving from a preference for aggressive balancing to a policy of passive neutrality. This shift is of enormous importance to the final destruction of the six kingdoms; the reasons behind it therefore merit further investigation.

If we examine closely the major events in the Qi state, from the reign of the Min king to the late reign of the Jun sovereign, one event—the most significant since the Qi state's founding—stands out: the five kingdoms' assaults on Qi. Qi was defeated by a joint force assembled by the five kingdoms (Qin, Han, Zhao, Wei, and Yan) in 284 BC and nearly destroyed. Although the Qi state managed to reconstitute itself in 279 BC, its strength was greatly compromised. It is reasonable to assume that this event formed the historical background against which the Qi adopted its policy of rigorous neutrality.

We can see, therefore, that the efforts of the six kingdoms' coalition to balancing the Qin ran aground not because the kingdoms did not attempt to balance, but because in choosing the target of their balancing, they often focused on the obvious revisionist powers, i.e., the Wei and Qi in the early Warring States period. After their strength was sapped by conflict, the Qin—their true potential threat—broke up their balancing coalition. Despite their desire to unite their strength to balance the Qin, it was no longer in their power to do so. This is the key reason why the Warring States' balancing strategy failed. Why was it, then, that in the presence of multiple rising or challenging powers, and punitive attacks on other nations by the Wei, Qi, and Qin states, that other states only exerted themselves in attempting to balancing thoroughly to Wei and Qi, but not Qin? The author believes this is due to the significant differences in the strategies and signals adopted by the Qin state during its rise, and those of Wei and Qi.

(2) Examination of Other States' Rationale for Balancing the Qin State: The Qin state rose quickly after Qi's victory over Wei; by 288 BC Qin and Qi were referred to as the "Two Lords of East and West." In reality, other states' efforts to balance Qi were contemporaneous with their balancing of Qin. Anti-Qin balancing coalitions had emerged even before efforts to balance Qi. It is readily apparent, however, that the balancing directed at Qi was backed by a good deal more force; of all the participants, the one whose attitude was most unyielding was the northern kingdom of Yan, who was seeking revenge for Qi interference in Yan internal strife. Other states seeking to balance the Qi were driven by Qi's prior behavior as well. The Qi state's Min king had continually sought to expand Qi territory, creating fear on the part of its neighboring states.

TABLE 13.1 Strategic choices by the seven warring states

Grouping Name	Date	Major Participating Powers	Major Powers Not Participating	Target of Balancing	Did Target of Balancing Violently Annex Large State?	Was Balancing Successful?
Besiege Wei Save Zhao	B.C. 353	Qi, Chu, Qin, Zhao	Han, Yan	Wei	Yes	Successful
Besiege Wei Save Han	B.C. 342	Qi, Han, Zhao, Qin	Chu, Yan	Wei	Yes	Successful
First Coalition	B.C. 318	Wei, Han, Zhao, Yan, Chu (latter two, Yan and Chu, did not contribute troops)	Qi	Qin	No	Unsuccessful
Second Coalition	B.C. 298–296	Qi, Han, Wei	Zhao, Chu, Yan	Qin	No	Successful
Third Coalition	B.C. 294–286	Han, Wei	Qi, Zhao, Chu, Yan	Qin	No	Unsuccessful
Fourth Coalition	B.C. 287	Qi, Han, Zhao, Wei, Yan	Chu	Qin	No	Successful
'Balance Qi' Coalition	B.C. 284	Qin, Han, Zhao, Wei, Yan	Chu	Qi	Yes	Successful
Fifth Coalition	B.C. 274	Qi, Wei	Han, Zhao, Yan, Chu	Qin	Yes	Unsuccessful
Sixth Coalition	B.C. 259–257	Chu, Wei, Zhao	Han, Yan, Qi	Qin	Yes	Successful
Seventh Coalition	B.C. 247	Wei, Chu, Han, Yan, Zhao	Qi	Qin	No	Successful
Eight Coalition	B.C. 241	Chu, Zhao, Wei, Han, Yan	Qi	Qin	No	Unsuccessful

Through empirical testing, the author has determined that the "balance of threat" theory can explain the emergence of balancing behavior, but cannot account for its success or failure. Perceptions of threat are subjective, and can correspond to the threat sensed by the balancer or the balancee. States must choose not only whether or not they wish to balance, but the strength of their balancing efforts as well. Whether the balancing directed toward the rising state is a mere slap on the wrist or a fierce assault derives from the balancing state's determination of the rising state's ambitions, a determination which itself is tied to contemporary international norms. If a rising power is violating fundamental international norms, the balancing efforts will be correspondingly powerful. If the rising power is circumspect in its handling of said norms, the efforts to balance will be relatively weak.

In the Warring States period, violent annexation of a major power was a violation of fundamental international norms. The deep-rooted reason for the difference between tough balancing against Wei and Qi and the relatively weak balancing against Qin lies in the baseline of international norms at that time. During the Warring States period, the international system was in Hobbes's anarchy state. Instead of seeking hegemony, countries tried to gain more territory and even eliminate other countries. Whether the goal of war was to fight for hegemony or to annex became an important feature to distinguish the Spring and Autumn period and the Warring States period.[29] The total number of states declined from hundreds in the Spring and Autumn period to seven major states and several medium-sized states in the Warring States period. The annexing of major states meant the thorough destruction of the power balance, which easily induced system collapse. Hence in the Warring States period, the taboo of international norms was that the annex war of major powers was forbidden, but the annex war of medium-sized states and the cession of cities in major powers were permitted.

The Qin state's success in uniting the six kingdoms laid not in its avoidance of balancing by other states, but rather in its strenuous efforts to avoid catastrophic balancing coalitions directed against it. In the early Warring States period, the Qin state avoided rash efforts to annex other major powers, and through its "horizontal alliance" foreign policy was able to reduce other states' perceptions of it as a threat. As the Qin state's power grew, the Wei and Qi states were both subject to successive, successful balancing efforts by other states. When the Qin state's strength had grown far beyond that of other kingdoms, it maintained an intelligent policy of allying with faraway states while attacking those nearby, reducing the readiness of the relatively distant states of Qi and Chu, and making its eventual unification of the six kingdoms a foregone conclusion.

Although Qin had experienced many instances of balancing by other major states, it retained a proper strategy of not annexing the major powers at one stroke. What's more, by using wedge strategies (lianhen "连横"), Qin also effectively prevented enemy coalitions named "合纵" (Hezhong). Additionally, to reduce the

resistance, Qin chose a new strategy named "allying distant states and attacking nearby states" (Yuanjiao Jingong远交近攻). All of the other major powers mistakenly judged the ambition of Qin. Therefore, they chose to check and balance Qi, which gave Qin a favorable opportunity to unify China at last. After Qi has been defeated completely, Qin naturally became the strongest power and began to show its ambition.[30]

The result is that in 221 BC Qin unified China. It is clear that the reason why the other six states could not resist Qin firmly was that they did not realize the threat of Qin. In the period of Qin's strength accumulation, Qin only sought cession of territory from the defeated, which did not break through the psychological bottom line of each state because Qin at that time did not choose to seek annexation of all major powers. At last, when Qin's strength was supreme to all of the other states, it adopted the new strategy of "allying distant states and attacking nearby states" (Yuanjiao Jingong远交近攻), which also reduced the threat perception of major states who were farther away. In the end, the unification process went smoothly.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

This study has sought to determine the deep-rooted reasons for China's long-lasting wars in the SAWS periods and the unification under the Qin Dynasty when compared to the long-term divisions of Europe. Through historical analysis, we can explain the peculiarity of ancient China from three perspectives. First, at the interstate level, the norm degradation and the loss of Zhou Tianzi's legitimacy can explain the tangled warfare in this period and the unification by Qin, which was the strongest state then and defeated all the other strong powers. Second, at the unit level, national reform resulted into a Hobbesian anarchy in which every state fought with other states. Third, the diplomatic and military strategy of each state from hegemony war to annex war triggered fierce struggles, and only the winner can survive in such a system.

The empirical study of ancient China provides new findings that the balancing theory from threat perception can explain part of the reason for the occurrence of balances, but cannot explain the success or failure of the balances. Whether the balancing states choose to punish the rising state slightly or fiercely depends largely on their judgment of the rising country's ambition, which is based on the degree to which the rising state violated the then-current international norms. The rising state who challenged the bottom line of international norms would face severe punishment. However, those who acted cautiously within the international norms would face lighter punishment. Compared with other rising states such as Wei and Qi in the Warring States period, the success of Qin's unification of China lies not in Qin's avoidance of containment but its escape of fatal balancing by other major powers.

The roots of success, however, also contained within them the beginnings of failure. Qin's success relied heavily on strategy, by reducing the other major powers' perception of fear. But the end of the Qin Dynasty was attributed to its overemphasis on strategy and relative neglect of morality. Strategy and intelligence helped Qin defeat its enemies, but the lack of morality did not help Qin win the support of the people, so it soon lost the world.

The end of the six other major states was not due to Qin but to themselves. The key reason lay in the degradation of international norms and their abandonment of benevolent rule in domestic governance. In the Warring States period, the princes overlooked the importance of morality and tried their best to expand territory. Therefore, the key reason why the six states could not unite was that they competed against each other for land. After relinquishing land to Qin, they often had to make up for it by taking land from other states, and the weaker states defeated by Qin also could become the targets of other major powers. For example, in 251 BC, after Zhao fought with Qin in the Changping (长平) War and the defensive war of Handan (邯郸), Yan also attacked Zhao to acquire territory. The reason why the six states could not unite with each other, and instead were eager to seek advantage through fraud, lay deep in the degeneration of international norms and the collapse of rites. Without moral restraint, states competed against each other and sought to conquer each other.

Although the events of the SAWS periods took place in the distant past, we can learn from the history. The traditional Western international relations theories, although sometimes using cases from Asian history, most often concentrated on European and American histories. In recent years, the rise of China and the rapid development of India should arouse widespread reflection among scholars that the rediscovery of Eastern Asian history may challenge current Western IR theory.[31] For example, in Chinese history, in addition to the end of the Warring States period and the unification of the Qin Dynasty, there was also a long Confucian peace during the tributary system. What's more, India also has political thoughts and philosophies that are quite different from Western thoughts and will provide us new insights into solving problems in today's world. According to the analysis of the pre-Qin period, we can see the importance of international norms and morality. Therefore, in order to maintain world peace, major powers should not overemphasize tactics and power, but should stress the importance of morality. Benevolent government is required of leaders not only due to domestic demand, but it is the sine qua non for an international society.

NOTES

1. Victoria Tin-bor Hui, *Zhanzheng yu guojia xingcheng: Chunqiu zhanguo yu jindai zaoqi ouzhou zhi bijiao* [War and state formation: A comparison of the Spring-Autumn Warring States Period and Early Modern Europe], 1.

2. Hui points out: "In a policy of 'reform from strength', destroying one's enemies in detail and deploying underhanded stratagems hugely amplifies coercive strength and reduces the costs of war. If a hegemon can increase its military and economic strength and endeavour to face its adversaries singly, while ensuring victory on the battlefield and using the spoils of war to sustain its military machine, then the results of opportunistic expansion may come to resemble a snowball, growing ever larger until unification is achieved. Conversely, if a hegemon employs 'reform from weakness', failing to use all the means at its disposal to support a strategy of divide and conquer, and failing to be sufficiently Machiavellian in its tactics, then its invasions will become more difficult to sustain, and the system may endure." Victoria Tin-bor Hui, *Zhanzheng yu guojia xingcheng: Chunqiu zhanguo yu jindai zaoqi ouzhou zhi bijiao* [War and state formation: A comparison of the Spring-Autumn Warring States Period and Early Modern Europe], 25–26.

3. Dingxiang Zhao, *Dongzhou zhanzheng yu rufa guojia de yansheng* [The wars of the Eastern Zhou and the birth of the Confucian state], 190.

4. Ibid., 195–96.

5. Jorgren Moller, "Why Europe Avoided Hegemony: A Historical Perspective on the Balance of Power," *International Studies Quarterly* 58 (2014): 660–70.

6. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 123–28.

7. Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 8, 29–33, 148–52.

8. Ibid., 22–24; see also Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of Power," *International Security* 9, no. 4 (Spring 1985): 9–12.

9. Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security* 19, no.1 (Summer 1994), 87–88; Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), chap. 1.

10. Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances*.

11. Si Maguang has said that since the destruction of the king's legitimacy, the states were entrapped in prolonged wars with each other; see Si Maguang, *zizhi tongjian*, "zhouji yi". 司马光说道："呜呼！君臣之礼既坏矣，则天下以智力相雄长，遂使圣贤之后为诸侯者，社稷无不泯绝，生民之类糜灭几尽，岂不哀哉！" ，司马光：《资治通鉴·周纪一》。

12. Zuo Qiuming, *Zuo Zhuan*, "Huanggong Ernian" "故天子建国，诸侯立家，卿置侧室，大夫有贰宗，士有隶子弟，庶人、工、商，各有分亲，皆有等衰。"（左丘明：《左传》"桓公二年"）。

13. Guan Donggui, *Cong zongfa fengjianzhi dao huangdi junxianzhi de yanbian: Yi xueyuan jieniu wei mailuo* (Beijing: zhonghua shuju, 2010), 34. 管东贵：《从宗法封建制到皇帝郡县制的演变——以血缘解纽为脉络》, 北京：中华书局, 2010年, 第34页。

14. Yaqing Qin, "Rule, Rules, and Relations: Towards a Synthetic Approach to Governance," *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 4, no. 2 (2011): 117–45. Yongjin Zhang, "System, Empire and State in Chinese International Relations," in *Empires, Systems and States: Great Transformations in International Politics*, ed. Michael Cox et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 43–63; David C. Kang, *East Asia before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute* (Cambridge: Columbia University Press, 2010); Yuan-Kang Wang, *Harmony and War: Confucian Culture and Chinese Power Politics* (Cambridge: Columbia University Press, 2011); Yongjin Zhang and Barry Buzan, "The Tributary System as International Society in Theory and Practice," *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 5, no. 1 (2012): 3–36.

15. Chen zhen, "Chunqiu huaxia zhixu wajie yu guoji shehui tuihua jizhi," *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* 2 (2015): 41–64. 陈拯：《春秋华夏秩序瓦解与国际社会退化机制》,《世界经济与政治》，2015年第2期。第41–64页。

16. Gu Yanwu, *rizhilu*, "zhoumo fengshu". 顾亭林指出："春秋时犹严祭祀，重聘享，而七国则无其事矣！春秋时犹论宗姓氏族，而七国则无一言及之矣！邦无完交，士无完主，此皆变

于一百三十三年之间，史之阙文，而后人可以意推者也，不得始皇之并天下，而文武之道尽矣。”，参见顾炎武：《*日知录*》卷十三《周末风俗》。

17. Han Feizi, “Wu du” 韩非子指出：“上古竞於道德，中世逐於智谋，当今争於气力。”《韩非子·五蠹》。

18. Si Maqian, *Shiji* “qin benji”. 司马迁：《史记·秦本纪》。

19. *The Analects of Confucius*, “Ji Shi Pian” 孔子曰：“天下有道，则礼乐征伐自天子出；天下无道，则礼乐征伐自诸侯出。《论语》“季氏篇”。

20. Stephen van Evera, “Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War,” *International Security* 22, no. 4 (Spring 1998): 5–43.

21. *Yijing, “Wenyan, Kun*”《易经·文言传·坤》：“臣弑其君，子弑其父，非一朝一夕之故，其所由来者渐矣。由辩之不早辩也。”

22. Zhao dingxin, Dongzhou zhanzheng yurufa guojia de dansheng, Shanghai sanlian shudian (2006), 102–3. 赵鼎新：《东周战争与儒法国家的诞生》，上海，华东师范大学出版社，上海三联书店，2006年，第102–103页。

23. 孟子曰：“今之大夫，今之诸侯之罪人也”，《孟子》“告子章句下”。

24. *Lunyu* “yaoyue”, *zhongyong* “zhangju”，“兴灭国，继绝世，举逸民，天下之民归心焉”(《论语·尧曰》)“继绝世，举废国，治乱持危，朝聘以时，厚往而薄来，所以怀诸侯也”(《中庸·章句》)

25. For example, Song Xianggong obeyed the norms of war even when fighting with the Chu state, and did not have regrets even though the result of obeying the norms was failure in the war. Si Maqian, *Shiji “Song Weizi Shijia*”（宋襄）公曰：“君子不困人於阨，不鼓不成列。”参见司马迁：《史记·宋微子世家》。

26. Daniel J. Whiteneck, “Long-term Bandwagoning and Short-term Balancing: The Lessons of Coalition Behaviour from 1792 to 1815,” *Review of International Studies* 27, no. 2 (2001): 151–68.

27. Gu Zuyu sighed: “I feel sorry for the Tian family of Qi because he tied up his hands and was captured by Qin when the five kingdoms were destroyed.” Gu Zuyu, *Summary of Fangyu in History Reading* “preface to Summary of Fangyu in Shandong Province.” 顾祖禹：《读史方舆纪要》“山东方舆纪要序”。“吾尝慨夫齐之田氏，席霸国之余业，不能于纵横之日，发愤为雄。及五国既灭，王贲东下，遂束手而臣虏于秦也。”

28. Su Xun pointed out: “The reason why Qi was at last occupied by Qin although Qi did not bribe Qin by cession of territory lies in the fact that Qi has chosen to bandwagon on the side of Qin but not other five states.” 苏洵：《六国论》。“齐人未尝赂秦，终继五国迁灭，何哉？与嬴而不助五国也。”

29. Zhao Dingxin, *The War of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty and the Birth of Confucianism and Legalism*, 102–3. 赵鼎新：《东周战争与儒法国家的诞生》，第102–3页。Yang Kuan: *History of the Warring States Period*, 1–2. 杨宽：《战国史》，第1–2页。

30. Yang Kuan, *History of the Warring States Period*, 158. 杨宽：《战国史》，第158页。

31. Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).