

# Toward an International Relations Theory with Chinese Characteristics?<sup>1</sup>

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*This article discusses the current state of the development of an international relations (IR) theory with Chinese characteristics, analyzing the arguments both for and against such a development. Describing the current state of IR studies in China as "closed pluralism" in search of theory, the article identifies its characteristics, highlights two major schools of thought, and assesses the implications of the Chinese perspectives on IR theorizing.*

**Keywords:** international relations theory; Chinese characteristics; national interests; power; culture

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"In China's participation in international relations, there is no theory, only practice."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This article is due to appear in a different form as a chapter in a forthcoming book authored by myself, *Chinese Perspectives on International Relations: A Framework for Analysis* (Basingstoke: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999). Throughout the article, I have adopted the system of giving first the surnames of Chinese and Japanese individuals, followed by their given names. Most of the English translations of Chinese texts quoted in the article are mine.

<sup>2</sup>Ni Shixiong, Feng Shaolei, and Jin Yingzhong, *Shiji fengyun de chan'er—Dangdai guoji*

"International relations theory is an uncharted territory in China's academia."<sup>3</sup>

In a book review appearing in *Millennium* in 1995, Steve Smith lamented the lack of our knowledge of the state of international studies beyond the Anglo-American sphere. He said, "Many readers . . . will doubtless feel somewhat embarrassed, as I did, about knowing so little about what was being done outside a small geographical area."<sup>4</sup> Ken Booth held a similar view when he said in 1995 that "international political theory has largely been Western ideology. . . . The West did not want a different theoretical future because it was dominating the practical present."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, back in the 1960s, Stanley Hoffman pointed out that the discipline of international relations (IR) was "born and raised in America" and dominated by the United States because of its "political preeminence."<sup>6</sup>

For the sake of the growth of knowledge and the promotion of international understanding, there is a need to go beyond this parochial understanding of IR to accommodate non-Western views. In this respect, the development of IR studies in China adds an interesting dimension to the existing body of knowledge.<sup>7</sup> As IR is a relatively new academic subject in China, much work needs to be done before a distinctively Chinese school of thinking emerges. The current Chinese understanding does not pose any significant challenge to the existing body of knowledge in the West. However, these differing views need to be taken into account, not least because the views articulated and championed by Chinese IR specialists are likely

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*guanxi lilun* (An offspring of the turbulent century—Contemporary international relations theory) (Hangzhou: Zhejiang People's Press, 1989), 230.

<sup>3</sup>Yang Yunzhong, "The Development Pattern of International Relations," *Henan shehui kexue* (Henan Social Sciences) (Zhengzhou) 1994, no. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Smith's review of A.J.R. Groom and Margot Light, eds., *Contemporary International Relations: A Guide to Theory* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1994), in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 24, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 154.

<sup>5</sup>Ken Booth, "Dare Not to Know: International Relations Theory versus the Future," in *International Relations Theory Today*, ed. Ken Booth and Steve Smith (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 333.

<sup>6</sup>Stanley Hoffman, "An American Social Science: International Relations," in *International Theory: Critical Investigations*, ed. James Der Derian (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 240.

<sup>7</sup>For some background reading, see Gerald Chan, "International Studies in China: Origins and Development," *Issues & Studies* 33, no. 2 (February 1997): 40-64.

to influence foreign-policy making in China and hence its external behavior. As China grows strong economically, politically, and militarily, other nations must begin to understand Chinese thinking on IR.

This article concentrates on the development of an IR theory with Chinese characteristics. It traces the efforts made to date and discusses the Chinese arguments for and against such a development. What exactly are the Chinese characteristics and what is the status of theory in IR studies in China?

The development of an IR theory in China, like so many social-engineering feats in the country, is crowned with the phrase "with Chinese characteristics." Witness the following:

A socialist economy with Chinese characteristics<sup>8</sup>

Socialist politics with Chinese characteristics<sup>9</sup>

A socialist culture with Chinese characteristics<sup>10</sup>

Modernization with Chinese characteristics<sup>11</sup>

Agricultural modernization with Chinese characteristics<sup>12</sup>

A theory of higher education with Chinese characteristics<sup>13</sup>

The study of diplomacy with Chinese characteristics<sup>14</sup>

The study of international political economy with Chinese characteristics<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Jiang Zemin's report at the CCP's Fifteenth National Congress on September 12, 1997, *Beijing Review*, October 6-12, 1997, 10-33.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>Wang Dong, "Create a New Theory of Modernization with Chinese Characteristics," *Beijing daxue xuebao* (Journal of Beijing University, Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), 1994, no. 4:11-21.

<sup>12</sup>Yi Jianguo, "A Framework of Agricultural Modernization with Chinese Characteristics," *Dangdai shijie yu shehuizhuyi* (Contemporary World and Socialism), 1995, no. 1:45-48.

<sup>13</sup>Chen Mokai et al., eds., *Jianshe you Zhongguo tese de shehuizhuyi gaodeng jiaoyu lilun lungang* (An analysis of the construction of a theory of higher education with Chinese characteristics) (Changchun: Northeast Normal University Press, 1994).

<sup>14</sup>Wang Deren, "A Round-Table Discussion on Research on International Relations," *Waijiao xueyuan xuebao* (Journal of Foreign Affairs College), 1995, no. 1:20.

<sup>15</sup>Jia Yongxuan, "Neorealism in International Relations and International Political Economy," *Guoji guanxi xueyuan xuebao* (Journal of the Institute of International Relations), 1994, no.

- A theory of international conflict with Chinese characteristics<sup>16</sup>
- International relations history with Chinese characteristics<sup>17</sup>
- Peace studies with Chinese characteristics<sup>18</sup>
- Political studies with Chinese characteristics<sup>19</sup>
- Sociology with Chinese characteristics<sup>20</sup>

The origin of all these can be traced to Deng Xiaoping's call for building socialism with Chinese characteristics. Thus, this phrase "with Chinese characteristics" apparently confers some kind of authority or legitimacy within China and serves to protect users from personal attacks that may arise during political campaigns or struggles.

Deng's socialism with Chinese characteristics is said to be a natural development and a logical extension of Marxism.<sup>21</sup> It is a natural development because the liberalization of thought and *shishi qiushi* (seeking truth from facts)—the philosophical bases of socialism with Chinese characteristics—are exemplars of Marx's dialectical materialism.<sup>22</sup> It is a logical extension because the socialist market economy is said to be the greatest breakthrough in socialism and a major revision of traditional Marxism based on China's experience.<sup>23</sup> While a critique of the logic of these arguments falls outside the scope of this article, it is useful to point out that the development of IR studies in China is greatly influenced by the

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4:12; Chen Bida and Xu Yuemei, "An Outline of Economics of International Political Relations," *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* (World Economics and Politics), 1996, no. 6:16-20.

<sup>16</sup>Zhang Yahang, "An Appraisal of General Conflict Theory," *Guowai zhengzhixue* (Foreign Political Studies), 1988, no. 1:29.

<sup>17</sup>Yan Feng, "Construct a Study of IR History with Chinese Characteristics," *Waijiao xueyuan xuebao*, 1995, no. 3:66-67.

<sup>18</sup>Liu Xiaolin, "Theoretical Study on Exploring an Everlasting Peace for Mankind," *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi*, 1995, no. 4:50.

<sup>19</sup>Wang Huning, *Wang Huning ji* (Anthology of Wang Huning) (Harbin: Heilongjiang Educational Press, 1989), 311.

<sup>20</sup>Liu Fei, "Sinicizing Sociology and the Functioning of Chinese Society," *Zhongguo renmin daxue xuebao* (Journal of the People's University of China), 1994, no. 2:54-57.

<sup>21</sup>Hong Yunshan, "Construct a Theory of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics," *Dangdai shijie yu shehuizhuyi*, 1994, no. 4:1-4.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

political ideology and the practical considerations of China's Communist Party leaders.

### **Recent Efforts to Develop a Chinese Theory**

Four conferences, two national and two international, have been held in the past decade to discuss the issue of the development of an IR theory with Chinese characteristics. The first national conference, held in Shanghai on August 9-13, 1987, was organized by Huan Xiang, a noted diplomat and president of the State Council's Center for International Studies. It was co-hosted by the Shanghai Institute for International Studies, the International Relations Association of Shanghai, the Shanghai Foreign Languages College, the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, and the American Studies Center at Fudan University. The conference brought together eighty-three participants from Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Nanjing, Hangzhou, Wuhan, and other cities to discuss the development of "a system of study of IR with Chinese characteristics *under the guidance of Marxism*."<sup>24</sup>

Several factors contributed toward the convening of this conference. First, from his diplomatic experience and academic interest in international studies as well as his personal contacts with top leaders, Huan was keen to convene such a meeting. Second, Professor Wang Shengzu of Nanjing University, the founder of the China Research Society of History of International Relations, gave a paper on "the balance of power" at a conference to mark the founding of the Contemporary World History Study Association in Lanzhou in 1978. That paper aroused the interest of many teachers and researchers of IR in the country. They felt that there was a need to develop the study of IR theory.<sup>25</sup> Third, subsequent to the adoption of the reform and opening-up policy in 1978, many Chinese students and young

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<sup>24</sup>Zhao Yuliang, Zhao Xiaochun, and Chu Shulong, "A Summary of the Shanghai Seminar on Theory of International Relations," *Xiandai guoji guanxi* (Contemporary International Relations), 1987, no. 4:3-6. Emphasis added.

<sup>25</sup>Liu Tongshun, "Preface" to Ni, Feng, and Jin, *Shiji fengyun de chan'er*.

scholars went overseas to study, some of whom undertook graduate training in IR in the United States. A portion of those who subsequently returned to the country realized the urgency for developing the study of IR theory in China.<sup>26</sup>

The second national conference, held in Beijing on May 6, 1994, was co-hosted by the China Research Society of History of International Relations and Beijing University's Department of International Politics. Some thirty-five participants came from the Foreign Affairs College, the Central Party School, the University of Political Science and Law, Beijing Foreign Languages University, the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, the Institute of International Relations, the People's University of China, Beijing Broadcast College, and Beijing Normal University.<sup>27</sup>

In between these two conferences, the Institute of International Relations at Beijing University organized an international conference in Beijing on June 17-19, 1991, which brought together some well-known IR specialists from overseas to join local scholars in discussing the development of IR theory in China. Foreign specialists who presented papers included Adam Roberts, Robert Scalapino, Claude Cadart, Harry Harding, Miles Kahler, Kenneth Waltz, Watanabe Akio, Robert Gilpin, and Sakurai Makoto.<sup>28</sup>

The latest international conference which also discussed the study of IR in China was held in Beijing in December 1994. The theme of the conference was "China and the World in the Twenty-first Century." It was organized by the Department of International Politics and the Institute of International Relations, both at Beijing University. Financial support came from the Program of International Studies in Asia,<sup>29</sup> an American founda-

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<sup>26</sup>According to *China Daily* (July 24, 1996, 1), a total of 250,000 Chinese scholars were studying or had studied in 103 countries or regions (since the late 1970s) and by the end of 1995, more than 80,000 of them had returned to China.

<sup>27</sup>Wang Lian, "A Summary of an Academic Conference on 'The Development of a Theory of International Relations with Chinese Characteristics'," *Guoji zhengzhi yanjiu* (Studies of International Politics), 1994, no. 3:44-47.

<sup>28</sup>A collection of their papers and those participants from China and Hong Kong was published in *Kua shiji de tiaozhan: Zhongguo guoji guanxi xueke de fazhan* (Facing the challenge of the twenty-first century: International relations studies in China), ed. Yuan Ming (Chongqing: Chongqing Press, 1992).

<sup>29</sup>Based at the George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

tion for academic exchange. The conference brought together some seventy scholars from the United States (including Robert Scalapino and Harry Harding), Russia, and China. The pros and cons of the development of an IR theory with Chinese characteristics were once again discussed.<sup>30</sup>

### **Evaluation of the Usefulness of a Chinese Theory**

Differences of opinion exist among Chinese scholars as to whether or not a theory of IR with Chinese characteristics should be developed and how this can be best accomplished, although the majority seems to favor such a development. But what exactly is meant by a theory of IR with Chinese characteristics? Professor Liang Shoude says that it means "the study of the objective rules that govern the changes and developments of international politics *from a Chinese perspective*."<sup>31</sup> He suggests that Chinese scholars should "face the world from a Chinese base" (*lizhu Zhongguo, mianxiang shijie*). The reasons for adopting a Chinese base or a Chinese perspective rest on the perceived needs by Chinese scholars to approach the study from China's conditions,<sup>32</sup> to serve its national interests, and to develop the study in an independent way.<sup>33</sup>

In general, the majority view holds that the Chinese study of IR should adopt six principles:<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>For a summary report of the conference, see Chu Feng, "China and the World in the Twenty-first Century," *Guoji zhengzhi yanjiu*, 1995, no. 1:53-57.

<sup>31</sup>Liang Shoude, "A Discussion of the Study of International Politics with Chinese Characteristics," *Guoji zhengzhi yanjiu*, 1994, no. 1:15. My emphasis. Also see Liang Shoude, "Constructing an International Relations Theory with Chinese Characteristics," and Song Xinling, "International Relations Theory-Building in China," *Political Science* (Wellington, New Zealand) 49, no. 1 (July 1997): 23-39 and 40-61, respectively.

<sup>32</sup>As for China's international position, Liang cites the facts that China is the largest developing country, a rising major power, a socialist country in the initial phase of transition to socialism, and the only country with a "one country, two systems" polity. See Ye Zicheng, "In Search of China's International Strategy in the Twenty-first Century," *Guoji zhengzhi yanjiu*, 1997, no. 4:2.

<sup>33</sup>Liang, "A Discussion of the Study of International Politics with Chinese Characteristics," 15.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 15-21; He Fang, "A Sea Change in the World Structure and the Chinese Discipline of International Relations," in Yuan, *Kua shiji de tiaozhan*, 15-18; Wang, "A Summary of

1. It must use Marxism as a guide, as the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the guidance of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought are stipulated in the PRC Constitution.
2. IR scholars should learn from the experiences of and theories developed by Chinese leaders like Mao, Zhou Enlai, and Deng.
3. IR studies should be used to enhance China's national interests and maintain its independence and momentum of development.
4. Peace and development should be the main themes.
5. The virtues of China's culture and tradition should be promulgated. Its longstanding civilization can serve as a valuable source for the development of such a theory.
6. China should learn from the IR scholarship in the West, especially in trying to establish the necessary framework, contents, and research methodology for the Chinese study of IR.

Of these, the most important principle is the promotion of China's national interests<sup>35</sup> or, more specifically, the interests of "China's state sovereignty" (*Zhongguo guojia zhuquan*).<sup>36</sup> Chinese IR scholars differentiate between *guojia liyi* and *guojia quanyi*. The former refers to national interests, and carries a slightly negative connotation because Western imperialists invaded late Qing China in pursuit of their national interests. The latter term, *quanyi*, consists of two Chinese characters: *quan* meaning power or right; and *yi* meaning benefit. Together, the two characters carry the notion of "rightful benefits." Thus, China is adamant in defending its *quanyi*. Sovereignty to the Chinese is not just an interest or *liyi*, but also *quanyi*—a basic right of states.

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an Academic Conference," 44-47; Zhao, Zhao, and Chu, "A Summary of the Shanghai Seminar," 3-5; and Tian Zhili, "A Summary Record of a Conference on International Relations Theory," *Zhengzhixue yanjiu* (Study of Politics), 1987, no. 6:55-59.

<sup>35</sup>For a critical analysis of China's national interests, see Yan Xuetong, *Zhongguo guojia liyi fenxi* (Analysis of China's national interests) (Tianjin: Tianjin People's Press, 1996).

<sup>36</sup>Liang, "A Discussion of the Study of International Politics with Chinese Characteristics," 19. See also Ren Yue, "Sovereignty in Chinese Foreign Policy: Principle and Practice," in *China Review 1996*, ed. Maurice Brosseau, Suzanne Pepper, and Tsang Shu-ki (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1996), 145-74.



A basic component of China's conceptualization of national interests is power. Since the 1980s, Chinese IR scholars have turned their attention to China's comprehensive national power (CNP). According to an official source, CNP refers to "the totality of a country's economic, military, and political power in a given period. It signals the country's comprehensive development level and its position in the international system."<sup>37</sup> However, the scope of CNP is not clear, since different scholars seem to have different ideas about its scope. The only consensus that emerges from Chinese academic writings suggests that it has a wide coverage.

In general, the Chinese conception of CNP embraces four features: comprehensiveness, openness, dynamism, and a multilayered structure.<sup>38</sup> Comprehensiveness means that the measurement of power should be based on a comprehensive list of indicators, ranging from hard to soft power and from tangible to intangible power. Openness means that the calculation of CNP should include external factors such as changes in the international environment. Dynamism suggests that consideration must be given to the constant changes in the constituent elements of power, the relationships among these elements, and their linkages with the outside environment. A multilayered structure refers to a rank order of the relative importance of factors or groups of factors that influence the calculation of power capacity. In order to increase one's CNP, a proper balance and coordination in the development of the various constituent elements must be maintained. What exactly is this balance, however, has not been made clear in the current Chinese literature.

Those who have reservations about the development of such a Chinese theory have expressed their views, especially at the second national conference held in Beijing in 1994. Their views can be summarized as

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<sup>37</sup>Zhong Cai, ed., *Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu zhiding guomin jingji he shehui fazhan "jiu-wu" jihua he 2010 nian yuanjing mubiao de jianyi (mingci shuyu jieshi)* (The proposal of the CCP Central Committee on the ninth five-year plan for national economic and social development and long-term goals by 2010 [a terminological explanation]) (Beijing: People's Press, 1995), 37, quoted in Zheng Yongnian, "Comprehensive National Power: An Expression of China's New Nationalism," in *China's Political Economy*, ed. Wang Gungwu and John Wong (Singapore: Singapore University Press and World Scientific, 1998), 192.

<sup>38</sup>Wan g Shuofeng, "An Analysis of Comprehensive National Power," *Baike zhishi* (Encyclopedic Knowledge), 1989, no. 6:7.

follows.<sup>39</sup> First, although "a theory of IR with Chinese characteristics" and "socialism with Chinese characteristics" are related, they differ significantly in their nature. The former is an academic subject, while the latter is a government policy. The two should not be mixed. Moreover, there is no overall consensus as to how to proceed with the development of such a theory.

Second, IR scholars in China have already developed an extensive network of contacts with foreign scholars and frequently exchange information as well as views on the discipline of IR. The main problems facing IR studies in the world have transcended national characteristics. Hence, there is no need to develop an independent Chinese theory.

Third, if it is accepted that one of the main levels of analysis in IR is the international level, then every IR scholar should pay attention to global as well as national interests. There is a role in every society for some "marginal" people who can detach themselves from their emotional attachment to their native cultures in order to become more universal in their intellectual make-up.

Fourth, IR theory should serve the interests not only of China but also of the world at large. If there is an IR theory which could be accepted in general terms by scholars all over the world, then the promotion of an IR theory with Chinese characteristics might not be to China's interests.

Fifth, the fact that the Chinese theoretical system of IR is different from that of other countries is obvious, and there is no need to emphasize such difference.

Wang Yizhou, a young researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), offers some sober thoughts in this debate. He argues that, given the cultural and historical differences between China and the West, it is not entirely inconceivable to talk about Chinese characteristics. However, deliberately to overstress Chinese characteristics is unwarranted and immature, since the study of IR in China is still at a very early stage of development and Chinese scholars are still in the process of learning from the outside world. A systematic body of knowledge of IR, including rele-

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<sup>39</sup>Wang, "A Summary of an Academic Conference," 46.

vant concepts, theories, and frameworks, has yet to be developed. When this is properly done, then a theory of IR with Chinese characteristics will automatically emerge.<sup>40</sup>

On the whole, those who are strongly in favor of establishing an IR theory with Chinese characteristics make up the majority of IR scholars in China. They are mostly elderly and conservative, while those who have reservations are in the minority, consisting mostly of younger and more liberal scholars, many of whom have had some overseas experience in the West. A clash of views between these two groups seems unavoidable, but has so far been quite subdued, owing to the current political situation in China in which the majority view has established a stronghold. Clearly, leading party officials and senior academics prefer to adopt a uniquely Chinese approach to IR. Although they do allow the spread of Western ideas about IR within the country and even point out from time to time the importance of introducing what they see as the best of Western scholarship, they nevertheless maintain that the principal line of enquiry should be Marxism and that IR theory should serve the interests of the state.

When the Chinese authorities refer to Chinese characteristics, they mean the collective Chinese characteristics or the characteristics of China rather than that of individuals. The supremacy of the state is held high. In the West, individuality is an accepted, even desirable, norm. In academia, whoever puts forward a new concept or a new theory first is often credited for doing so. Schools of thought are attributable to or identified with one or more representative scholars in the field, for example, power politics to Hans Morgenthau, complex interdependence to Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane, neorealism to Kenneth Waltz, and so on. Western scholars do not seem to qualify their body of knowledge with the characteristics of their countries. IR theory with American characteristics or British characteristics or, for that matter, of any other country, is far from the norm. Although scholars have used such references as the "English" school of international theory<sup>41</sup> and the American school of international theory to

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<sup>40</sup>Wang Yizhou, "Basis and Methodology," *Ouzhou* (Europe), 1995, no. 3:86-87.

<sup>41</sup>See, for example, Steve Smith, "The Self-Images of a Discipline: A Genealogy of Inter-

distinguish between the two different strands of IR thinking in the West, a particular school of thought, paradigm, or perspective is the usual way of identification. Such schools include the realist, the neorealist, behavioralist, post-behavioralist, traditionalist, global-structuralist, Marxist, or post-modernist.

Chinese scholars are not too keen to know who in China was the first to use such terms as *guoji geju* (international pattern), or the Chinese equivalents of national interest, poles, or polarity. They would point out that these terms and concepts started sometime in the mid-1980s. As to an authoritative interpretation or ultimate source of all these concepts, they would often refer to the *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*. Apparently, the Propaganda Department of the CCP Central Committee first officially authorized their use in such publications as the *People's Daily*, the *Liberation Daily*, or *Qiushi*, and subsequently their usage spread to other official, semi-official, or academic publications around the country. As one Chinese scholar puts it, in China academic theorists are few, ideological theorists are many.<sup>42</sup>

The emphasis on the development of a Chinese theory of IR reflects to a certain extent the relative flimsiness of the academic study of IR in China and the perceived need felt by most scholars and officials to protect this fledgling field from being overwhelmed by the comparatively much richer study in the West. Underlying the effort to develop a Chinese theory of IR is perhaps the implicit fear among established scholars that their status and positions might be threatened. Apparently, they treat the Western study of IR as one form of "spiritual pollution." If the academic study of IR in China is solid and strong, then there is no need to develop such an apparently parochial theory. A parallel can be drawn to compare China's

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national Relations Theory," in Booth and Smith, *International Relations Theory Today*, 11; Iver B. Neumann, "John Vincent and the English School of International Relations," in *The Future of International Relations: Masters in the Making?* ed. Iver B. Neumann and Ole Wæver (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), chap. 2; and K.J. Holsti, "America Meets the 'English School': State Interests in International Society," *Mershon International Studies Review* 41, Supplement 2 (November 1997): 275-80.

<sup>42</sup>Interview with Professor Jia Qingguo, Department of International Politics, Beijing University, Beijing, March 8, 1995.

jealousy in guarding its sovereignty. As noted by one Chinese scholar, because of its comparative weakness, China is very sensitive to any perceived threat to its national interests and sovereignty. A strong and confident state like the United States does not have to exercise such vigilance.<sup>43</sup>

### Chinese Contributions to IR Studies

One way to nurture the fledgling development of IR studies in China is to reaffirm, if not exaggerate, China's contributions to the field. According to Feng Tejun, Song Xinning, and their colleagues at the People's University of China, Chinese leaders and scholars have made four contributions:<sup>44</sup> (1) the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence in governing international relations; (2) Mao Zedong's "Three Worlds" theory; (3) peace and development as the two major issues facing the world today; and (4) the Chinese view of a new world order.

A Chinese source has pointed out that Lenin first developed the idea of peaceful coexistence,<sup>45</sup> but the Chinese have subsequently made improvements in the form of the current five principles.<sup>46</sup> The five principles—mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual nonaggression, noninterference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence—now constitute China's explicitly stated conditions for developing good relations with other countries. The "Three Worlds" theory was first developed by Mao in the 1960s and then elaborated by other Chinese leaders and scholars in the 1970s, but lost its relevance in the 1980s as a result of the changes in the global balance of power

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<sup>43</sup>Chen Lemin, "International Cooperation and Sovereignty," *Shijie zhishi* (World Affairs), 1992, no. 5:14-15.

<sup>44</sup>Feng Tejun and Song Xinning et al., eds., *Guoji zhengzhi gailun* (Introduction to international politics) (Beijing: The People's University of China Press, 1992), 36-37.

<sup>45</sup>Liu Jinji, Liang Shoude, Yang Huaisheng, et al., eds., *Guoji zhengzhi dacidian* (A dictionary of international politics) (Beijing: Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Press, 1994), 32.

<sup>46</sup>These improvements were made, with the concurrence of the Indian government, in the 1950s.

which led the Chinese government to adopt an "independent foreign policy."<sup>47</sup> The issues of peace and development tie in well with China's desire to speed up its modernization programs in a peaceful environment.<sup>48</sup> The Chinese view of a new world order is the latest fad among Chinese IR scholars and deserves some attention for its greater objectivity, more sophisticated analyses, and its timeliness.

The fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union came as much as a surprise to IR scholars in China as it did to those in the West. The phenomenal changes called into question the ability of IR theories to explain what had happened and to make a timely prognosis, prompting some Western scholars to review and revise their current theories and analyses. Despite the surprise, Chinese IR scholars apparently have not addressed the issue as to why they have failed to anticipate such momentous events. This is due partly to political sensitivities and partly to the fact that theory in China serves a different purpose, as a policy guide rather than as a systematic body of knowledge.

As a result of the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, some Chinese IR scholars have started to revise the way in which they group countries together for analytical purposes. In the 1980s, IR textbooks in China put the world's countries into three broad categories: developed capitalist countries consisting of the United States, those in Western Europe, and Japan; socialist countries including the Soviet Union and those in Eastern Europe; and independent nationalist countries belonging to the Third World. This kind of division reflected the Chinese perception of the world during the Cold War.<sup>49</sup> As the above categorization has been rendered obsolete, IR textbooks are in the process of being revised to reflect recent changes. A standard textbook written by Feng Tejun and others in 1994, for example, gives a chapter each to the United States, Japan, Europe, Russia, the Third

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<sup>47</sup>See, for example, James C. Hsiung, ed., *Beyond China's Independent Foreign Policy* (New York: Praeger, 1985).

<sup>48</sup>Gerald Chan, "Chinese Perspectives on Peace and Development," *Peace Review* 10, no. 1 (1998): 35-41.

<sup>49</sup>Feng Tejun et al., eds., *Dangdai shijie zhengzhi jingji yu guoji guanxi* (Contemporary world politics, economics, and international relations), 2nd edition (Beijing: The People's University of China Press, 1994), 7.

World, and China, instead of adopting the traditional tripartite division.<sup>50</sup>

These textbooks use different classification systems to present different international political situations; their theoretical discussions remain fairly weak. Mao's "Three Worlds" theory was, in fact, a way of dividing the world into three groups of countries and analyzing their conflictual relationships: the First World consisting of the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union; the Second World consisting of the industrialized West, including Japan; and the Third World consisting of the developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The fact that Mao's theory received greater attention than the more recent ways of classifying countries in the international system was because of his political influence. During the revolutionary days, Mao's theory was publicized on a scale unprecedented in modern Chinese history. Observers inside and outside the country fell under the sway of Mao's personality cult and the propaganda generated by the CCP.

Feng Tejun says that the contents of IR textbooks should be based on practice, not on theory.<sup>51</sup> His personal preference is a narrative, historical type of analysis, and he is not satisfied with some Western scholarship that suggests that theory should lead and set the framework for empirical analysis. Yet he contradicts himself by saying that Marxism should be the guiding theory in IR study.<sup>52</sup> His arguments, at least as presented in his book, are not convincing for four reasons. First, he listed books written by Marx, Lenin, and Mao and referred to Zhou Enlai's diplomatic brilliance. Without comparing their contributions to other scholarly works on international politics in contemporary China and elsewhere, Feng prematurely drew the conclusion that what they had contributed was accurate, comprehensive, and valuable. Second, the persons cited were revolutionaries, not academics, and to treat one group of people as if they belong to another is misleading. Third, the contributions made in their published works, including those of Marx, were limited in time and space—thus an increasing number

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 11.

of Chinese scholars have begun to question many of these analyses. Fourth, their works, including Marx's works on IR, have not been developed to an extent comparable to those in the IR scholarship of the West. Some of Marx's ideas have been used by structuralists in the globalist school of thought, but these are mostly scholars in the West rather than scholars in socialist countries. So the Chinese claim to have inherited Marxism seems to be born out of ideological assertion rather than serious academic analysis.

### The "Old" Versus the "New"<sup>53</sup>

Chinese thinking about IR falls into two major camps, the "old" and the "new," with variants in between. The "old" refers to the established scholars and their way of thinking, such as Feng Tejun of the People's University and Liang Shoude of Beijing University. The "new" school consists of those who are more "liberal" in their thinking, including "the three musketeers" from Shanghai: Ni Shixiong of Fudan University who did research in the United States in the early 1980s; Jin Yingzhong of the Shanghai International Relations Association; and Feng Shaolei of Shanghai's East China Normal University who received part of his IR training in the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s. Together, they have jointly written or edited several books on IR. The "Fudan school" of IR studies is active and refreshing. "New" blood from Shanghai also include Pan Zhiwei, Fan Jun, and Lu Lin. The urge to develop an IR theory with Chinese characteristics seems to have originated from China's defensive attitude toward Western thinking and practice, an attitude which is far more typical of the "old" school than the "new."

For the first time in the IR literature in China, the authors of a book published in 1994 argue that theory should serve to promote the forward-looking awareness or predictive power of international affairs and to serve to accumulate knowledge.<sup>54</sup> They deviate from the traditional line of think-

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<sup>53</sup>These are my terminologies, as are "musketeers" and the "Fudan school" in the following paragraph.

<sup>54</sup>Feng Shaolei, Pan Zhiwei, Fan Jun, and Lu Lin, *Guoji guanxi xinlun* (New discussions on



ing which holds that theory is to serve as a policy guide. Moreover, Marxism is only mentioned briefly in a few sentences, grouped together in a section at the end of the book.<sup>55</sup>

While IR scholars in Shanghai are more "liberal" and pluralistic, those in Beijing are more influential. Some senior scholars in the capital are responsible for setting the framework for provincial editors to follow in their compilation of textbooks for the political theory course on "World politics, economics, and international relations,"<sup>56</sup> which is compulsory for all liberal arts students at the tertiary level of education.

Somewhere in between the "old" and the "new," or between the "Beijing school" and the "Shanghai school," lie some interesting variants. One example is Bai Xi, a relatively young IR scholar in Beijing. He does not dispute the need to develop an IR theory with Chinese characteristics,<sup>57</sup> possibly because he is entangled in a web of entrenched vested interests among his colleagues or because of political sensitivities in China. Bai gives an analytical, if not somewhat sketchy, view of what he understands as constituting an IR theory with Chinese characteristics. He says that the theory shows three important aspects. First, there is no major contradiction between a potential IR theory with Chinese characteristics and the theoretical base of the current political thinking in China, that is, Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong Thought. Second, to some Chinese, such a theory could satisfactorily describe and explain the practice of China's foreign policy in the past, the present, and possibly the future. And third, it must

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international relations) (Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press, 1994), preface, 1.

<sup>55</sup>This section is clearly out of line with the flow of arguments in the main text. The analysis in the section scarcely touches on China, and concerns the past rather than the contemporary relevance of Marxism to IR. A plausible explanation for the inclusion of this rather odd section is that the authors had to satisfy the conditions of its funding agency in Shanghai for supporting Marxist publications and that it was possibly the result of a screening process conducted by the government to ensure "political correctness."

<sup>56</sup>According to Professor Song Xinning of the People's University of China in Beijing, starting from September 1998, the name of the course would be changed to "World politics and economics," dropping the reference to IR. The contents would remain the same. Interview with Professor Song at his office on June 4, 1998.

<sup>57</sup>Bai Xi, *Dangdai guoji guanxixue daolun* (Introduction to contemporary international relations) (Beijing: University of Political Science and Law Press, 1991), 293.

be based on the way in which Chinese scholars view international affairs. He goes on to say that "a scientific theory with Chinese characteristics" should not be equated with "China's own scientific theory."<sup>58</sup> The latter runs against the principle of generalization in science. It would be as ridiculous as to call for "the establishment of physics with Chinese characteristics."<sup>59</sup>

Apart from Bai, one could also include Wang Jisi and Wang Yizhou, researchers at CASS, as those who fall somewhere in between the "old" and the "new." Both have a solid grounding in Western IR theory and a clear understanding of China's domestic conditions. Both have a reflective style of thinking and analysis that goes beyond the general normative description of current events so typical of most Chinese writers. Both have reservations on the development of an IR theory with Chinese characteristics.

### Possible Fall-Out of a Chinese Theory

For an outside observer, to develop an IR theory with Chinese characteristics might be seen as a deviant move, because in so doing China is setting itself apart from, if not up against, the mainstream study in the academic world. This would seem undesirable given that China is still at an early stage of developing its study of IR. Some foreign students studying international politics at Beijing University in 1995 expressed their puzzlement, as the development of an IR theory with characteristics of a particular country was unheard of elsewhere.<sup>60</sup> Such a development is unlikely to en-

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 292.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid. Bai's arguments can best be viewed against the context of the nature of social sciences and the differences between social sciences and physical sciences. In comparison, physical sciences can be rendered more exact in terms of measurability of the variables involved by some commonly accepted standards, whereas social science variables are much more difficult to measure because they involve human values and judgments which can be highly controversial. Hence social sciences in some countries, especially in China, are politically very sensitive. Despite these relative differences between the two branches of sciences, there exist some commonalities. What makes them both sciences is that they share the qualities of being systematic and logical, and both make use of the theoretical properties of description, explanation, predication, and prescription.

<sup>60</sup>Interviews at Beijing University in early 1995. The Department of International Politics

hance China's image abroad. It might even generate misunderstanding between Chinese and foreign scholars.

The current state of the study of IR theory in China can be described as "closed pluralism," as opposed to "open pluralism." Closed pluralism refers to the kind of freedom of expression that allows a variety of differing views on IR theory to exist, but only within a certain limit prescribed by Chinese Marxism. It is not the kind of freedom of academic pursuit that exists in the West. Closed pluralism, however, is not a static situation; it is dynamic to the extent that Marxism is being interpreted and reinterpreted differently to suit changing circumstances.

Western IR theories have been introduced to the Chinese education system mainly through the translation of Western academic works into Chinese or through the teaching and publications by young Chinese scholars who have received training abroad. The contending schools of thought within China (those who argue for or against, or remain somewhat neutral to the development of an IR theory with Chinese characteristics) are welcoming signs. A paradigm shift in the Kuhnian sense in the study of social sciences in China is definitely not in the offing. A Marxist approach to IR, though a bit watered down and relatively benign in recent years, is still dominant. A change to open pluralism is not yet in sight, but the development of IR studies seems to be edging gingerly in that direction.

In the process of opening up to the outside world, there is often a tendency within the traditional, orthodox sector of the academic community to try to arrest the speed with which contacts are being made between Chinese scholarship and Western (Marxist and non-Marxist alike) scholarship. In China, this conservative sector can be compared to the *guocui pai*, or the "national essence" school, which is so deeply nationalistic and patriotic that scholars within the school care very little about seeking objectivity. They stick to their own entrenched ideological stands, partly because of political necessity and partly because they want to protect their vested interests and

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at Beijing University runs a master's program in English for foreign students. Most of them come from Africa and other developing countries to study on Chinese government scholarships. Their courses are run separately from courses offered to local Chinese students and a few South Korean students.

status. To modify their collective view of the world to conform to that of the West could undermine their privileged positions.

Another plausible explanation is more physical and psychological in nature. Physically they find it difficult, if not impossible, to meet the challenges posed by Western studies. A common feature is that most of the members of this school have little experience in living or working in the West; they do not have the necessary foreign language ability to keep in close touch with the latest developments in IR studies outside. Some of them are just too old or rigid to adjust to change. For example, Liang Shoude and Feng Tejun were trained in the 1950s and 1960s when the Soviet influence was dominant. They have little command of the English language, but they are currently holding senior academic positions in the IR field. To the elderly and the established, change can be painful and sometimes frightening. The fear of the unknown puts most of them off. This physical and psychological effect tends to strengthen their determination to cling to their accustomed past.

A few of them are endeavoring to revisit the past in the hope of uncovering something useful to help them to stand up to Western influence. This pattern of Chinese learning versus Western learning has a historical ring dating back to the initial encounters between China and the West, and it persists in one form or another up to this day. In the study of IR, the "national essence" school is trying to do something similar, hoping that the Chineseness or Chinese characteristics can negate or neutralize the effects brought about by Western ideas and values which are embedded in the Western learning of IR.

Wang Jisi offers an interesting observation when he says that some IR specialists in China hold the view that "the purpose of making acquaintance with Western theories is not so much to enrich Chinese thinking and methodology as to know more about the foundation of Western foreign policies."<sup>61</sup> This is certainly true of the older, traditional scholars, but less so of the younger, more liberal ones. Interestingly, this kind of

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<sup>61</sup>Wang Jisi, "International Relations Theory and the Study of Chinese Foreign Policy," in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, ed. Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 495.

thinking is an extension of the Chinese understanding of theory, which is supposed to guide policy rather than to explain social phenomena.

Those who favor the establishment of a theory of IR with Chinese characteristics often argue that Chinese scholars have to consider their *guoqing* (national conditions), but no one seems to have come up with a proper definition of the term.<sup>62</sup> Professor Zhao Baoxu, head of Beijing University's Research Center for Contemporary China, offers a useful explanation when he says that *guoqing* takes into consideration the history and the present conditions of a country, as well as its material and spiritual wealth.<sup>63</sup>

### Why Do We Need a Chinese Theory?

Huan Xiang said forthrightly that "we are socialists. Of course we ought to develop a socialist IR study."<sup>64</sup> He Fang, on the other hand, said that because China could not import Western IR theories lock, stock, and barrel, it must therefore develop its own.<sup>65</sup> Apparently, he sets himself up in an *either-or* situation without giving adequate consideration to possible alternatives. Although he has admitted that there are things that China can learn from the West, he does not seem to have specified what these things are nor does he suggest how they can be learned. Neither has he considered if Chinese scholars can Sinicize and incorporate some parts of Western learning so as to form China's own approach to IR. Nor has he considered a *both-and* situation in which Chinese scholars can engage in meaningful debates with foreign scholars on Western IR theories.

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<sup>62</sup>Some young Chinese scholars have recently turned their attention to publishing policy-oriented papers based on their perception of China's conditions. See, for example, Wang Shaoguang and Hu Angang, *Zhongguo guojia nengli baogao* (A report on China's national capability) (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>63</sup>Zhao Baoxu, "Preface" to *Guoqing zhishi shouce* (Handbook of the knowledge of national conditions), ed. Beijing University's Research Center for Contemporary China (Beijing: Science and Technology Press, 1990), 1-2.

<sup>64</sup>Huan Xiang, "Preface" to James Dougherty and Robert Pfaltzgraff, Jr., *Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey*, trans. Shao Wenguang (Beijing: World Affairs Press, 1987), 1-2.

<sup>65</sup>He Fang, "Establish China's International Relations Theory," *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi*, 1992, no. 1:36.

Instead of looking for possible compatibility and accommodation, the traditional, conservative IR scholars apparently put emphasis on the preservation of Chinese uniqueness as a way to resist the encroachment of Western scholarship. Certainly, Sinocentrism or the Middle Kingdom mentality (in the general sense of the terms) has played a significant part in the Chinese effort to develop their own theory of IR.

He Fang also says that one of the characteristics of China's view of IR is the recognition that "the protection of [China's] national interests and the protection of world peace and human development are in harmony."<sup>66</sup> These are lofty ideals, like the goal of trying to tie China's foreign-policy objectives to the traditional Marxist call for the people and workers of the world to unite to combat imperialism and inequality. While Western liberal democracies have been trying to achieve equality in various spheres of social life through legal means, the Chinese government has been trying to achieve equality among states in order to protect its national interests from the encroachment of imperialist powers. Similarly, Li Shisheng argues that IR theory should pay attention to the masses of oppressed peoples around the world, apart from nation-states.<sup>67</sup> Li says this is one of the important aspects that distinguishes Marxist and Leninist IR theory from those of the mainstream West.

In summary, according to its proponents, an IR theory with Chinese characteristics should consist of the following components: Marxism; Chinese culture; measures to protect and promote China's national interests; peace and development as the main themes; and the oppressed class, apart from states, as one of the main actors in world politics.

Wang Yizhou suggests that the development of IR studies in China is at a "preliminary stage," in which the main task for scholars is to learn, borrow, absorb, and digest the existing body of IR knowledge in the world.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 37.

<sup>67</sup>Li Shisheng, "Basic Thinking on the Establishment of a System of International Relations Theory," in *Guoji zhengzhi lunji* (Collected essays on international politics), ed. Liang Shoude et al. (Beijing: Beijing Press, 1992), 101.

<sup>68</sup>Xiao Duan (Wang's pen name) in reviewing Yuan Ming's *Kua shiji de tiaozhan*, in *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi*, 1995, no. 1:92.

He says that "characteristics" usually take shape through a slow and natural process. Only when there exist a sizeable number of scholars in the discipline, substantial publications in the field, and various contending schools of thought, can China be ready to compete with other theoretical systems in IR studies. At present, Wang says that the primary task should be to achieve a thorough understanding of the aims, methods, scope, and concepts of IR. A common language has to be developed in order to facilitate communication and exchange among Chinese scholars as well as between Chinese and foreign scholars.

Currently, academics in China are divided on these issues. For instance, those in the conservative school say that the time is ripe for China to develop its own theory of IR, pointing out that their younger colleagues are spending too much time and energy on introducing Western ideas without critical evaluation. This accusation is unfair, because critical analysis cannot be made until and unless the relevant literature in the West has been properly digested.

The importance of maintaining Chinese characteristics is partly psychological: the more the Chinese are challenged, the more they cling to their past. The long history of their civilization and culture give the Chinese the security and comfort that they need in order to carry on, more so in times of danger than in times of peace. When challenged by Western scholarship, Chinese scholars tend to look to their historical past for survival clues. To meet the challenge posed by Western IR theory, they try to develop something which they can call their own—a theory of IR with Chinese characteristics, while projecting Marxism as the guiding principle out of political necessity. The Chinese also look to their rich cultural past to buttress their world outlook by stressing their Chineseness, not only out of pride but also out of a need for security. This harks back to the slogan "Chinese learning as an essence and Western learning as a tool" (*Zhongxue wei ti, Xixue wei yong*). The two can coexist in some kind of balance, like *yin* and *yang*, but they are also in a state of constant conflict.

Following the party's instruction to offer courses on IR in 1985, Marxist scholars with a background training in communist movements began to take on the task. These were scholars of Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong Thought. Some of them learned Russian as a second language and

received their training from Soviet instructors who taught in Chinese universities in the 1950s. Now most of them have to adjust to a new academic environment. When they come into contact with Western scholarship through meetings with foreign scholars or through reading Western literature translated by their younger colleagues, they began to feel a deep sense of unease. They cannot fully grasp the Western literature because IR theories are so varied and the models and approaches used so foreign to them. The fact that most of them know little English only adds to the problem. The task of adjusting becomes so daunting that most of them respond in a defensive way by championing the development of their own theory of IR, based on their own experience and the political climate prevailing in the country at the time.

### In Search of Theory

Despite the efforts made so far to develop an IR theory with Chinese characteristics, the single most disturbing feature in IR studies in the country is a dearth of research on theory. This is aptly demonstrated by the research done at the master's level in the Department of International Politics at Beijing University over the past few years. Table 1 shows the distribution of MA students in the department. A survey of the thesis titles of all the students in table 1 reveals that in 1994 there was none on IR theory and only one each in subsequent years that can possibly be counted as touching on IR theory per se: "Balance of Power in the New International Order" (1995); "Unilateralism and Interdependence in the Post-Cold War Era" (1996); and "International Intervention in the Post-Cold War Era" (1997).<sup>69</sup> The "theory" that a few other theses discuss relates to Marxism. Nearly all the theses in the international politics stream are concerned with interstate power politics. Apparently, there are few or no theoretical debates or discussions, as would be expected of most IR theses in British and American

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<sup>69</sup> *Guoji zhengzhi yanjiu*, an in-house academic journal published by the department, 1994, no. 3:68-69; 1995, no. 3:110-11; 1996, no. 3:80-81; and 1997, no. 3:119-20.



**Table 1**  
**The Distribution of MA Students in the Department of International Politics at Beijing University, 1994-97**

Subject Area	1994	1995	1996	1997
International politics*	15	17	10	26**
International communist movement	5	2	4	6
Scientific socialism	1	2	1	1
Chinese Communist Party history	5	5	5	5

\*including IR.

\*\*including six South Korean students.

**Sources:** *Guoji zhengzhi yanjiu* (Studies of International Politics), an in-house academic journal published by the department, 1994, no. 3:68-69; 1995, no. 3:110-11; 1996, no. 3:80-81; and 1997, no. 3:119-20.

universities. One plausible explanation is that most of the graduate supervisors in China are elderly professors who have little intimate knowledge of IR theory in the West. The situation is therefore as much a reflection of their research preference as the political or ideological condition in the country.

In 1997, four postgraduates completed their doctoral studies and twenty-five completed their masters at the Foreign Affairs College in Beijing, an institution for training diplomats. All four doctoral students were in IR, as were five out of the twenty-five master's degree students. The rest were studying international law, China's foreign relations, and language (English) studies. Of all the IR theses, only one can be counted as dealing with theory, namely, the dissertation dealing with the changing structure of IR; the rest were dealing with different aspects of interstate relations, especially relations with the United States.<sup>70</sup> In 1996, none of the five IR theses dealt with IR theory.<sup>71</sup>

This lack of theoretical studies can also be seen in the entrance examinations to the master's and doctoral programs at the Foreign Affairs College. The main foci of the 1994 entrance examination paper to the doc-

<sup>70</sup>*Waijiao xueyuan xuebao*, 1997, no. 3:86-87.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 1996, no. 3:87.

toral program in IR were IR history and Japanese economic diplomacy. The examination paper consisted of seven sections:<sup>72</sup> (1) American diplomatic history (1945 onward); (2) Japanese diplomatic history (1945 onward); (3) contemporary IR history (1917 onward); (4) contemporary world history (1917-45); (5) the history of China's external relations (1911-49); (6) political economy; and (7) international trade and international finance. Two interesting points emerge. First, the use of the year 1917 as a starting point in contemporary world history shows the legacy of the Soviet influence on the college's program. Second, in the last two non-history sections, applicants were asked to explain some technical economic terms. Of the two essay-type questions in the rest of the paper, one related to the socialist market economy and the other to Marxism.

The master's program at the same college consists of three disciplines: international law, international politics, and international relations. Within the IR discipline, the 1997 master's entrance examination consisted of the following sections:<sup>73</sup> (1) postwar international relations (1945-90); (2) the world economy; (3) contemporary world history (1917-45); (4) American diplomatic history (1898 onward); (5) contemporary Chinese diplomacy (1949-96); and (6) Chinese diplomatic history (1840-1949). A similar pattern appears in the yearly entrance examination papers in the IR discipline from 1994 to 1996.<sup>74</sup> It is apparent that the college's IR program is heavily skewed toward IR history, with a socialist slant. There are no discussions or debates on IR theory, and little sign of learning from the body of IR knowledge in the West, despite the repeated calls to do so from some quarters in the country. China is China is China!<sup>75</sup>

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 1995, no. 1:88-89.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 1997, no. 3:92-96.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 1995, no. 1:94-96; 1995, no. 3:91-93; and 1997, no. 3:86-92.

<sup>75</sup>A phrase borrowed from June T. Dreyer's *China's Political System: Modernization and Tradition* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1993), 23-24, as one of the seven schools of analysis of Chinese politics which stresses the importance of the influence of culture and tradition on Chinese politics. The phrase also means that "China is unique, and therefore few readily available Western theories can be applied directly to its study." See Hua Shiping's book review of Liu Xiuwu, *Western Perspectives on Chinese Higher Education: A Model for Cross-Cultural Inquiry* (Cranbury, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996), in *Perspectives on Political Science* 26, no. 4 (Fall 1997): 233.

### **Some Concluding Thoughts**

From the above analysis, it can be seen that the Chinese are still struggling to develop an IR theory of their own and that differing opinions exist as to whether or not the development of an IR theory with Chinese characteristics is the way forward. To talk of a Chinese theory is apparently premature and perhaps the Chinese views of world affairs can best be understood as perspectives rather than theory. These Chinese perspectives, however, deserve attention, as perception influences behavior, and how the Chinese behave will certainly affect the outside world. This will be especially true as China continues to grow strong, both economically and politically. Therefore, efforts to understand Chinese perspectives should be encouraged.

Clearly, the current Chinese perspectives can only form a peripheral school in IR theorizing. Some scholars have pointed out that to think is to theorize.<sup>76</sup> But here a subtle difference can be made: theorizing refers to an academic enterprise, while thinking carries a greater policy sense in that thinking leads more directly to behavior than theorizing does. Based on this assumption, it is no wonder that academics in general pay relatively little attention to Chinese theorizing, unlike policymakers around the world who pay increasing attention to what a rising China may or may not do, and hence to what Chinese leaders think and calculate. If a major goal of the policy world is to influence the academic world, as it often does in countries like the United States and elsewhere, then it is likely that increasing academic attention will be paid to Chinese perspectives. It will be naive to think that the peripheral Chinese school will become the central school in the academic world in the near future. However, it is possible that this Chinese school may attract more serious attention than it has hitherto been able to do, thus moving from a peripheral position to a semi-peripheral one.

Before this happens, and if it is to happen at all, a kind of "two cultures" problem will persist: tension between the Western "culture" of IR

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<sup>76</sup>Samuel Alexander, *Space, Time and Deity* (London: Macmillan, 1920), quoted in Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977), preface.

theorizing and the Chinese "culture" of IR theorizing. At present, both are largely talking past each other. But increasing interdependence of one kind or another will inevitably bring the two together into some kind of uneasy dialogue before they can relate comfortably with each other. If this simple dichotomy is extended to cover the development of IR studies in other geographical regions, then we may be facing a "many cultures" problem today in IR theorizing.

The dominance of American theorization of IR is an objective state of affairs. It is being sustained by the comprehensive power of the United States, which has the largest community of IR specialists, the best colleges and schools of international affairs, the brightest professors and graduate students, the most prestigious academic journals, and the largest amount of funding to support the study of IR. Its tyranny of sheer power, influence, and "cultural imperialism" is there to stay. The cost of this dominance is, however, the stifling of indigenous developments in IR studies elsewhere. The European school, especially the English school, fares much better, for obvious reasons, than non-Anglo Saxon schools such as those in the developing world of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

From a historical perspective, not all that a tyrant does is bad. Chinese history tells us that Emperor Qin Shihuang was an absolute tyrant. He burned books and executed scholars. But he was also the first emperor to unite China, to build a network of roads and canals to facilitate trade and communication. Similarly, the American dominance over IR studies does have its benefits. It sets the academic standard, gives the discipline of IR its distinctiveness, helps scholars of other nationalities to theorize, and most important of all, American society is one open to criticism and differing views.

