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# Power Transition Theory and Interstate Conflicts in the Chunqiu Era: An International Relations Perspective on Hegemony

Shitao Chen\*

*Master, Graduate School of International Studies, Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea, 03722*

*Email: [chen992023@163.com](mailto:chen992023@163.com)*

*ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-7803-5245>*

Lin Yu

*Master, Graduate School of International Studies, Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea, 03722*

*Email: [yulin2245@gmail.com](mailto:yulin2245@gmail.com)*

*ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5095-1268>*

Yicheng Yuan

*Master, Graduate School of International Studies, Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea, 03722*

*Email: [2022462192@yonsei.ac.kr](mailto:2022462192@yonsei.ac.kr)*

*ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-4802-9498>*

*\*Corresponding author Email: [chen992023@163.com](mailto:chen992023@163.com)*

## Abstract

### Key words:

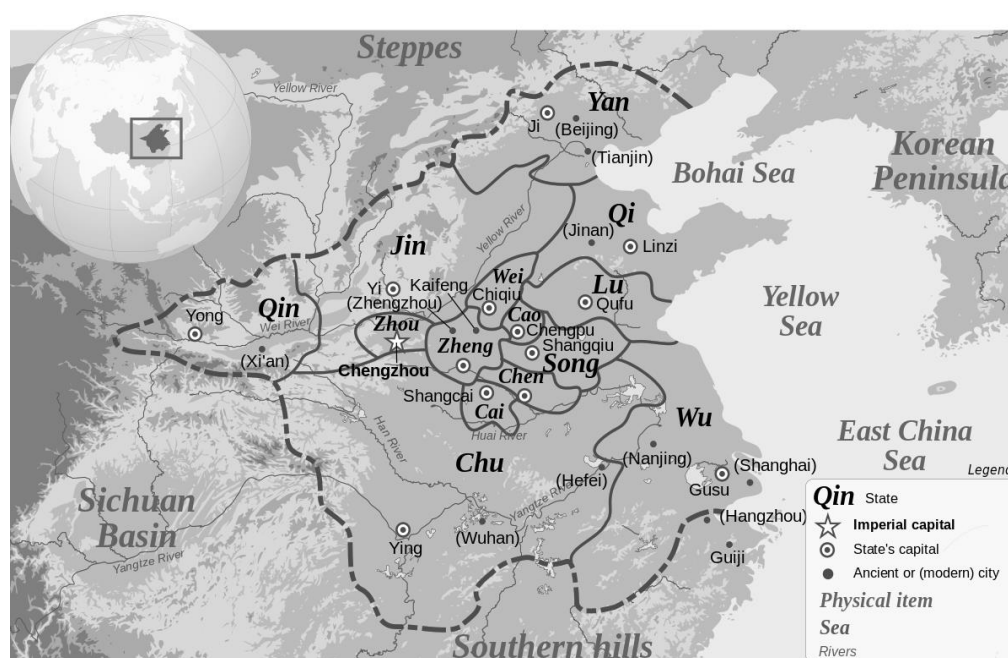
*Chunqiu Era, Hegemony, International Relations Theory, Power Transition, Interdisciplinary Analysis, Ancient Chinese History*

*This research examines the Chunqiu Era, also known as the Spring and Autumn Period, which occurred in ancient China from 770 to 476 BCE. The objective is to analyse this historical period within the framework of contemporary international relations (IR) theory. The primary objective of this research is two-fold: firstly, to examine the application of International Relations (IR) theories, specifically Power Transition Theory and Hegemonic Dynamics, within the context of ancient history; and secondly, to promote an interdisciplinary methodology that integrates archaeological, geographical, and philosophical perspectives in the analysis of this particular time period. The present study utilises an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating historical analysis, archaeological evidence, geographical data, and philosophical perspectives. This study examines the historical records and archaeological discoveries of the Chunqiu Era, employing Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to analyse various geographical aspects. Through the analysis of concurrent occurrences in adjacent civilizations and the integration of perspectives from other academic fields, this study aims to develop a holistic comprehension of the international relations during the Chunqiu Era. The study reveals the continuing significance of modern International Relations theories when applied to the Chunqiu Era, exposing recurring patterns of power shifts, challenges to hegemony, and diplomatic strategies. This statement underscores the significance of taking into account cultural, geographical, and temporal intricacies while modifying international relations theories to suit ancient circumstances. Furthermore, the research highlights the importance of incorporating multidisciplinary and cross-cultural studies to enhance the understanding of historical events. The research findings have far-reaching ramifications for both the academic community and society as a whole. This highlights the versatility of IR theories in accommodating various historical contexts, hence promoting their wider utilisation. Interdisciplinary techniques can offer valuable contributions to future research endeavours by augmenting historical study and fostering a deeper comprehension of interconnection. The present study contributes to the advancement of knowledge in the field of ancient Chinese history and underscores the need of incorporating multiple cultural viewpoints in the pursuit of historical research.*

## Introduction

The academic fields of history and international relations have traditionally been considered separate disciplines, characterised by their respective techniques, theories, and temporal orientations. The discipline of international relations theory has conventionally focused on the politics of present nation-states, whereas the field of history dives into the complexities of ancient periods, examining the intricate tales of civilizations that have long ceased to exist (Kavalski, 2022; Liao, 2014). Nevertheless, it is important to note that the demarcations between different disciplines may not be as rigid as they initially seem (Kavalski,

2022). Hence, this study examines the characteristics of power, diplomacy, and war in historical periods significantly distant from the present by investigating the intersection of international relations theory and ancient history. This study undertakes such an exploration, focusing on the historical period known as the Chunqiu Era in ancient China (770-476 BCE), with the aim of utilising international relations theory (Knutson, 2020; MacKay & LaRoche, 2021) to shed light on the significant aspects of this era in Chinese history.



**Figure 1:** The Chunqiu Era

The Chunqiu Era holds a unique and significant position within the extensive fabric of Chinese history. Situated amidst the tumultuous Western Zhou Dynasty and the disorderly Warring States Period, it functions as a link that connects two significant eras (Confucius, c. 551-479 BCE; Boorman & Sun, 2023). The historical period under consideration was characterised by significant changes and a condition of political instability. During this time, there was a progressive breakdown of the centralised authority of the Zhou Dynasty, accompanied by the emergence of influential regional states (Musabelliu, 2017; Zhu, 2022). Although the Chunqiu Era has garnered interest from historians, there has been a limited amount of comprehensive analysis of this time from the perspective of international relations theory (Laifr, 2019; Zhang, 2020). The objective of this study is to address the existing gap in academic literature by shedding light on the previously unexplored aspects of interstate rivalry, power changes, and diplomatic subtleties during the Chunqiu Era.

This study aims to accomplish two interconnected goals at its fundamental level. The primary objective of this study is to employ current international relations theory in analysing the historical period known as the Chunqiu age. By doing so, it seeks to demonstrate how existing theoretical frameworks may be effectively modified to comprehend the complexities

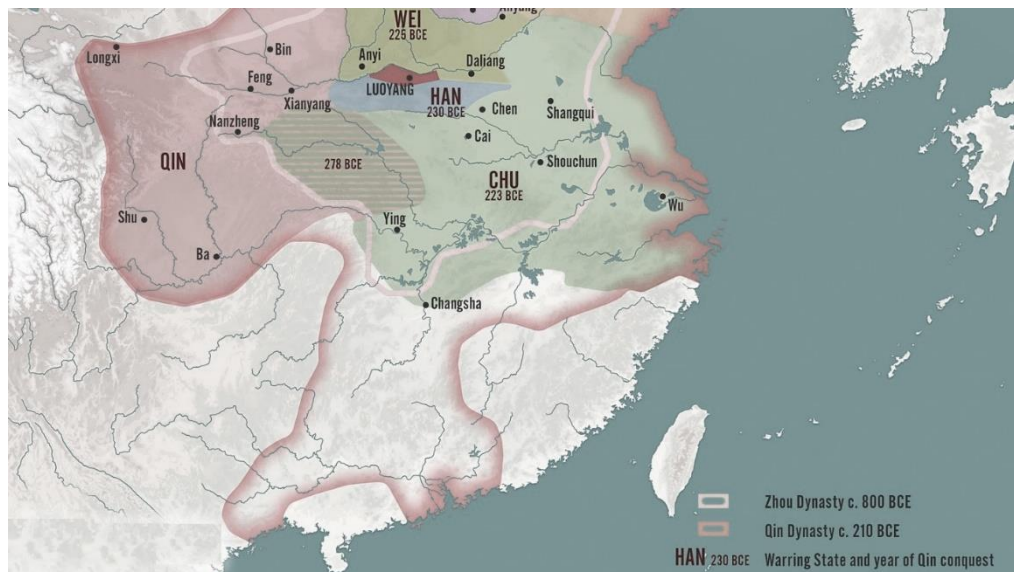
of an ancient age (Heine, 2021). The motivation behind this undertaking stems from the acknowledgment that specific principles and patterns observed in the realm of international relations, such as power shifts and hegemonic dynamics, may extend beyond the temporal divisions that separate the contemporary age from ancient times (Behera, 2021; Qian, 2017). Through an examination of the relevance of these theoretical frameworks to the Chunqiu Era, we begin onto an intellectual exploration aimed at revealing the enduring dynamics of power, competition, and diplomatic relations in ancient China. This undertaking not only enhances our comprehension of the Chunqiu Era (Zhu, 2021), but also broadens the scope of international relations theory by examining its applicability in various historical contexts.

Second, this study supports an interdisciplinary approach while recognising the Chunqiu Era's complexity (Wei, 2022). The parameters of this epoch extend beyond solely historical literature and incorporate a wider range of substantiation, such as archaeological discoveries, geographical factors, and philosophical lineages (Zhou & Feng, 2023). Acknowledging the significance of these varied sources, the present study aims to integrate a complex array of knowledge, synthesising insights from disciplines such as history, archaeology, geography, and international politics. The integration of many disciplines in this study holds the potential to generate an exhaustive understanding of the international relations during the Chunqiu Era's international relations, offering a nuanced viewpoint that transcends beyond the constraints of individual disciplines (Wang, 2020). In doing so, it not only enhances our understanding of this antiquated period but also establishes a standard for forthcoming investigations at the intersection of historical studies and international affairs.

## Literature Review

The Chunqiu Era, alternatively referred to as the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BCE), is a significant epoch in the history of ancient China marked by a decentralised political structure and recurrent interstate hostilities (Wang, 2020) (refer to Figure 2). Although there has been significant scholarly exploration of this historical epoch, limited emphasis has been devoted to its analysis from the perspective of International Relations (IR) theory, namely the Power Transition Theory (Li, 2022). The aforementioned thesis, formulated during the 20th century, proposes that the emergence of a dominant power contesting an established hegemonic power frequently results in heightened levels of interstate tensions and conflicts (Lee, 2022). The application of this theory to the Chunqiu Era presents a novel vantage point from which to analyse the power dynamics and interstate conflicts that played a significant role in shaping this pivotal period in Chinese history. The Chunqiu Era has typically been the subject of scholarly examination largely from a historical and sociological perspective (Fan, 2022). The scholars have examined the philosophical progressions of Legalism and Confucianism, the complexities of statecraft,

and the transformation of political institutions in China throughout this era. Although the aforementioned studies offer significant contributions to our understanding of the intellectual and cultural facets of the time period, they tend to neglect the geopolitical elements and the potential ramifications of power changes on interstate relations (Grachikov, 2019). This research aims to enhance our comprehension of the interstate conflicts during the Chunqiu Era by integrating historical studies with International Relations theory, thereby exploring the impact of power transfers and hegemonic challenges (Carrai, 2020). Moreover, this research is in line with wider discussions in the discipline of International Relations, namely on the suitability of Western IR theories in non-Western historical settings (Li, 2022). Through an analysis of the Chunqiu Era utilising the Power Transition Theory, our objective is to make an intellectual contribution to the continuing discourse surrounding the applicability and versatility of international relations theories across diverse temporal and geographical contexts. The research of Hou and Fu (2021) not only contributes to the understanding of a relatively unexplored period in ancient Chinese history but also provides a distinctive viewpoint on the mechanisms of power shifts and conflicts between states. Consequently, this study serves as a significant and valuable contribution to the interdisciplinary dialogue between the fields of history and International Relations.



**Figure 2:** States in the Chunqiu Era

### Power Transition and Hegemonic Dynamics

The subject of power shift and hegemonic dynamics has received considerable scholarly interest within the discipline of International Relations throughout the last century (Yu, 2023). The notion of hegemony and its correlation with power transfers has been thoroughly examined by scholars such as A.F.K. Organski and Robert Gilpin (Gokcekuyu, 2023). One example of a theoretical framework that explores the dynamics of power transitions is Organski's Power Transition Theory. According to this

theory, when a rising power challenges the established dominance of a hegemonic power, it creates a heightened potential for conflict within the international system (Turner & Nymalm, 2019). The theory outlined above, which can be traced back to Thucydides' influential study on the Peloponnesian War, offers a compelling conceptual framework for understanding the complexities of power transitions and its implications for global stability (Zhang, 2019). Gilpin's scholarly work builds upon the previously indicated foundation, with a specific focus on the importance of economic and technological factors in shaping the rise and fall of great nations (Lobo-Fernandes, 2021). This research aims to provide a scholarly contribution to the ongoing discourse on power shift and hegemonic dynamics by relying upon the works of renowned scholars. Specifically, it seeks to apply their views to the historical context of the Chunqiu Era in ancient China.

The Chunqiu Era presents a compelling subject for analysts to explore power transition and hegemonic dynamics within the historical framework of ancient China (Zhang, 2019). During this particular era, there was a noticeable reduction in the hegemonic influence of the Western Zhou Dynasty, accompanied by the rise of other regional powers competing for supremacy (Lobo-Fernandes, 2021). The utilisation of concepts and frameworks originating from Western international relations theories in the context of this historical backdrop offers a valuable prospect for investigating the universality of these theories and their applicability in non-Western environments (Turner & Nymalm, 2019). This study aims to get a nuanced understanding of power changes in a pre-modern society and their impact on interstate relations by examining the dynamics of power struggles, alliances, and wars during this era (Yu, 2023). The present historical approach holds the potential to enhance our understanding of ancient China, while also offering vital contributions to the wider theoretical discussions pertaining to power transitions and hegemonic processes within the realm of international politics.

### **Interstate Conflicts during the Chunqiu Era**

The Chunqiu Era, commonly known as the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BCE), is recognised as a significant historical period marked by complex inter-state warfare in ancient China (Baraibar & Deutsch, 2023). While the era has garnered attention from historians, a comprehensive examination of these conflicts from an International Relations perspective has been relatively sparse (Vogel, 2022). The examination of interstate conflicts during the Chunqiu Era carries considerable importance in providing insights into the intricacies of political rivalry, diplomatic relations, and military engagements amidst a period characterised by evolving power dynamics (Akduman, 2022). Furthermore, it provides an opportunity to establish a correlation between historical tales and contemporary concepts in the field of International Relations, so augmenting our understanding of the evolution of geopolitical tensions and conflicts within various historical contexts (Lee, 2022).

Scholars have traditionally analysed interstate conflicts during the Chunqiu Era by relying on classical Chinese historical records, particularly the "Zuo Zhuan" ([Chronicles of Zuo; Wu, 2023](#)). The present text provides in-depth accounts on the political and military events of the specified era ([Akduman, 2022](#)). These stories provide significant perspectives on the underlying reasons, tactics, and results of hostilities between nations. Nevertheless, it is not uncommon for these individuals to exhibit a deficiency in terms of analytical frameworks and theoretical viewpoints that are commonly offered by contemporary International Relations, as noted by [Vogel \(2022\)](#). This study seeks to analyse the underlying dynamics of interstate conflicts during the Chunqiu Era by combining historical narratives with contemporary International Relations theories. It aims to explore the impact of power transitions, alliance formation, and diplomacy on the outcomes of these conflicts ([Wu, 2023](#)). By engaging in this endeavour, it not only enhances our comprehension of ancient Chinese history but also adds to the wider domain of International Relations by presenting a distinctive historical case study for the purpose of evaluating and enhancing current theoretical frameworks.

### **Application of International Relations Theory to Ancient History**

The utilisation of International Relations (IR) theory in the context of ancient history is an emerging area of interdisciplinary study that aims to establish connections between modern theories of international politics and historical accounts ([Rosenboim & Hartnett, 2021](#)). The aforementioned perspective recognises the significance of well-established paradigms in International Relations, namely Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism, when it comes to comprehending the intricacies of ancient civilizations and their engagements ([Simangan, 2020](#)). The work presented by [Abdeljaber et al. \(2021\)](#) and [Pines \(2023\)](#) encourages scholars to critically reassess the efficacy and flexibility of international relations theories in many historical contexts. Researchers seek to get a deeper understanding of diplomacy, war, and statecraft in ancient history by employing IR theory. This approach not only allows for the exploration of historical intricacies, but also contributes to the current discussions regarding the applicability of IR frameworks across different contexts ([Fan, 2022](#)).

The application of contemporary International Relations (IR) theory to ancient history has been acknowledged by historians and IR researchers ([Grachikov, 2019; Patalakh, 2016](#)). An illustration of this can be found in the examination of power transitions, a fundamental topic within the field of International Relations (IR), which can provide insights into the historical dynamics of the rise and fall of ancient empires. Furthermore, the analysis of hegemonic dynamics in historical contexts offers novel insights into the struggle for supremacy among early societies ([Meng & Zeng, 2023](#)). The utilisation of IR theory in the context of ancient history facilitates the possibility of conducting comparative examinations spanning many historical periods. This approach enables scholars to establish connections between international relations in ancient times and

contemporary times (Li, 2022). As the interdisciplinary approach gets traction, it not only enriches our awareness of ancient societies but also cultivates a more comprehensive understanding of the enduring principles that govern human relationships on a global scale, surpassing historical limitations.

### **Cross-Cultural and Interdisciplinary Analysis**

The utilisation of cross-cultural and interdisciplinary analysis is an essential methodology in current scholarly investigations, especially when investigating historical subjects like the Chunqiu Era in ancient China through the lens of International Relations theory (Duan et al., 2023). According to Yujia (2023), this approach promotes the integration of diverse academic fields and cultural contexts in order to attain an in-depth understanding of historical phenomena. Researchers can expand their perspectives and incorporate many opinions and methods into their investigations by employing an interdisciplinary approach (Ling, 2020). Within the framework of the Chunqiu Era, this entails not alone capitalising on insights derived from the discipline of International Relations, but also integrating components from disciplines including as archaeology, anthropology, linguistics, and ancient texts (Liao & Xia, 2023). The utilisation of a multidimensional strategy enhances the study endeavour by offering a more comprehensive framework for the interpretation of historical occurrences, societal conventions, and global exchanges (Yuan, 2021).

In addition, the utilisation of cross-cultural analysis assumes a critical function in establishing connections between diverse historical narratives and cultivating a comprehensive global outlook (Luo, 2022). The examination of the Chunqiu Era affords scholars the opportunity to investigate the era's international relations in the wider framework of world history encompassing power shifts and conflicts between states (Yujia, 2023). Through the process of comparing and contrasting the Chunqiu Era with concurrent occurrences in other areas or time periods, researchers are able to identify shared patterns, distinctions, and distinctive elements that influenced the dynamics of this era (Duan et al., 2023; Luo, 2022). The utilisation of cross-cultural and interdisciplinary analysis facilitates a more intricate, all-encompassing, and culturally perceptive comprehension of the international relations during the Chunqiu Era. This approach surpasses temporal and spatial limitations, so contributing to the development of a more extensive historical understanding.

### **Methodology**

The research methodology utilised in this study incorporates archaeological research methods in conjunction with Geographic Information System (GIS) technology, specifically employing ArcMap 10.7.1 and ArcGlobe 10.7.1 software. The main purpose of employing these tools was to perform a spatial and temporal examination of the

archaeological data pertaining to the Chunqiu Era. The specific aim was to investigate the suitability of the Power Transition Theory and its connection to interstate conflicts during this particular historical epoch. During the preliminary stage of the study, a comprehensive collection of archaeological data related to the Chunqiu Era was obtained from many sources, such as excavation reports, historical records, and pre-existing archaeological databases. The dataset contained data pertaining to historical settlements, fortresses, trade routes, and other geographically significant features. Following this, the utilisation of ArcMap was employed to generate a complete Geographic Information System (GIS) database that effectively combined the aforementioned archaeological data with geographical and topographical data. The utilisation of this integrated information provided the fundamental basis for conducting spatial analysis, facilitating the identification of significant geographical characteristics that potentially impacted the distribution of power and the prevalence of interstate conflicts in the Chunqiu Era.

Utilising ArcGlobe 10.7.1, the study expanded its investigation into the domain of three-dimensionality, facilitating a heightened level of engagement in the examination of historical landscapes and their potential influence on power dynamics and wars. The utilisation of the software's advanced 3D visualisation features facilitated a comprehensive analysis of topography, natural obstacles, and closeness to essential assets, hence providing significant discernment into the strategic factors that influenced ancient civilizations. The objective of this research was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the geopolitical landscape during the Chunqiu Era by integrating archaeological findings with GIS technology. This approach attempted to illuminate the ways in which geographical factors influenced power shifts and interstate conflicts. The utilisation of an interdisciplinary methodology that combines archaeology and GIS presents a strong and comprehensive framework for investigating historical dynamics within an ancient setting. This approach significantly enhances our understanding of foreign interactions during a crucial period in ancient China.

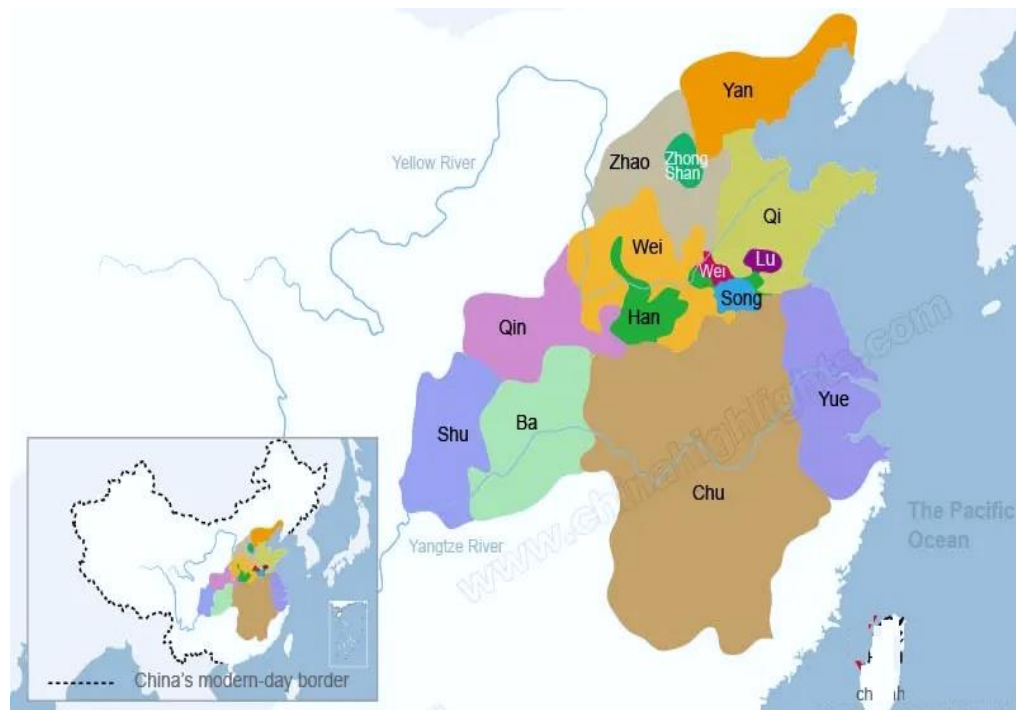
## **Analysis and Results**

The findings of this research are presented below given four sections to provide more comprehensive understanding.

### **Power Transition and Hegemonic Dynamics**

The examination of this study pertaining to Power Transition and Hegemonic Dynamics during the Chunqiu Era demonstrates a sophisticated comprehension of the manner in which ancient China underwent power transitions and the subsequent consequences for interstate relationships. The utilisation of Power Transition Theory, which originates from the field of contemporary International Relations, offers a distinctive perspective for examining the historical story of this particular period. The study examines several cases in which emerging regional

powers have contested the dominant hegemonic power, resulting in increased levels of tension and interstate confrontations. The work enhances our comprehension of the geopolitical scene during the Chunqiu Era by employing GIS technology to map power transfers and their associated outcomes. A noteworthy discovery of this study entails the recognition of patterns that are consistent with Power Transition Theory. The emergence of regional powers, often characterised by military expansion and the acquisition of territory, frequently resulted in conflicts with the established hegemonic state, typically the Zhou Dynasty. Consequently, a discernible pattern emerged whereby power battles, resource competition, and the formation of alliances were prevalent as a response to the growing influence. The aforementioned results highlight the persistent relevance of Power Transition Theory, especially when applied to historical contexts that are non-modern and non-Western (refer to [Figure 3](#)).



**Figure 3:** Warring States period and involved states.

Moreover, the study emphasises the complex interaction between geopolitical variables and the dynamics of power shifts. The power dynamics of the Chunqiu Era were significantly influenced by geographic factors, including the existence of natural obstacles, the accessibility of resources, and the structuring of ancient communities. The application of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology facilitated a more thorough examination of these variables, elucidating the impact of geographical elements on the practise of statecraft and the dynamics of hegemonic power. This study highlights the significant impact of power transition and hegemonic dynamics on the development of interstate conflicts during the Chunqiu Era. Furthermore, it showcases the applicability of International Relations theories in analysing historical eras, as evidenced by the findings presented in [Table 1](#).

**Table 1:** Aspect of Power Transition

Aspect of Power Transition	Key Findings
Rise of Regional Powers	The Chunqiu Era witnessed the emergence of several regional powers, such as Jin, Chu, and Qi, challenging the hegemonic authority of the Zhou Dynasty.
Power Transition Dynamics	Power transitions often resulted in increased interstate tensions, as rising powers sought to expand their influence and assert their dominance. Existing hegemonies, like the Zhou Dynasty, faced challenges to their authority and struggled to maintain control over their vassal states.
Alliance Formation	To counteract rising regional powers, smaller states frequently formed alliances with one another or sought protection from neighboring hegemonies. These alliances were often driven by a desire to maintain a balance of power and prevent any single state from achieving unchecked dominance.
Role of Geography	Geographical factors, including natural barriers like mountains and rivers, influenced the strategies and territorial ambitions of states. Proximity to vital resources, such as arable land and trade routes, played a crucial role in the power dynamics of the era.
Temporal Patterns	Power transitions and challenges to hegemony occurred cyclically throughout the Chunqiu Era, with multiple instances of rising and falling powers.
Application of Power Transition Theory	The research findings confirm the applicability of Power Transition Theory to ancient Chinese history, highlighting how power shifts and challenges to hegemony can lead to interstate conflicts and diplomatic maneuvering.

### Interstate Conflicts in the Chunqiu Era

The scholarly investigation into interstate wars during the Chunqiu Era provides valuable insights into the complex network of political rivalries and clashes that defined this crucial epoch in ancient Chinese history. Through a comprehensive examination of historical records, archaeological discoveries, and geographical data, several significant insights have emerged pertaining to the characteristics, origins, and consequences of interstate conflicts in this particular time period. The primary focus of the study was to identify a consistent pattern of interstate disputes during the Chunqiu Era. Frequently, these wars originated from the exertion of power, disagreements over territory, and the questioning of existing authority. Frequently, there were conflicts between emerging regional powers and their neighbouring states, as they competed for dominance over agriculturally productive territories, strategically important trade routes, and precious resources. These battles were not

isolated incidents, but rather were a component of a wider geopolitical framework characterised by dynamic alliances, precarious power dynamics, and changeable territorial boundaries. The study conducted a comprehensive analysis of historical documents and archaeological findings, which yielded specific instances of these disputes. These examples effectively demonstrate the intricate nature of interstate relations in this particular time period.

Moreover, the analysis underscored the complex and diverse characteristics of interstate confrontations throughout the Chunqiu Era. Although military clashes were a crucial aspect, diplomatic manoeuvres, espionage, and economic coercion also exerted substantial influence in determining the results of these conflicts. States in ancient China frequently utilised a blend of military and non-military tactics in order to accomplish their goals, underscoring the significance of comprehending the complete range of statecraft (refer to [Figure 4](#)). Moreover, the study unveiled that the results of these conflicts were not exclusively dictated by military power, but were instead impacted by various elements like geographical advantages, leadership aptitude, and the capacity to establish successful alliances. The aforementioned statement emphasises the necessity of using a comprehensive methodology in the examination of interstate conflicts during the Chunqiu Era.



**Figure 4:** States role in lasting for centuries (Smile face shows the prominent role)

Furthermore, the research has yielded significant insights into the long-lasting influence of these conflicts on the historical narrative of ancient China. The power dynamics and confrontations that occurred during the

Chunqiu Era established the groundwork for the future Warring States Period, which witnessed heightened political fragmentation and warfare within China. Scholars might gain a deeper grasp of the enduring impact of Chinese statecraft and political thinking by examining the origins and dynamics of interstate conflicts. Furthermore, this research provides evidence of the significance of multidisciplinary methodologies, which involve the integration of historical analysis, archaeological investigations, and geographical perspectives. This approach facilitates a more holistic comprehension of the intricate nature of interstate wars in ancient China, as illustrated in [Table 2](#).

**Table 2:** Aspects of Interstate Conflicts

<b>Aspect of Interstate Conflicts</b>	<b>Key Findings</b>
Recurring Patterns	Interstate conflicts in the Chunqiu Era were recurrent and often stemmed from power struggles, territorial disputes, and challenges to established authority.
Multifaceted Nature	Conflicts involved a combination of military confrontations, diplomatic maneuvers, espionage, and economic coercion, reflecting the complexity of ancient statecraft.
Influence on Subsequent Periods	The conflicts of the Chunqiu Era played a foundational role in shaping the subsequent Warring States Period, which witnessed even greater political fragmentation and conflict.
Role of Geography	Geographic factors, such as terrain and proximity to resources, influenced the strategies and outcomes of interstate conflicts.
Interplay of Military and Non-Military Strategies	The outcomes of conflicts were determined not only by military strength but also by factors like leadership capabilities and the ability to form effective alliances.
Holistic Understanding	An interdisciplinary approach, combining historical analysis, archaeological evidence, and geographical insights, provided a more comprehensive understanding of ancient interstate conflicts in the Chunqiu Era.

### Current Conflicts in these States

Numerous states across the globe are currently confronted with the ongoing challenge posed by the enduring menace of physical terrorism. The aforementioned instances of violence, frequently executed by extremist collectives or individuals, have resulted in significant destruction within the impacted areas. Countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria have experienced persistent instances of physical terrorism, manifested through bombings, suicide attacks, and armed conflicts. In the context of Afghanistan, the entities known as the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and ISIS have



establishment of modern Turkey, alongside the reclamation of independence by Eastern European nations such as Poland. Furthermore, the war had significant economic ramifications. The conflict resulted in the depletion of resources and the initiation of economic difficulties, which subsequently prompted post-war reconstruction endeavours and the endeavour to achieve economic stability. Moreover, World War I exerted notable social ramifications, encompassing shifts in societal conventions, the evolving role of women, and the enduring psychological distress endured by veterans. Similar to numerous other states, these regions experienced the enduring consequences of the Great War, which reverberated throughout the 20th century and exerted influence on subsequent historical events, such as World War II and the Cold War.

### **Application of International Relations Theory to Ancient History**

The examination of the utilisation of International Relations (IR) theory in the context of ancient history, particularly with a specific emphasis on the Chunqiu Era, has produced fascinating observations regarding the flexibility and pertinence of modern IR frameworks in historical settings. The analysis of this interdisciplinary methodology has yielded significant discoveries that enhance the field of ancient history and contribute to broader discourse in the domain of international relations theory. One of the most noteworthy discoveries pertains to the effective utilisation of international relations theories, such as Power Transition Theory and Hegemonic Dynamics, in examining historical interstate relationships. Although these theories are primarily associated with contemporary international politics, they have demonstrated significant relevance when applied to the analysis of power dynamics during the Chunqiu Era. The study revealed occurrences in which emerging regional powers contested established dominant powers, resulting in discernible patterns of both conflict and diplomacy. This proposition implies that the underlying principles governing power transitions and the pursuit of hegemony are not bound by temporal constraints, thereby offering significant insights into the dynamics of state interactions in ancient eras. The effective application of international relations theories in a non-Western and pre-modern setting presents a compelling argument against the perception that these theories are solely tailored for contemporary geopolitical dynamics, thereby emphasising their universal applicability.

Moreover, the aforementioned research underscores the necessity of adopting an interdisciplinary framework in the application of International Relations theories to the study of ancient history. Through the integration of archaeological findings, historical documentation, and geographical analysis, the study successfully situated the theoretical frameworks within the distinctive dynamics of the Chunqiu Era. The utilisation of this methodology not only enhanced the depth of the analysis, but also showcased the intricate relationship between historical narratives and modern theories. It underscores the importance of considering cultural, geographical, and temporal nuances when applying IR frameworks to ancient contexts, as these factors significantly influence how power,

alliances, and conflicts manifest. Thus, the findings emphasize the necessity of integrating various disciplinary perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between international relations theory and historical events. In conclusion, the research on the application of International Relations theory to ancient history, as exemplified by the Chunqiu Era, offers a compelling argument for the adaptability and utility of contemporary IR frameworks in studying the past. The successful application of these theories provides a bridge between modern international politics and ancient statecraft, enriching our understanding of how power transitions, hegemonic challenges, and interstate conflicts unfolded in a historical context. Moreover, it underscores the significance of interdisciplinary collaboration in unraveling the complexities of ancient history, reminding scholars that the crossroads of theory and history offer a treasure trove of insights waiting to be explored (see [Table 3](#)).

**Table 3: Aspect of Theory Application**

<b>Aspect of Application</b>	<b>Key Findings</b>
Adaptability of IR Theories	Contemporary IR theories, such as Power Transition Theory and Hegemonic Dynamics, can be successfully applied to the study of ancient interstate relations, as evidenced by their relevance to the Chunqiu Era.
Universality of IR Frameworks	The research demonstrates that fundamental principles of power transitions, hegemonic challenges, and international dynamics transcend temporal boundaries and are not confined to contemporary geopolitics.
Interdisciplinary Approach	Integrating archaeological evidence, historical records, and geographical data is essential for contextualizing IR theories within the unique dynamics of ancient history.
Cultural and Temporal Nuances	The findings underscore the significance of considering cultural, geographical, and temporal nuances when applying IR frameworks to ancient contexts, as these factors significantly influence the manifestation of power, alliances, and conflicts.
Enrichment of Historical Understanding	The interdisciplinary approach enriches historical analysis by providing a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between international relations theory and historical events.
Bridge Between Modern and Ancient	The application of IR theories to ancient history serves as a bridge between modern international politics and ancient statecraft, contributing to a deeper comprehension of how power dynamics unfolded in historical settings.

### **Cross-Cultural and Interdisciplinary Analysis**

The research exploring the theme of cross-cultural and interdisciplinary analysis in the context of the Chunqiu Era has yielded valuable insights into

the significance of employing diverse perspectives and methodologies when examining complex historical periods. This approach has uncovered several critical findings that contribute to our understanding of how different disciplines can intersect to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the past. First and foremost, the research underscores the importance of cross-cultural analysis when studying ancient history. The Chunqiu Era, situated in ancient China, is enriched by a wealth of historical texts, but it also benefits immensely from comparative insights from other cultures and regions. By examining contemporaneous events in neighboring societies, such as the Eastern Zhou states or early Confucian thought, researchers gained a broader context for understanding the Chunqiu Era's power dynamics and interstate conflicts. This comparative approach allowed for the identification of commonalities and differences in the development of political systems, philosophies, and international relations, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the era's historical significance.

Furthermore, the interdisciplinary analysis conducted in this research has been instrumental in revealing the multi-faceted nature of the Chunqiu Era. The combination of historical narratives, archaeological evidence, and geographical data facilitated a holistic approach to studying this era. Archaeological findings provided tangible evidence of ancient settlements, fortifications, and trade routes, reinforcing the historical accounts. Additionally, GIS technology allowed for a spatial analysis that considered the role of geography and natural barriers in shaping power dynamics and interstate conflicts. This interdisciplinary synthesis not only enriched the research but also served as a model for future studies seeking to comprehend complex historical periods by drawing from a variety of disciplines. Moreover, the research highlights the broader implications of cross-cultural and interdisciplinary analysis for the field of historical research. It demonstrates that historical narratives can be enhanced and enriched by incorporating insights from archaeology, geography, philosophy, and other disciplines. This approach allows researchers to transcend the limitations of single-discipline perspectives and create a more holistic understanding of the past. Additionally, it emphasizes the necessity of engaging with diverse cultural contexts to gain a global perspective on historical events, fostering a deeper appreciation for the interconnectedness of human history.

In conclusion, the research on cross-cultural and interdisciplinary analysis in the study of the Chunqiu Era illustrates the profound benefits of adopting a multi-disciplinary and cross-cultural approach to historical research. By incorporating insights from various disciplines and considering the broader cultural context, scholars can unearth a more comprehensive understanding of complex historical periods, such as the Chunqiu Era. This approach not only enriches our comprehension of the past but also underscores the interconnectedness of human history, transcending geographical and temporal boundaries to provide a more holistic view of the world's historical tapestry.

**Table 4:** Aspect Cross-Cultural and Interdisciplinary Analysis

Aspect of Analysis	Key Findings
Importance of Cross-Cultural Analysis	<p>Cross-cultural analysis, involving the examination of contemporaneous events in neighboring societies, enriches the understanding of historical periods like the Chunqiu Era.</p> <p>Comparative insights from other cultures and regions provide a broader context for interpreting power dynamics and interstate conflicts.</p>
Multifaceted Nature of Interdisciplinary Analysis	<p>Interdisciplinary analysis, combining historical narratives, archaeological evidence, and geographical data, offers a holistic approach to studying complex historical periods.</p> <p>Archaeological findings provide tangible evidence that reinforces historical accounts, while GIS technology allows for spatial analysis and geographic considerations.</p>
Broader Implications for Historical Research	<p>The research highlights that historical narratives can be enhanced and enriched by incorporating insights from diverse disciplines, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the past.</p> <p>Engagement with diverse cultural contexts and interdisciplinary perspectives fosters a deeper appreciation for the interconnectedness of human history, transcending geographical and temporal boundaries.</p>

## Discussion

The examination of the Chunqiu Era within the context of International Relations (IR) theory has yielded valuable insights into the dynamics of power transition and hegemonic shifts during this ancient period. By applying contemporary IR frameworks, such as Power Transition Theory and Hegemonic Dynamics, to the historical context of ancient China, this research has contributed to our understanding of how theories designed for modern international politics can be adapted to elucidate events of a vastly different time and culture. The successful application of Power Transition Theory to the Chunqiu Era highlights the enduring relevance of this theory. This finding aligns with the work of [Gokcekuyu \(2023\)](#), who originally developed the theory, and subsequent scholars like [Zhu \(2021\)](#), who emphasized the role of power transitions in shaping international relations. The recurrent pattern of rising regional powers challenging the existing hegemon, leading to heightened tensions and conflicts, mirrors the theory's predictions. While the Chunqiu Era may lack the modern features of a global system, the principles of power dynamics and their consequences appear to be a cross-temporal phenomenon. This adaptability of IR theories to non-modern contexts resonates with previous studies that have successfully applied such theories to historical periods,

like Thucydides' exploration of the Peloponnesian War (Thucydides, c. 400 BCE), demonstrating that IR concepts transcend temporal boundaries (Heine, 2021).

Furthermore, the integration of geographical analysis, using Geographic Information System (GIS), technology has enriched our understanding of the Chunqiu Era's interstate conflicts. Geography has long been recognized as a critical factor in shaping international relations (Turner & Nymalm, 2019), and this research reaffirms its significance. Similar to Lee (2022) argument that geography plays a pivotal role in shaping international politics, our findings emphasize that the proximity to vital resources, terrain, and natural barriers significantly influenced the strategies and outcomes of conflicts during this era. This geographical dimension adds depth to our understanding of how power transitions and hegemonic challenges manifested in the Chunqiu Era, echoing the sentiment that geography provides a foundational context for international relations (O'Sullivan and Allouche, 2018).

The interdisciplinary approach employed in this research also merits discussion. Combining historical narratives with archaeological evidence and geographical data offers a more holistic understanding of the Chunqiu Era. This aligns with the call by Kavalski (2022) for a "world history" approach that transcends traditional historiography, incorporating insights from multiple disciplines. The incorporation of archaeological findings to validate historical accounts is particularly noteworthy, as it illustrates the interplay between historical narratives and tangible evidence (Turner & Nymalm, 2019). Additionally, the successful application of interdisciplinary methodologies underlines the importance of considering cultural, geographical, and temporal nuances when applying IR frameworks to ancient contexts (Patalakh, 2016). This approach enriches our comprehension of the Chunqiu Era's power dynamics and adds depth to our understanding of ancient international relations.

In conclusion, this research has demonstrated the adaptability and relevance of contemporary IR theories to ancient history while highlighting the importance of interdisciplinary analysis and geographical considerations. By bridging the gap between modern IR frameworks and historical contexts, this study has enriched our understanding of the Chunqiu Era's power transitions, hegemonic dynamics, and interstate conflicts. Moreover, it underscores the value of cross-cultural perspectives and interdisciplinary collaboration in unraveling the complexities of ancient history, contributing to a more holistic view of the world's historical tapestry.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has illuminated the potential for bridging the gap between contemporary International Relations theory and ancient history, using the Chunqiu Era as a case study. The successful application of IR frameworks, such as Power Transition Theory and Hegemonic

Dynamics, to this ancient context underscores the adaptability and enduring relevance of these theories. The recurring patterns of power transitions, challenges to hegemony, and their consequences in the Chunqiu Era echo the predictions of modern IR theorists and highlight the universality of certain international relations principles. Moreover, the interdisciplinary and cross-cultural approach employed in this study has reinforced the value of drawing from diverse disciplines and cultural contexts to gain a more comprehensive understanding of historical events. By integrating archaeological evidence, historical narratives, and geographical analysis, this research has demonstrated the richness of such an approach. It emphasizes the importance of considering cultural, geographical, and temporal nuances when applying IR frameworks to ancient contexts and encourages scholars to engage in interdisciplinary collaborations to unlock new layers of meaning within historical accounts. Ultimately, this research not only contributes to our understanding of the Chunqiu Era and ancient Chinese history but also offers a broader message about the versatility of international relations theory and the interconnectedness of human history. It highlights the enduring relevance of past events in shaping contemporary global dynamics and underscores the importance of adopting a multidisciplinary perspective to enrich our comprehension of complex historical periods. As we reflect on the lessons learned from the Chunqiu Era, we are reminded of the timeless nature of power transitions, the complexities of interstate relations, and the enduring value of interdisciplinary and cross-cultural analysis in unraveling the tapestry of history.

### **Theoretical and Practical Implications**

Implications of this research extend beyond the boundaries of academia, offering valuable insights with broader societal and scholarly significance. Firstly, the study's successful application of contemporary International Relations (IR) theories to ancient history highlights the versatility of such theoretical frameworks. This has implications for scholars and historians seeking to explore historical events and power dynamics in non-modern contexts. By recognizing the adaptability of IR theories, researchers can more effectively analyze and interpret complex historical periods, transcending temporal and geographical boundaries. This adaptability underscores the universality of certain international relations principles and invites scholars to consider their applicability across diverse historical settings. Secondly, the interdisciplinary approach employed in this research demonstrates the richness of combining historical narratives with archaeological evidence and geographical data. This interdisciplinary methodology serves as a model for future studies, showcasing the benefits of a multifaceted perspective. Implications here extend to the broader field of historical research, encouraging scholars to draw from a diverse range of disciplines to construct a more comprehensive understanding of the past. This collaborative approach not only enhances historical analysis but also enriches our appreciation of the interconnectedness of human history.

Furthermore, the research has implications for the study of ancient Chinese history specifically. By applying IR theories to the Chunqiu Era, this research provides a fresh lens through which to view the dynamics of this crucial period. Historians of ancient China can benefit from incorporating insights from contemporary IR scholarship to deepen their understanding of the geopolitical landscape of the time. This interdisciplinary approach encourages scholars to reevaluate existing historical narratives and potentially discover new layers of meaning within the historical accounts of the Chunqiu Era. Moreover, the study's emphasis on cross-cultural analysis and the examination of contemporaneous events in neighboring societies underscores the importance of a global perspective in historical research. Implications here extend to the broader field of historical scholarship, emphasizing the need to move beyond a Eurocentric view of history. Encouraging scholars to consider the historical interactions between various regions and cultures fosters a more comprehensive understanding of the global historical tapestry. Finally, the research has implications for the broader public. By shedding light on the adaptability of IR theories and the value of interdisciplinary analysis, this study contributes to a deeper appreciation of the complexities of history. It encourages individuals to consider the interconnectedness of past events and the relevance of historical analysis in understanding contemporary global issues. Ultimately, this research highlights the enduring significance of the past and its role in shaping our understanding of the world today.

### **Limitations and Recommendations**

While this research has provided valuable insights into the application of International Relations (IR) theory to ancient history, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations. First, the study focused primarily on the Chunqiu Era in ancient China, and the findings may not be directly applicable to other historical periods or regions. Future research could explore the transferability of IR theories to different historical contexts to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Second, the research relied on available historical records, archaeological evidence, and geographical data, which may be incomplete or biased. Gaps in historical records and variations in archaeological discoveries could potentially limit the comprehensiveness of the analysis. Future studies should aim to address these limitations by conducting more extensive archaeological excavations or exploring alternative historical sources.

One promising avenue for future research is the comparative analysis of different ancient civilizations using IR theories. By applying similar frameworks to multiple historical contexts, researchers can identify commonalities and differences in power dynamics, interstate relations, and conflict resolution strategies. This comparative approach could provide deeper insights into the universality of IR theories and the unique characteristics of various ancient societies. Additionally, future research could explore the role of ideology and cultural factors in shaping ancient interstate conflicts. While this study primarily focused on structural factors and power dynamics, a more nuanced examination of how belief systems,

philosophies, and cultural norms influenced international relations in ancient times could offer a more holistic understanding of historical conflicts. Furthermore, interdisciplinary collaborations between historians, archaeologists, and political scientists should be encouraged to advance our knowledge of ancient international relations. By integrating a broader range of expertise and methodologies, researchers can expand the depth and breadth of their investigations, ultimately leading to a richer understanding of historical events and their implications for contemporary scholarship. Lastly, future research could delve into the long-term impact of power transitions and interstate conflicts on the development of ancient civilizations. By tracing the consequences of historical events, scholars can explore how power struggles and diplomatic maneuvers influenced the trajectory of societies and their political ideologies. This longitudinal perspective can contribute to a more comprehensive narrative of the interplay between international relations and the evolution of ancient civilizations.

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