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THE EVOLUTION, ACHIEVEMENTS, AND PROSPECTS OF THE CHINESE SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY**

Abstract: *Over the past fifty years, the discipline of International Relations in China has undergone continuous evolution. Chinese scholars have transitioned their focus from translating, introducing, and disseminating Western theories to delving into the creation of an international relations theory uniquely shaped by Chinese characteristics. While progress has been made in formulating a distinct Chinese international relations theory, there are still areas of inadequacy that require attention. This article aims to critically examine the theoretical development and accomplishments of the "Chinese School" in International Relations theories while also presenting its perspectives on the future direction of International Relations theories in China.*

Keywords: *International Relations Theory; Chinese School; Relational Theory; Moral Realism; World System.*

Introduction

Since the University of Wales appointed its inaugural faculty member in this field in 1919, International Relations has been acknowledged as a separate and independent discipline for more than a century. However, the development of international relations theories in China has notably lagged that of other countries globally.

The study of International Relations only began to emerge in China during the 1980s. Despite this late start and the challenges posed by language barriers, Chinese scholars have made substantial progress in this field through their dedicated efforts and steadfast pursuit of knowledge.

As China's role in global affairs has grown, Chinese scholars have started to provide their distinctive interpretations and analyses of international events, incorporating unique "Chinese Characteristics". This article seeks to provide a

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critical examination of the theoretical development and achievements of the "Chinese School" in International Relations theories, while also presenting its perspectives on the future trajectory of International Relations theories in China.

The Development of International Relations Theory in China

Scholars have divergent views on the categorization of China's indigenous international relations theories in terms of specific phases. According to Liang Shoude, the Chinese school of thought emerged in the 1960s (Liang, 2020). However, Yu Zhengliang, Jin Yingzhong, Li Shisheng, and others assert that the development of China's International Relations theory had its genesis with the Shanghai International Relations Theory Symposium in 1987, particularly after the initiation of reforms and opening (Guo and Zhang, 2022). Other scholars represented by Ren Xiao suggest that the issue of the Chinese school of thought was brought to attention around 2000 (Ren, 1997). Chinese scholars generally concur that the field of International Relations began to coalesce during the 1980s. Before this, Professor Ni Shixiong from Fudan University astutely noted that "China's study of International Relations was virtually non-existent prior to the 1980s." (Ni and Xu, 1997) Subsequently, the evolution of international relations theory in China can be broadly divided into three distinct phases: translation of foundational texts, scholarly debate and exploration, and theoretical innovation.

In 1980, at the inaugural meeting of the Association for the History of China's International Relations, Professor Jin Yingzhong put forth an article entitled *The Research Tasks, Objects and Scopes of International Relations*, which signified a growing awareness of International Relations theory development in China. At the same time, several prestigious universities in China began establishing departments and majors in International Relations, International Politics, and Diplomacy. In the early 1980s, China's reform and opening-up policy prompted numerous Chinese students to study abroad. Among them, some chose International Relations as their major. Upon returning to China after studying abroad in International Relations programs overseas, these students began translating and introducing a vast array of Western works on International Relations. Representative monographs from this era included *Selected Works of Contemporary American Schools of International Relations Theories* by Professors Ni Shixiong and Jin Yingzhong, which systematically and comprehensively introduced international relations theories. During this period, such works primarily focused on introducing mainstream theories while also including interpretations of the theories by Chinese scholars. With the in-depth study of Western theories, Chinese scholars began advocating for the creation of an International Relations Theory with distinct Chinese features. Professor Wang

Jianwei's article, *Strive to Create Our Own Theoretical System of International Relations*, garnered significant attention within the academic community. Meanwhile, representative foreign language institutions such as Shanghai International Studies University, military academies led by the National Defense University of the People's Liberation Army, and other key universities represented by the School of International Relations have played a pioneering role in the research of international relations theory. Shanghai International Studies University hosted the first China International Relations Theory Seminar in 1987. Scholars like Hu Menghao and Li Shisheng explicitly proposed establishing a theory of international relations with "Chinese characteristics." (Li, 1999) However, at this stage, it was merely a proposal without further elaboration on what constitutes an International Relations theory with "Chinese Characteristics". In 1989, Zhang Jiliang from the University of International Relations wrote and published *An Introduction to International Relations*. This book, based on the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism, adopted an analytical approach combining economic analysis, class analysis, and systemic analysis. It stood as the first textbook on international relations theory in Chinese history to be written in the discourse system of the Chinese people (Guo and Zhang, 2022). During the first phase, which lasted until approximately the mid-1990s, Chinese scholars primarily focused on translating and introducing Western International Relations theories into China. This laid the foundation for further research and scholarship in this field.

After the Cold War, as more Chinese scholars began studying in Western institutions, China increasingly focused on International Relations theory. Numerous Western works were translated into Chinese, introducing diverse theoretical paradigms, including constructivism, feminism, the British School, critical theory, and others. The representative works include *Fundamental Theories of International Relations* edited by Cheng Yi and Yang Hongyu, and *Comparative Study of International Relations Theories*, written by Jin Yingzhong and Ni Shixiong. Different theoretical paradigms significantly broaden the horizons of domestic scholars in China. Rather than blindly adopting these theories without scrutiny, Chinese scholars began analyzing and even criticizing them from their perspectives. At the 1991 Beijing China International Relations Theory Seminar, scholars pointed out that international relations research should be internationalized, rather than monopolized by a few countries (Yuan, 2007). With well-trained academic backgrounds in International Relations research, some Chinese scholars proposed building a distinctive International Relations Theory. Initially, there was debate amongst China's international relations scholars regarding whether it was necessary to create an international relations theory with

specific features that reflect China's unique characteristics. Two major groups emerged: one group strongly advocated for constructing a theory of international relations with distinctively Chinese features, due to Western theories' limitations in explaining Chinese history and political behaviors, while also being permeated with ideological bias. Liang Shoude believed that without individuality and distinctiveness, a theory lacks universality and commonality. The intrinsic requirements of social science theories include Chinese theories, Chinese schools of thought, and Chinese characteristics (Liang, 1997). The second group represented by Yan Xuetong, argued that theories contain universal truth and can be revised or disposed of as necessary, making it unnecessary to create a theory with specific features. While the discussion centered on the potential for theoretical innovation rather than specific content, it undoubtedly marked a substantial stride in the development of China's International Relations theory. The subsequent phase witnessed heightened deliberation and inquiry among Chinese scholars regarding the application of these imported theories within a Chinese framework. During this period, numerous researchers endeavored to craft distinct approaches or frameworks for comprehending global politics and international relations, incorporating China's specific historical and cultural context.

From 2000 to the present day, the third phase has been marked by substantial theoretical innovation. Since the beginning of this century, Chinese scholars have actively explored and deliberated on the development of China's International Relations theory. Wang Yizhou and other scholars believed that the "Chinese characteristics" was too prominent in ideology and suggested adopting a Chinese perspective to establish their observation angle and style (Wang, 2003). Mei Ran proposed the establishment of a Chinese school of international political science in his paper, marking the first time that the term "Chinese school" was used in the Chinese academic community in the field (Mei, 2005). During this period, many researchers sought to develop their own unique approaches or frameworks for understanding global politics and international relations, considering China's specific historical and cultural context. Innovative scholars in China sought to draw theoretical resources from ancient ethics and political thought while incorporating traditional cultural elements, history, and classical works into international relations theory. In particular, at the third China International Relations Theory Seminar in 2004, scholars conducted in-depth discussions on fundamental categories such as objects, systems, and paradigms as well as characteristics related to constructing Chinese International Relations theory from an ontological perspective. This marked a significant milestone for China's International Relations research entering the stage of theoretical innovation (Liang, 2000). By 2005, scholars like Qin Yaqing, Wang Yizhou, and Wang Zhengyi had raised issues

about building a "Chinese School" in International Relations theory with each proposing a different angle. Scholars such as Qin Yaqing and Yu Zhengliang strongly believed that the emergence of a "Chinese School" was not only possible but also inevitable. They argued that China's uniqueness in history, culture, political system, economic system, and other aspects would inevitably lead to Chinese national characteristics in international relations theory (Qin, 2005). These distinctive attributes may ultimately contribute to the formulation of a distinct theory diverging from that of Western scholars. Concurrently, Professor Zi Zhongyun proposed that rather than formulating a theory with "Chinese characteristics," it would be more beneficial for Chinese researchers to engage in the global theoretical discourse and offer their contributions (Zi, 1998). During this period, a significant cohort of Chinese scholars began devising an international relations theory with both theoretical characteristics and distinctively Chinese features (Su, 2009). It took nearly ten years from sporadic thinking at the beginning of the theoretical preparation stage to proposing a complete theory.

While an objective standard for theory creation exists in terms of developing a truly indigenous international relations theory with distinct "Chinese characteristics", these three phases represent important milestones in the evolution of this field within China. The academic focus has gradually shifted towards the question of "what is the connotation of the international relations theory of the Chinese School." From the initial translation of original works and the constant introduction of new paradigms and theories to ongoing efforts to develop localized theories, scholars have tirelessly searched for ways to contribute to the emergence of an International Relations theory with distinctively Chinese characteristics. Scholars have proposed various approaches to building a "Chinese School" in international relations theory, including incorporating Confucianism and other traditional Chinese philosophical thoughts into theoretical frameworks. Some scholars have also emphasized China's unique historical experiences and political systems as crucial elements for developing a distinctive approach to international relations theory. For instance, Ye Zicheng utilized the history of ancient Chinese political thought to study (Ye, 2005). By continuing to engage with diverse perspectives both within China and internationally, emphasizing practical applications of theory, and developing more comprehensive analytical frameworks that account for complex global phenomena, Chinese scholars can continue to make important contributions to the field of International Relations.

Achievements of the "Chinese School" in International Relations Theory

In the new century, China has made significant strides in economic development, achieved major breakthroughs in comprehensive reform, and continuously improved the standard of living for its citizens. China's economic growth has elevated its position as a major player in the global economy, leading to greater influence in international affairs. Additionally, China's active participation in global governance, such as its involvement in international organizations and initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative, has extended its influence on a global scale. Furthermore, China's diplomatic efforts, cultural exchanges, and contributions to peacekeeping operations have also contributed to its enhanced international influence. As a result, China's international influence has been comprehensively enhanced.

Moreover, as China continues to play an increasingly influential role in global affairs, its unique perspective on international relations will become even more important. The world's political circumstances are undergoing transformational changes. While China is on the rise, the West appears to be declining. With the continuous and rapid enhancement of China's comprehensive national strength, its self-perception has shifted towards being a major power. This signifies that China will bear greater international responsibilities and is expected to propose Chinese solutions for global governance (Guo and Zhang, 2022). The Western theory of international relations politics is gradually becoming inadequate when applied to interpreting China's political practices and current world politics. Therefore, there is an urgent need for revolutionary paradigm shifts and theoretical breakthroughs in political research, not only within China but also globally. Against this backdrop, Chinese scholars have recognized the necessity of developing an international relations theory that reflects distinctive Chinese characteristics. Pang Zhongying believes that the Chinese School emphasizes international relations or a diplomatic knowledge system specific to China's unique national conditions, focusing on explaining China's worldview or diplomatic style (Pang, 2003). Yu Zhengliang points out that the sources of the Chinese School are Marxist international relations theory, the international relations theory and practice of New China, Chinese culture, and foreign international relations theory (Yu, 2005). Qin Yaqing places more emphasis on China's thoughts and practices, including the world view of Confucian culture and the practice of the tribute system, China's modern sovereignty thought and revolutionary practice, as well as the ideas of China's reform and opening and its integration into international society (Qin, 2006).

In particular, Chinese scholars of international relations have drawn inspiration from traditional Chinese culture, values, history, and philosophy. For instance, some Chinese scholars have proposed the concept of "China's peaceful diplomacy" as a way to understand China's role in the global order. China's 20th National Congress report emphasizes the commitment to dialogue and negotiation, promoting the construction of a world of enduring peace (Xi, 2022). This idea emphasizes that China seeks to pursue its interests through peaceful means and cooperation with other nations, rather than through coercion or aggression. Additionally, some notable scholars, including Yan Xuetong, Wang Gungwu, and Zhao Tingyang, have argued that Confucianism can be used as a lens for understanding Chinese foreign policy. These scholars have delved into the historical and philosophical aspects of Confucianism and its potential influence on China's approach to international relations. Yan Xuetong, in particular, has been prominent in advocating for the integration of Confucian principles into China's foreign policy framework. They argue that Confucian values such as harmony, hierarchy, and benevolence are deeply embedded in China's political culture and play an important role in shaping its approach to international relations. By integrating these elements with modern international relations theory, they have achieved remarkable progress. Notable examples include Professor Qin Yaqing's theory on the relationship between world politics, Professor Yan Xuetong's moral realism theory, Zhao Tingyang's world system theory, and Su Changhe's Symbiotic theory. These representative achievements of China's International Relations Theory are introduced below and analyzed in detail.

As early as 2009, Professor Qin Yaqing began exploring China's International Relations theory and put forward the Relationship Standard and Process Construction Theory. He incorporated Chinese concepts into International Relations theory. The core idea of his Relationship theory is that there are behavioral differences between Chinese people and Westerners. The Western mode of thinking emphasizes instrumental rationalism, while the Chinese mode of thinking follows a different logical system, namely, relationalism. The differences between these two modes of thinking inevitably lead to different understandings of the fundamental logic of international relations. The underlying logic of relationalism is to maintain a harmonious global atmosphere where economic interests give way to friendly relationships, and interactions do not emphasize competition and contention but rather are centered on mutual benefit. The fundamental concept in this theory is "Relationality", which he identifies as a key component of Chinese social culture (Qin, 2012). In 2015, he published an article titled *The Theory of Relations in International Politics* to develop a purely Chinese theory of International Relations. The Relationship theory conceptualizes two core

cultural thought—process and relationship — to form a relatively systematic theoretical framework. According to this approach, process refers to flowing relationships, while the relationship itself becomes the metaphysical element at the heart of the theoretical framework, constructed through nucleation processes. Moreover, this perspective holds that all relationships take on a basic form characterized by *yin-yang* meta-relationships; these represent dialectical opposites that are understood in a harmonious relationship through the dialectics of the mean. The process perspective links things in a continuous flow and resolves oppositions and conflicts toward harmony. The relationship theory stands in contrast to Realism theories, but it also recognizes the importance of rationality. From this perspective, Professor Qin Yaqing puts forward "relational rationality" as an alternative approach to understanding international relations (Qin, 2015). In 2018, Cambridge University Press published Professor Qin Yaqing's English monograph, *the Theory of Relations in World Politics*. In this book, he systematically presents his theory of International Relations that takes the ontology of relations as its basic assumption and employs dialectics of the mean as its epistemological basis. Qin Yaqing's relationism draws inspiration from Chinese traditional philosophy, particularly the concept of "relationality" found in Confucianism. This perspective emphasizes harmony, moral obligations, and the interconnectedness of individuals and society, which Qin Yaqing applies to the international realm. According to Qin Yaqing, traditional Western international relations theories have focused primarily on the state as the central actor and on power politics, often neglecting the significance of relationships between states and other actors. In contrast, relationism places relationships at the center of analysis. It emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of actors in the international system, including states, international organizations, and non-state actors. This approach seeks to understand international relations through the dynamics of various relationships, such as alliances, trade partnerships, cultural exchanges, and diplomatic interactions. While both Weber's philosophy of "explanatory understanding" and Chinese relational perspectives seek to understand human action within a broader context, the Chinese standpoint tends to emphasize harmony, collective identity, interconnectedness, and moral context in a way that distinguishes it from Weber's individualistic and subjective approach. Chinese philosophical traditions often prioritize harmony and balance in relationships, where individual actions are seen in the context of their impact on broader social and relational harmony. This differs from Weber's focus on individual motivations and subjective meanings. Chinese relational perspectives often place greater emphasis on collective identity and group dynamics. Actions are frequently understood in relation to one's roles and responsibilities within family, society, and

the state, rather than solely through individual motivations, as emphasized by Weber. This unique Chinese perspective offers a new way to examine world order and the logic of action from a relational viewpoint.

Another group of Chinese international relations scholars, led by Professor Yan Xuetong and known as the Tsinghua School, emphasizes the use of scientific methods in their research. Professor Yan Xuetong has integrated China's pre-Qin period ideology with American realism theory to develop a novel approach called Moral Realism. This theory aims to explain why power shifts occur from dominant powers to rising powers. According to this perspective, power is divided into moral power and material power. Moral power refers to the ability to establish legitimacy through soft-power means, while material power includes military and economic hard-power capabilities. The theory introduces two key variables — political leadership and strategic reputation — which are essential for understanding a nation's rise or fall. Political leadership can be categorized into four types: inaction, conservatism, activism, and combativeness. Moral Realism also highlights that morality can enhance a country's strategic reputation; it helps gain legitimacy for building new international norms. The order of the international system can be classified into three categories: the order of kingship, the order of hegemony, and the order of power. Professor Yan Xuetong argues that kingship is the best international system order, and a combination of moral power and material power represents the optimal form of power. Furthermore, if China upholds values such as equality, justice, and civilization in its rise to great-power status, it can surpass those proposed by other countries like the United States (Yan, 2014). Professor Yan Xuetong further refined his theory on leadership and rising powers, which he published as a book entitled, *Leadership and The Rise of Great Powers*, by Princeton University Press in 2019. It sparked widespread attention in the academic community in China.

Zhao Tingyang's international system theory, known as Tianxia Theory, presents a philosophical starting point that differs from Western political theories. Rather than viewing national states as the basic political units, he proposes that the world should be considered under heaven (Zhao, 2015). The ontology of international relations is coexistence and relational rationality is emphasized over individual rationality. The theory draws on the world system concept of the ancient Zhou Dynasty in China to inspire today's global order construction. In this model, the Chinese government manages the world order and arbitrates disputes between vassal states, while each state independently manages its internal affairs with the free movement of people within them. The principle of order in this world is based on family values characterized by minimizing self-interest and maximizing love and harmony. For Zhao Tingyang, the best choice for an international system is

one where the political unit is not a sovereign country but rather views itself as part of a harmonious big family - transcending Westphalia's sovereign state system. A global perspective can solve all the difficulties and problems facing the world today, given the current lack of a global order and system (Zhao, 2015). Zhao Tingyang's theory is not constructed using traditional elements of international relations theory but rather elucidates Chinese thought in the field of international politics. As such, it has presented some challenges for Western researchers attempting to understand it outside of the Chinese context.

Another branch of Chinese international relations scholars is focused on Symbiotic theory, with Su Changhe and Ren Xiao being representative scholars. They aim to use the international political system in East Asia as a model for addressing current global challenges. The nature of the political system in East Asia is characterized by pluralism, amiability, and peacefulness. These scholars believe that humans must adopt co-existing attitudes to survive in the world. Furthermore, they have clarified some misconceptions about the Tribute system practiced in ancient China (Ren, 2013). Ren Xiao's article "On the Principles of the System of Symbiosis in East Asia" provides an explicit explanation of this concept within a regional context. Meanwhile, Su Changhe has used the Symbiotic theory to further explain Chinese President Xi Jinping's proposal of a community with a shared future (Su, 2016). It emphasizes the importance of building trust and mutual understanding among nations, which can foster a more stable and sustainable global order. The Symbiotic theory challenges traditional realist theories that prioritize power politics and security concerns as the primary drivers of international relations. Instead, it argues for a more holistic view that takes into account economic interdependence, cultural exchange, environmental protection, and other non-traditional security issues. They believe that promoting symbiosis in international relations can help to build a community with shared interests and values while reducing conflicts between states. Overall, the Symbiotic theory offers valuable insights on how to construct a new world order based on cooperation rather than confrontation or coercion.

In summary, these representative achievements in China's International Relations theory all reflect distinctively Chinese perspectives on how to interpret and construct theories about international relations.

Prospects

The paradigm of International Relations theory is firmly rooted in the historical and political practices of the West. Its logical foundation and philosophical views are heavily influenced by Western culture. During the initial stages of this development, American scholars' theoretical paradigms were

predominant. Gradually, the "British School" emerged as a significant force in Europe. However, it can be challenging to separate European cultural homogeneity from the International Relations theory proposed by the "British School", making it difficult to justify the theory universally. It must be acknowledged that China's International Relations studies have primarily relied on the adoption of frameworks and core concepts from Western international relations theories. As a result, these studies have generally lacked original Chinese theoretical perspectives and insights, which has significantly diminished Chinese scholars' influence in the broader International Relations academic community as well as the global political arena.

With a unique blend of traditional Chinese philosophy, modern international relations practices, and a deep understanding of China's historical and cultural context, the Chinese School offers valuable insights and perspectives on the development of international relations theory.

Chinese scholars have crafted their viewpoints on international relations based on China's historical practices and cultural values. The above-mentioned theories show the distinctive wisdom and charm of Chinese cultural characteristics. They challenged conventional Western approaches to understanding this complex world. Of note are the monographs authored by Professor Qin Yaqing and Professor Yan Xuetong, which were written in English and published by Western publishing houses. Moreover, these two experts have produced a significant number of academic papers in English, which have played an important role in facilitating dialogue between Chinese international relations scholars and their Western counterparts within the global academic community. Their tireless efforts have been instrumental in promoting the voice of Chinese International Relations scholars on the world stage.

In addition to several scholars who systematically advanced their theories, Renmin University of China established its Research Center for Historical Politics in 2019 with a focus on "Historical Politics" as a new research path within political studies.¹ The center aims to construct a framework for political interpretation featuring distinctively Chinese historical characteristics. With its profound background in historical research and political thought study, the Department of Political Science at Renmin University of China is well-positioned to support further development in China's International Relations theory. By developing a theoretical framework that takes into account China's historical experiences,

¹ "The Research Center for History and Political Science at Renmin University of China was established, hosting a roundtable forum on the intersection of historical political science and Chinese political studies", <https://www.rujiarzg.com/article/16421> (accessed November 12, 2022)

cultural values, and political context, Chinese scholars can contribute to shaping debates about key issues such as governance structures in international organizations or regional security arrangements. By drawing on traditional Chinese philosophy and culture as well as incorporating new perspectives from different regions and cultures around the world, Chinese scholars can continue to enrich the global discourse on international relations with diverse perspectives that better reflect the complex realities of our interconnected world.

Additionally, an undeniable feature of the Chinese academic community is the high degree of alignment between academia and current politics. Wang Jisi pointed out that Chinese theoreticians tend to focus more on how theory can guide practice or serve current policies, rather than on its capacity to explain reality. In China, what is referred to as international relations theory differs significantly in substance from Western theory, with the former being oriented towards serving diplomatic practice and the latter towards explaining the realities of international relations (Wang, 1998). The official Chinese documents also point out that Xi Jinping's diplomatic thoughts have opened a new realm of innovation in today's international relations theory in the world.² Xi Jinping's diplomatic thoughts emphasize the concept of preserving world peace and pursuing common development with the purpose of promoting the building of a community with a shared future for humanity, advocating for win-win cooperation, mutual respect, and peaceful development. He emphasizes the idea of leading the reform of the global governance system with the concept of fairness and justice and building a new type of international relations featuring mutual respect and win-win cooperation. Additionally, Xi Jinping has stressed the importance of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a means to achieve shared growth through discussion and collaboration. Furthermore, he has emphasized China's commitment to advance major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics to fulfill the mission of realizing national rejuvenation.³ Overall, Xi Jinping's diplomatic thoughts focus on promoting a vision of global governance that is inclusive, cooperative, and mutually beneficial.

Therefore, it is not difficult to see the guiding direction of Xi Jinping's diplomatic thoughts in the development of the Chinese School's theoretical framework. As China continues to play an increasingly influential role in the international arena, the Chinese School has the potential to enrich and diversify the

² The Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Study Outline on Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy* (Beijing: People's Publishing House, Xuexi Publishing House, 2021), 9.

³ "Guidelines of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy", http://en.chinadiplomacy.org.cn/node_8013949.shtml (accessed November 8, 2023)

discourse within international relations, contributing to a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of global politics. Furthermore, the emphasis on harmony, mutual benefit, and non-confrontational approaches inherent in the Chinese School's perspective can contribute to the development of new paradigms for managing international relations in an interconnected world.

Conclusion

The development of China's international relations theory has undergone a lengthy process, beginning with a pre-theoretical phase before eventually culminating in theoretical presentations. Various Chinese International Relations theories reflect different aspects of "Chinese characteristics." Some integrate Chinese elements into existing Western theoretical frameworks; others remove these frameworks' Western elements entirely and use purely Chinese approaches to explain their viewpoints. Still, others employ Western methods to build their theories but avoid using Western phrases deliberately and emphasize traditional Chinese thoughts and ideas instead. The variety of approaches mirrors the distinctive and multifaceted essence of Chinese culture, which defies easy reduction into a singular theoretical paradigm.

Moreover, the "Chinese School" has made significant contributions to International Relations theory by introducing novel perspectives and concepts that challenge traditional Western viewpoints. For example, the concept of "Tianxia World System" emphasizes cooperation and mutual benefit as key principles in international relations, while also highlighting China's commitment to peaceful development. This approach stands in contrast with the traditional Western emphasis on power politics and zero-sum games.

At its core, a theory is an abstraction and sublimation of reality. Theories of international relations are derived from the history of interactions between nations, encapsulating a condensation and generalization of human progress overall. As a concept, "theory" originated in the West. Classical international relations theories are based on Western historical experience and international practices. However, human joys and sorrows are interconnected across cultures, and theory itself is derived from practice while also guiding it. International relations theories describe and predict nations' practices worldwide. The international relations theory with Chinese characteristics originates from Chinese culture but must break through its context to communicate effectively with the world. China's international relations scholars need to continue exploring their works deeply to achieve this goal. This process of exploration and deepening is crucial for the development of international relations theory with Chinese characteristics. It involves not only

incorporating traditional Chinese cultural elements but also engaging in dialogue with existing Western theoretical frameworks to find common ground.

Moreover, effective communication requires clear and concise language that can be easily understood by the global audience. China's international relations scholars must strive to express their ideas using accessible language that transcends linguistic and cultural barriers. The development of international relations theory with Chinese characteristics represents an exciting opportunity for cross-cultural exchange and collaboration. In the creation of Chinese international relations theory, it is important to focus on addressing and discussing the common challenges faced by humanity, without being overly confined to Western theoretical standards. Whether one seeks to adhere exclusively to Western models or deliberately avoids Western theoretical influences in search of "Chinese characteristics", both approaches seem somewhat constrained. By contemplating the destiny of all humanity and engaging in philosophical introspection with a distinctively Chinese perspective, scholars can ultimately forge an international relations theory that belongs not only to China but also to the world.

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