The Chinese School of International Relations: Myth or Reality?

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Review article of:

> Yongjin Zhang and Teng-chi Chang, eds., *Constructing a Chinese School of International Relations: Ongoing debates and sociological realities* (Oxon and NY: Routledge, 2016, 265 pp., USD 38.47, eBook).

Mainstream theories of International Relations (IR) claim to be universally valid, neutral, and value-free in their scientific endeavours to explain the way the world operates. In contrast to these claims, there is a close relationship between power and knowledge production, as is demonstrated by Robert W. Cox's famous dictum: "Theory is always for someone and for some purpose."[1] Cox's words ring so true that scholarly works produced in social sciences throughout the world reflect the core-periphery structure of the world order. While IR studies in the United States can be classified as 'core social sciences,' European IR schools represent the semi-periphery, and finally, scholarly works from the rest of the world represent the periphery.[2] With their claim to universal validity, studies in the core intellectually dominate the field of IR in the Gramscian sense. Most scholarly works in the semi-periphery and periphery try to integrate into the 'global IR' represented by US academia, whereas others question and try to overcome this core-periphery structure of social sciences by challenging the Western-centric mainstream IR theory.[3]

Theoretical and scholarly debates on the Western-centric nature of IR theories and the need to overcome this nature have been an enduring issue in the field of IR. Early attempts at questioning the Eurocentrism of IR theories can be found in the writings of the Latin American Dependency School and the World Systems Analysis. Immanuel Wallerstein identifies the notions of "the right of those who believe they hold universal values to intervene against the barbarians; the essential particularism of Orientalism; and scientific universalism"[4] as three forms of European universalism that are used to legitimize the dominance of the powerful. For Wallerstein, a possible way of overcoming the era of European universalism is to create a multiplicity of universalisms by historicising our intellectual analyses.[5]

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[1] Robert W. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 10, no. 2 (1981): 128.

[2] Peter Marcus Kristensen, "Navigating the Core-Periphery Structures of "Global IR": Dialogues and Audiences for the Chinese School as Travelling Theory," in *Constructing a Chinese School of International Relations: Ongoing debates and sociological realities*, eds. Yongjin Zhang and Teng-chi Chang (New York: Routledge, 2016), 143.

[3] See Engin Sune, "Non-Western International Relations Theory and Ibn Khaldun," *All Azimuth* 5, no. 1 (2016): 79-88; Ali Karaomanoğlu and Ersel Aydınlı, "Introduction to All Azimuth," *All Azimuth* 1, no. 1 (2012): 5-7; Seçkin Köstem, "International Relations Theories and Turkish International Relations: Observations Based on a Book," *All Azimuth* 4, no. 1 (2015): 59-66.

[4] Immanuel Wallerstein, *European Universalism: The Rhetoric of Power* (New York: The New Press, 2006), 71.

[5] Wallerstein, *European Universalism*, 82-4.

In a similar manner, Amitav Acharya asks the question: "Does the discipline of International Relations truly reflect the global society we live in today?" in an article focusing on a new agenda for international studies for establishing a global IR. After criticising the non-inclusive, Eurocentric nature of the discipline he calls on academia to construct a truly global IR that recognizes the diversity of thoughts in the world and the multiple ways of overcoming conflicts and finding common ground.[6]

Since the end of the Cold War, several attempts have been made by IR scholars from Brazil to India and Turkey to China to criticize and challenge the Western-centric nature of IR theory building. *Constructing a Chinese School of International Relations* is an example of such efforts, and tries to reveal both the ongoing debates on the construction of a Chinese School of IR and the achievements of such attempts so far.

This review essay is composed of three parts. First, it briefly examines the development of Chinese IR studies from the field's formation in the 1950s until today, as well as the three main contributions of Chinese IR to the field: the Tsinghua Approach under the leadership of Yan Xuetong, the Relational Theory of World Politics of Qin Yaqing, and the *Tianxia* (All-Under-Heaven) Approach of Zhao Tingyang. Then it moves on to provide an overview of the book, which is the product of a workshop, *The Chinese School of IR and Its Critics*, organized in 2013 by the future editors of the book. Finally, it briefly discusses the existing situation of the Chinese School of IR and evaluates the place the book occupies in building a distinctive IR theory.

1. Chinese IR Theory Pathway

Endeavours in creating a Chinese School of IR are some of the leading attempts at challenging the US-centric knowledge production and thus, diversifying and localizing IR theory. The history of Chinese IR studies dates back to the early 1950s, but studies in the Western sense only started in the post-Mao period. Following Qin's periodization, scholarly Chinese IR endeavours can be classified into three phases: pre-theory, theory-learning, and theory-building.[7] During the 'action-oriented' pre-theory period from 1949 to 1979, the main task of scholarly works was to provide information for the foreign policies and strategies being developed by Chinese political leaders. In other words, IR theory building was an action-oriented business that could only be realised by the leaders of the Communist Party of China (CPC).[8]

The second phase, theory-learning, started with the opening-up and reform period, which Deng Xiaoping initiated after the death of Mao Zedong and continued until the mid-2000s. This was a period of IR knowledge accumulation from the West, especially the US. In this phase, the intense inflow of trans-Atlantic IR studies dominated Chinese IR thinking and studies, and almost blocked the flow of critical and non-mainstream IR theories. One of the most important features of this period was the rising awareness in Chinese IR academia of the distinction between action-oriented policy interpretation and knowledge-oriented academic

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[6] Amitav Acharya, "Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds: A New Agenda for International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (2014): 647-59.

[7] Zhang Feng, drawing on Qin's periodisation, divides this same period into five phases. See Zhang Feng, "The Tsinghua Approach and the Inception of Chinese Theories of International Relations," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 5, no. 1 (2012): 76-8.

[8] Yaqing Qin, "Why is There No Chinese International Relations Theory?" *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 7, no. 3 (2007): 317-18; Qin Yaqing, "Development of International Relations Theory in China: Progress Through Debates," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 11, no. 2 (2011): 232-33.

research. This awareness was so prevalent that the first conference about establishing a Chinese IR theory (which can be considered the starting point of Chinese IR theory-building efforts) was held in 1987 in Shanghai by Chinese academia. Another feature is the consciousness of 'schools of thought' in IR theory debates. During this phase, according to Qin, three debates emerged among Chinese IR scholars.[9] The first debate began in the 1980s and lasted until the early 1990s, and concerned the issue of China's relations with the outside world. The main issue of the debate was whether China should stay as a proletarian revolutionary state that isolates itself from the rest of the world, or whether it should become an open, 'normal' state with links to the international community. In other words, the debating parties were proponents of Marxism and realism, respectively. The end result of the debate was the emergence of realism as the first established Western IR theory in Chinese IR academia.[10]

The 1990s witnessed the second debate, which resembled the first great debate in IR discipline that took place in the 1930s and 1940s. Two main questions about China's national interest constituted this second debate: 'What was China's most important national interest, and how China should realise it?' The parties joining the debate were realists and liberals who stressed, respectively, the importance of the accumulation of power and of integration into international institutions. In the end, the two sides agreed that these arguments reinforced each other and that a continued policy of opening-up was the best policy choice for fulfilling China's national interests. Put differently, for the Chinese realists and liberals, China should simultaneously become a Hobbesian nation-state and a rational Lockean actor. The end result of this debate was (institutional) liberalism's establishment as an IR theory in Chinese academia on equal footing with realism.[11]

The third and final debate, which concerns the issue of China's rise, stemmed from the response to the China-threat theory in the US and followed the same question debated there: 'Is China a peaceful status quo power, or a revisionist challenger?' The most significant development of this phase has been the emergence of Wendtian constructivism and thus, the tripartite division of Chinese IR theory studies. While realists argue that the relationship between a rising state and a hegemon cannot be peaceful, liberals reject this deterministic approach and state that if China follows a policy of integration into the international system it will find an opportunity to rise peacefully. Constructivists have joined the debate in the liberal camp, yet with a different approach. They argue that as China integrates with international society it not only benefits from this process materially, but also accepts international norms and institutions that shift its identity and transforms it into a responsible member of international society, or namely, a status quo power. This debate is still ongoing among the three leading schools of thought and is closely related to the third phase of Chinese IR theory endeavours – theory-building – which is still in its initial stages.[12]

Since the start of the third phase in the mid-2000s, IR theoretical knowledge production in China made important progress, with a number of innovative initiatives launched by Chinese scholars. Three of these contributions, which can be categorised into two methods, are worth noting. The first method is an integrative approach that combines both Western and Chinese styles of knowledge and theory building. Qin's Relational Theory of World

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[9]   Zhang also makes a similar classification. See "The Tsinghua Approach," 77-8.
[10]   Qin, "Why is There," 319-21; Qin, "Development of International," 234-40.
[11]   Qin, "Development of International," 240-44.
[12]   Qin, "Why is There," 321-22; Qin, "Development of International," 245-48.

Politics, as well as the works of the Tsinghua Team, including Yan, are part of this integrative approach. The other method is the traditional approach, which examines the thoughts of Chinese philosophers, mainly Confucius. Zhao's reinterpretation of the ancient *Tianxia* (All-Under-Heaven) system for analysing the world order and global governance is a pioneering study of the traditional approach. Indeed, all three contributors to the Chinese School base their theories on traditional Chinese thinking and philosophy, but what makes Zhao's works distinct is his rejection of the ontology and epistemology of Western thought and the overwhelming reliance on Chinese ontology and epistemology.

In his attempt to combine Western theories with Chinese culture and ideas, Qin, who identifies himself as a constructivist, brings social constructivism and Chinese traditional philosophy together. In this endeavour, as a counterpart to the concept of rationality as the metaphysical core of mainstream IR theories, Qin proposes to put the concept of relationality, which is pivotal to Confucian cultural communities, in the centre of IR theory research.[13] He bases his theory on three underlying assumptions of the interrelatedness of the IR world: socially constructed roles, identities of social actors, and processes defined in terms of relations in motions. Following these assumptions, Qin suggests redefining the research orientations and key concepts of IR by taking relations as the basic unit of analysis. However, this does not mean replacing rationality with relationality, as those concepts are complementary and a successful synthesis of them may be useful in analysing and understanding world politics.[14]

Yan (who identifies himself as a political realist) and other members of the Tsinghua Team focus on and examine Chinese interstate philosophy in the pre-Qin period to find valuable intellectual sources for their innovative theoretical studies. However, it must be pointed out that Yan rejects the possibility of creating a distinctively Chinese School of IR theory. He believes that scientific theory must be universal and thus establishing a Chinese School is unnecessary. Still, he argues that it is possible to enrich current IR theory by studying Chinese political thought of the pre-Qin era. A new theory can then be created by combining pre-Qin thinking with modern IR theory. Such a study may also be helpful in understanding contemporary international political realities and drawing lessons for policy today. In other words, pre-Qin political thought may be useful in formulating strategies for a rising China.[15]

As a philosopher, Zhao's approach to the world order is different than Qin's and Yan's. As a firm critic of Western thought, he argues that due to lack of a universally accepted worldwide political institution to govern a truly coherent world society, today's world is a non- or failed world. In a failed world, attempts to unify the world are useless. Such an attempt must be based on a global political philosophy "which speaks on the behalf of the world,"[16] not the nation-state. Thus, to achieve the goal of establishing a world theory, world politics must be understood under the framework of 'world-ness,' not internationality. For Zhao, the Chinese concept of *Tianxia*, which he compares with the concept of the United Nations, provides such a framework. While *Tianxia* presupposes the 'Oneness' of the world as acceptance of its diversity, the UN pattern presumes it as a mission to accomplish Western universalism. In other words, whereas *Tianxia* presupposes harmony, the UN model presumes sameness.[17]

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[13] Yaqing Qin, "A Relational Theory of World Politics," *International Studies Review* 18, no. 1 (2016): 34-9.

[14] Qin, "A Relational Theory," 33-47.

[15] Yan Xuetong, "Pre-Qin Philosophy and China's Rise Today," in *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, eds. Daniel A. Bell and Sun Zhe (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011), 199-204.

[16] Zhao Tingyang, "A Political World Philosophy in terms of All-under-heaven (Tian-xia)," *Diogenes* 221 (2009): 7.

[17] Zhao Tingyang, "Rethinking Empire from a Chinese Concept 'All-under-Heaven' (Tian-xia)," *Social Identities* 12, no. 1

2. Overview of the Book

The possibility of building a non-Western IR theory in general and a Chinese IR theory in particular is a hotly-debated issue in Chinese, Western, and non-Western IR academia. *Constructing a Chinese School of International Relations* is about ongoing debates on and contestations to the development of a Chinese School of IR theory. Contributions to the book from different nationalities, each with distinct viewpoints, pay tribute to the diversity of existing views. These contributions reflect the ways Chinese scholars are engaged in Western IR theories, the construction of Chinese IR theory, and the likelihood of developing a Chinese School(s) of IR as a challenge to the hegemony of Western-centric IR knowledge production, thereby diversifying and localizing IR theory construction. By gathering a number of scholarly works from both inside and outside of mainland China, the book helps to further the efforts exerted by Chinese scholars in constructing a Chinese IR School(s). Through an in-depth evaluation, the book both criticises and contributes to distinctive Chinese IR theory building endeavours.

Constructing a Chinese School of International Relations is composed of two parts. The first part evaluates the ongoing debates on the construction of a Chinese School of IR, and the second part investigates whether the development of such a school has turned into a sociological reality. Among a number of issues debated throughout the chapters, three are worth focusing on: naming the school, Chinese-ness and Chinese exceptionalism, and the power-knowledge relationship. L.H.M. Ling, in Chapter 1, and Ren Xiao, in Chapter 2, take on the issue of naming the school from opposite directions. Ling argues that "the acting [*sic*] of naming not only defines an object of inquiry but also how we study it,"[18] and rejects the claim that a Chinese school of IR, as it stands, offers a distinct perspective in the study of IR. She argues that the concepts of 'Chinese' and 'IR' are reflections of Westphalian legacy and thus, a Chinese school of IR creates another form of Western-centrism. To overcome the hegemony of Western IR thinking, Ling argues, the territoriality of Westphalia must be transcended. Ren, on the other hand, is one of the leading proponents of the 'Chinese School of IR,' as well as the scholar who coined this term. He provides two reasons for coining such a term. The first is the dissatisfaction with the dominance of Western IR thinking in forming and addressing theoretical questions in the Chinese academia. However, challenging its dominance is not enough for non-US communities to counter the US intellectual hegemony; they also need to produce 'innovative and meaningful scholarship'. Ren argues that this is what Chinese scholars have been doing in the last 15 to 20 years. So, the emergence of a Chinese school, though a long and toilsome process, is inevitable. Ren's second reason is to gain academic autonomy from the dominant political discourse of the CPC. He rejects naming the school as 'IR with Chinese characteristics' because it invokes the political discourse on 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'. Ren further states that products of social science become more cosmopolitan as they become more national. Chinese-ness of IR theory building is an important aspect of his argument, but he makes a narrow and thus controversial definition of the Chinese School one which includes only Chinese scholars living in China.

(January 2006): 29-39; Zhao, "A Political World," 5-15.

[18] L. H. M. Ling, "What's in a Name? A Critical Interrogation of the "Chinese School of IR"," in *Constructing a Chinese School of International Relations: Ongoing debates and sociological realities*, eds. Yongjin Zhang and Teng-chi Chang (New York: Routledge, 2016), 17.

On the other hand, in Chapter 5 Teng-chi Chang claims that "naming debates of the Chinese IRT still went ahead of its substantive content."[19] For him, the central problematic of the Chinese School is how to present itself to the outside world and show that China is a peace-loving country. The question 'Does China's rise threaten the existence of the post-war peace settlement?' has been one of the most debated issues both in the West and in China, but mainly from opposite standpoints. Chinese scholars try to reformulate the question and overcome the China Threat Theory. However, as they try to accomplish this goal, their studies serve the foreign policy needs of the state and thus, the Chinese ruling elite. In other words, the Chinese School becomes "a national IR theory only intending to deliver a 'China voice'."[20] According to Teng-chi, to prevent such a position the Chinese School needs to enlarge its scope in time and space and bring East Asia back in the picture through a dynamic dialogue with both the East and the West.

By providing cultural explanations for the lack of a Chinese IR theory Wang Yiwei and Han Xuqing, in Chapter 3, weigh in on the Chinese-ness debate, taking the side of the proponents of Chinese exceptionalism. They claim that even though Chinese culture prevents Chinese scholars from developing Western-paradigm-based IR theories, it can contribute to building a culture-based Chinese-paradigm IR theory by focusing on the Chinese cosmopolitanism, ethical idealism, and harmony that are rooted in the Chinese culture. However, Chinese exceptionalism should not be understood as an exclusionist approach as in the case of Western universalism. On the contrary, Wang and Han argue, Chinese IR theory "will seek to share the very theory of cultural inclusiveness, of recognition, respect, and coexistence among theories and civilizations"[21]. On the other hand, in Chapter 4, Weixing Hu opposes both the possibility and the desirability of 'Sinicizing' or nationalising IR theories. Furthermore, in his analysis of the relationship between practice and theory-building, which is based on the distinction made by Qin between action-oriented theory and knowledge-oriented theory, Hu argues that it is not possible to construct knowledge-oriented theory isolated from social actions and the logic of practicality. If 'a theory is for someone and for some purpose,' as Cox claims, then in a rapidly changing world order, contrary to the claims for exceptionalist theories, Hu maintains that China, as a rising power, needs theories that strengthen its links with the outside world, including ones that are based on experience and historical and cultural traditions.

This point takes us to the relationship between knowledge and power. As stated above, Ren opposes the label of IR with Chinese characteristics because it resembles the political project of the CPC. However, the above-mentioned second and third IR debates among Chinese IR scholars are precisely about the link between power and knowledge. Indeed, even issues of naming and Chinese exceptionalism are also closely related to the relationship between power and knowledge as shown in the first five chapters of the book. Nele Noesselt, in Chapter 6, analyses this relationship and argues that despite the search for autonomy, debates among Chinese scholars and the official political discourse are closely related to each other. Debates on constructing a Chinese IR theory serve mainly two purposes. On the one

[19] Teng-chi Chang, "Debating the Chinese School of IR: A Reflective Review from Taiwan," in *Constructing a Chinese School of International Relations: Ongoing debates and sociological realities*, eds. Yongjin Zhang and Teng-chi Chang (New York: Routledge, 2016), 83.

[20] Teng-chi, "Debating the Chinese School of IR," 85.

[21] Wang Yiwei and Han Xueqing, "Why is There No Chinese IR Theory? A Cultural Perspective," in *Constructing a Chinese School of International Relations: Ongoing debates and sociological realities*, eds. Yongjin Zhang and Teng-chi Chang (New York: Routledge, 2016), 66.

hand, it "contributes to national identity building and symbolically stabilizes political rule" and on the other hand, "it reveals itself as part of China's global positioning ambitions."[22]

After addressing the ongoing debates about the construction of the Chinese School(s) of IR, five chapters in Part II analyse whether these attempts have become reality. In Chapter 7, Wang Jiangli and Barry Buzan compare the Chinese School with the English School in six dimensions: origins, founders and organization; naming; context; aims/intentions; theoretical sources; and historical projects from which to draw lessons for the development of the school. While in the first four dimensions there are significant differences between the schools, in the final two dimensions the two schools show similarities. These comparisons provide three lessons for building a Chinese School of IR. First, the English School does not argue for national approaches to IR theory. Second, it avoids parochial interests and focuses on global-level theory building. Finally, it rediscovers the importance of historical knowledge and analysis.[23] By looking to the English School as a model, Chinese IR can avoid parochialism, build its theory at the global level, and use historical knowledge and analysis as a source for theory building. In other words, rather than following US-centred approaches only, Chinese IR should enrich its sources of knowledge production. However, constructing an IR theory and gaining recognition from the international IR society is not an easy endeavour, especially when the stratified structure of the IR community is taken into account. Peter Marcus Kristensen, in Chapter 8, examines the core-periphery structures of IR and the place the Chinese School occupies in this structure by focusing on its relations with the core, semi-periphery, and periphery. This way, Kristensen shows that "the Chinese theory debate is still mainly an internal Chinese debate and when seeking to enter 'global IR' it has mostly focused on one particular audience: the United States…The Chinese School may… benefit from a broadening of audiences."[24]

In Chapter 9, Xu Jin and Sun Xuefeng, as members of the so-called Tsinghua Approach (one of the main theoretical contributions of Chinese IR to the discipline), provide a review of the achievements, criticisms, limitations, key challenges, and future directions of the Tsinghua Team. Chih-yu Shih and Chiung-chiu Huang present another innovative Chinese knowledge product in Chapter 10, the Balance of Relationship (BoR) theory. The BoR theory is, in their claim, simultaneously Confucian, post-Western, and post-hegemonic. Rather than a substitute, BoR is a complementary theory to the widely used IR concepts of balance of power (BoP), balance of interests, and balance of threat. By integrating a geo-culturally distinct theory of BoR into familiar concepts like BoP, Chih-yu and Chiung-chiu reintroduce the issue of Chinese-ness.

Yongjin Zhang, in Chapter 11, examines the history of Chinese intellectual engagement with trans-Atlantic IR since the opening up of China to the world. Based on Wang Yiwei's categorisation of the history of Chinese IR studies into four phases of 'starting-Marxism' (1960s-1980s), 'learning and copying' of Western IR theories (1980s), 'stimulus and response' (1990s), and 'reflecting-constructing' (2000s),[25] Zhang identifies three main turning

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[22] Nele Noesselt, "Mapping the World from a Chinese Perspective? The Debate on Constructing an IR Theory with Chinese Characteristics," in *Constructing a Chinese School of International Relations: Ongoing debates and sociological realities*, eds. Yongjin Zhang and Teng-chi Chang (New York: Routledge, 2016), 110.

[23] Wang Jiangli and Barry Buzan, "The English and Chinese Schools of International Relations: Comparisons and Lessons," in *Constructing a Chinese School of International Relations: Ongoing debates and sociological realities*, eds. Yongjin Zhang and Teng-chi Chang (New York: Routledge, 2016), 141.

[24] Kristensen, "Navigating the Core-Periphery Structures of "Global IR"," 160.

[25] Wang Yiwei, "China: Between Copying and Constructing," in *International Relations Scholarship Around the World*, eds.

points that are affected and facilitated by the diffusion of trans-Atlantic IR into Chinese IR academia: epistemic optimism, epistemic scepticism, and epistemic reflexivity. These epistemic turns have been influential in moving Chinese IR from the phase of learning and copying to reflecting and constructing. Thus, "the diffusion of ideas is no longer a one-way street; but a two-way process."[26]

In the final chapter, Hun Joon Kim and Yongjin Zhang critically evaluate the Chinese School of IR as an intellectual project by focusing on the timing of the emergence of the Chinese School of IR, the features that make the Chinese School 'differently different,' the intellectual hazards of the project, and the intellectual discontent of the Chinese School, and the obstacles it needs to overcome. Kim and Chang criticise several aspects of the Chinese School project. To start, they claim that this project is too 'Chinese' and driven by parochial concerns. Since the English School is a theoretical construction at the global level, the Chinese project can take it as an example to follow. Second, they criticise is the on strong link between instrumental knowledge and reflexive knowledge and the domination of the former over the latter. Finally, Kim and Zhang claim that this project is still mainly an internal dialogue and for it to become more innovative and productive, it must make knowledge journeys through space and time.

3. Conclusion

Theories are cumulative products of a long and challenging process. Due to the intellectual hegemony of Western political thought, creating non-Western theories is even harder to accomplish. Since the 1960s there have been various attempts to fulfil this goal. However, many of these efforts fell into the trap of echoing the Western-centrism of core social sciences. As shown above, Chinese attempts to establish Chinese Schools of IR involve the same risk.

Though a fledgling project, in the last 15 to 20 years Chinese project of IR theory building is off to a good start. It is a many-sided endeavour. Rather than creating one Chinese School, several Chinese approaches to IR and world order have emerged. It is therefore more appropriate to speak of building Chinese *Schools* of IR. While the majority of these approaches, such as the Relational Theory, the Tsinghua Approach and the BoR Theory try to enter into the 'global IR' represented by US academia by combining Western and Chinese political thought, others, like Zhao's *Tianxia* Approach, focus solely on ancient Chinese philosophy. Despite this difference, the theories share a common ground: drawing lessons from historical Chinese texts for formulating strategies for a rising China. This understanding leads to the question of whether or not instrumental knowledge dominates reflexive theory-building efforts in Chinese academia. In other words, as was the case in Maoist China: Are intellectual studies in the service of politics and the CPC? This is a question to be answered by Chinese scholars.

While as Wallerstein suggests, historicising intellectual analysis is important in overcoming Western universalism and creating a multiplicity of universalisms, non-Western – and in this case Chinese – intellectual contributions should not fall into the trap of becoming another form of parochialism, exceptionalism, or Western-centrism. To overcome such a risk,

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Arlene B. Tickner and Ole Waever (New York: Routledge, 2009), 104-08.

[26] Yongjin Zhang, "Constructing a Chinese School of IR as Sociological Reality: Intellectual Engagement and Knowledge Production," in *Constructing a Chinese School of International Relations: Ongoing debates and sociological realities*, eds. Yongjin Zhang and Teng-chi Chang (New York: Routledge, 2016), 209.

Chinese IR should engage with non-mainstream and critical approaches to IR studies and base its theory construction on critical thinking.

Constructing a Chinese School of International Relations is an important contribution for analysing and evaluating the development of Chinese IR in the last four decades. Discussions about ongoing debates on and contestations to the development of a Chinese School of IR included in the book mirror the diversity of approaches and views from different nationalities. These contributions reflect the ways Chinese scholars are engaged in Western IR theories, the construction of Chinese IR theory, and the likelihood of developing a Chinese School(s) of IR as a challenge to the hegemony of Western-centric IR knowledge production, and thus diversifying and localizing IR theory construction.

Through its focus on the Chinese-ness debate and theoretical contributions from within and outside of China, and by providing examples from Western and non-Western IR theories and approaches, the book tries to overcome the nationalizing or Sinicizing tendency of China-centred IR approaches. It also attempts to overcome the Western-centrism that is predominant in Chinese IR academia. In other words, it tries to avoid trapping the Chinese School(s) of IR in Western-centrism, parochialism, and exceptionalism. By emphasizing the strong link between instrumental knowledge and reflexive knowledge, the book offers ways of overcoming the dominance of the former over the latter, and thus the power of the CPC over the Chinese academia.

Notwithstanding its contributions to Chinese IR theory construction efforts, there are two important elements missing from this book that would both enrich and corroborate it. First, two major Chinese IR theory contributions are left out. Even though Zhang, in his chapter, mentions the theoretical contributions of Zhao and Qin, the original contributions of these scholars on the *Tianxia* Approach and the Relational Theory of World Politics, would corroborate the aim of the book. An analysis of Chinese foreign policy from various Chinese perspectives could also be included, enabling Readers to compare how different Chinese approaches view and analyse Chinese foreign policy. Nevertheless, despite these deficiencies, *Constructing a Chinese School of International Relations* is an important contribution to the ongoing debates in Chinese IR academia. As the book offers a number of alternative approaches to IR theory knowledge production, it contributes to the efforts to link local and global knowledge accumulation and thus empowers the attempts to create a distinctive Chinese IR theory, encouraging it to make knowledge journeys through space and time.

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