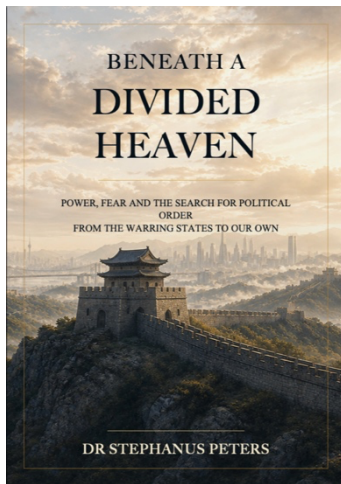




## Beneath a Divided Heaven

Power, Fear and the search for political order from the warring states to our own.

We live again beneath a divided heaven. Nations speak the language of peace while preparing for conflict. Alliances promise security yet deepen suspicion. Political leaders appeal to history, identity and justice, even as fear narrows the space in which restraint remains possible. The weapons are modern, but the anxieties surrounding them are ancient.

More than two thousand years ago, China's Warring States confronted a comparable crisis of political order. Rival kingdoms competed for territory, resources and survival. Old customs had weakened, authority was contested, and war became both an instrument of policy and a permanent condition of life. From this disorder emerged some of humanity's most enduring reflections on power: Confucian responsibility, Mohist impartial care, Daoist restraint and Legalist discipline.

This book does not claim that our world is merely a repetition of ancient China. History never returns unchanged. Technology, nationalism, democracy, nuclear weapons and global interdependence have transformed the scale of political action. Yet the underlying human tendencies remain recognisable. Fear seeks certainty. Power protects itself. Humiliation preserves old wounds. Communities strengthen their identity by imagining an enemy beyond their borders.

The search for order has therefore taken many forms. Chinese dynasties, Indian kingdoms, Roman law, religious empires, European sovereign states and modern international institutions have each promised stability. Each also revealed its limitations. Order can restrain violence, but it can become domination. Moral conviction can defend the vulnerable, but it can also excuse conquest. Unity can sustain a civilisation, but it can silence those who do not belong to its preferred image.

Beneath a Divided Heaven places Eastern and Western political traditions into conversation without forcing them into sameness. It examines how culture, religion, memory and institutions shape what societies expect from authority, and what they are willing to endure in its name.

Its central question is simple, though no final answer is simple: how can political power become strong enough to protect human life, yet restrained enough not to possess it? The future of order may depend less upon defeating every rival than upon recovering the difficult discipline of living with difference.

### Author

Dr Stephanus Peters is a writer, business leader and thoughtful observer of human relationships, cultures and institutions. His extensive professional experience, cross-cultural engagement and lifelong study of philosophy, history and spiritual traditions have shaped his understanding of how people relate to one another, and of what enables societies to flourish. Throughout his life, Stephanus has been drawn to the values that connect humanity across different beliefs, generations and ways of living. He writes with the conviction that enduring change begins in our everyday choices and extends into our communities, workplaces and institutions.

