With China's salient rise onto the world stage in recent years, many people are concerned whether China will overturn or integrate into the existing international order. According to Professor Wang Jisi of the School of International Studies at Peking University and a Global Scholar of Princeton University, overturning this order is neither desirable nor practical for China since China has been a great beneficiary of this world order for the past three decades. Wang does not anticipate any dramatic change in the global power structure and balance in the next decade or so. He calls on China and the U.S. to accommodate and cooperate with each other to improve the world system.

Wang first delineates the international order today, analyses how China and the U.S. view the world differently, and then articulates China's desires of how to improve this order. Wang believes that despite the immense political challenges inside both countries, a tacit understanding between them is achievable, by which the U.S. respects China's internal order maintained by the communist party, while China respects the existing international order maintained and advocated by the U.S.

Wang would not characterize today's world as unipolar, bipolar or multi-polar, but prefers a more descriptive account of a few categories of countries. The U.S. is in its own category. In spite of its declining share of the world GDP, the U.S. still has a decisive edge over all other countries through its military, economic and cultural influences. But the 2008 financial crisis and two protracted wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have turned the U.S. inward looking. China and the EU are in the second category. China's foreign policy has become more proactive and China is a regional power in Asia, growing faster than any other major country. The EU has the largest single market in the world and the largest GDP if all 28 member states are counted together. Japan, Russia and India are in the third category. Several more countries are in the fourth category. Wang labels this division by the number of countries in each category: "one, two, three and multiple." To Wang, the world has become more fragmented. The slogan of the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing - "One World, One Dream" - is more of an aspiration than reality.

How does China view this world? China divides it into developing countries and developed countries, and identifies itself as a developing country. In comparison, the U.S. sees the world as democracies versus non-democracies. Whereas China views India as the second largest developing country, next only to China, the U.S. views India as the largest democracy in the world. In cases of discord with India, China typically blames the U.S. for driving a wedge between these two developing countries. China tends to think along this line when it has tension with other countries.
China feels that its history of benevolent and harmonious relations with the rest of the world, as epitomized by the ancient Silk Road, is seriously under appreciated by the West, whose own history with foreign countries is tainted with confrontation, violence and colonization. Now China wants to build upon the legacy of the Silk Road, under the label of "One Belt and One Road" (Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road), to reach out to Europe, South Asia and Africa, linking dozens of countries along the way economically and technologically. This initiative will have a far-reaching strategic significance for China and the world.

China feels that it does not have enough say in the existing international organizations, particularly in the World Bank and the IMF, commensurate with its status. China considers the U.S. as the principal barrier to more structural reforms of these institutions. With its vast foreign reserves, China is creating its own international institutions, like the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIID) and the BRICS bank (consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). China expects these institutions to amplify China's voice on international economic issues and facilitate the internationalization of the RMB, shaking the dollar's domination of the world.

In the political arena, China resists any foreign interference in its domestic affairs and any democracy promotion. The Chinese point out that most failed states are those that introduced western-style democracies and heeded western admonitions. China accuses the foreign policies of western countries for being "ideologically biased." China sees the U.S. security alliances with Japan and other countries in Asia as part of a grand strategy to prevent China from becoming more powerful.

Despite these complaints, China's official attitude on the international order has changed since 2011. Instead of seeking "a new international order," China tries to make the existing order more "just and rational." China promotes democracy and rule of law in global governance, since these principles are important in safeguarding the rights and interests of developing countries, of which China identifies itself as a member. In this context, China frames the role of the AIID as an improvement of the existing international order.

There are legitimate reasons to doubt this benign picture. Nationalism can assert itself inside China, manifest in its foreign relations and embolden Chinese military. Similarly an economic stagnation coupled environmental degradation can turn Chinese grievances against the West. Wang admits that the tension between China's desire of maintaining authoritarianism domestically and seeking a liberal democratic order abroad can become acute in the future.

Wang anticipates some competition between China's and the U.S. versions of international order in a wide range of areas. But the most urgent problem for the world, according to Wang, is not to choose which or whose international order to follow but to avoid disorder, currently prevailing in many parts of the world. To this end, a stronger
China, a stronger U.S., a stronger Russia and many other countries are much better than weaker countries.

Looking to the future, Wang calls for mutual accommodation of both countries and strengthening cooperation on global governance issues. China should act as a bridge between the developing and the developed world, whereas the U.S. should view the world beyond a simple dichotomy of democracies versus non-democracies, since the world is so complex. Both countries should focus on the larger picture of the world's challenges rather than their own narrow interests, and work together to enhance the international order.