

THE QUEST FOR A CHINESE SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: OBSERVATIONS FROM CHINA, THE WEST, AND JAPAN*

ABSTRACT

This paper examines China's diplomatic philosophy and its attempts to establish a Chinese school of international relations (IR). The diplomatic philosophy expressed by the Chinese leaders can be interpreted as China's original IR theory that contained extremely Chinese understandings of international relations with universal significance. Chinese scholars adopted Marxist theory first. Then, they accepted Western IR theories. At the same time, Chinese scholars have studied traditional Chinese political thought and have tried to apply it to contemporary Chinese foreign behavior. Zhao Tingyang presents the concept of "all-under-Heaven" (*tianxia* 天下) from the perspective of political philosophy. Qin Yaqing has attempted to explain the topic by focusing on relations, presenting the "relational (*guanxi* 关系) theory" and discussing how relationality shapes China's foreign behavior. Yan Xuetong discusses China's rise from the perspective of "moral (*daoyi* 道义) realism." Studies of IR in China have made remarkable achievements since the advocacy for the construction of the Chinese school of IR. Universalization is key to whether a Chinese school of IR will be established in the future. China should develop values that can be shared with the rest of the world and overcome its principle of non-interference in internal affairs, thus assuming a genuine role as a member of the international community. When China comes to have values that it can share with the rest of the world, Chinese IR theory will receive more attention and be cited by international scholars.

Keywords: Chinese school of IR theory, Chinese diplomatic philosophy, all-under-Heaven theory, relational theory, moral realism

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the reception of Western-oriented international relations (IR) theory by Chinese scholars of international politics and their efforts to estab-

lish a “Chinese school of international relations” that promulgates a theory of IR combined with Chinese history and traditional characteristics. IR theory emerged and developed in the West. It views the world and interstate relations from the perspective of the major Western powers that have occupied dominant positions in the international community. In recent years, China and non-Western countries have achieved rapid economic development. Power in the international community has been dispersed, making it difficult to understand the non-Western world, its political system, and new IR solely from the perspective of Western powers. In addition to the vigorous development of emerging economies, globalization has brought to the fore several global problems, such as international terrorism and regional conflicts. Accordingly, IR theory requires a perspective based on the experiences of non-Western countries.

Among non-Western countries, China has historically experienced colonization by Western countries, thus choosing to become a major power. It is natural for China to try to develop its own IR theories based on its perspective of the problems. Chinese scholars in international politics are trying to explain China’s foreign behavior in their own words and with their theories and present it to the world in a comprehensive way, referring to Chinese history, traditional culture, and the ideas of past political leaders. Qin Yaqing 秦亚青 of China Foreign Affairs University uses the concept of “relation” to discuss IR and is leading the debate to establish a Chinese school of IR. Pang Zhongying 庞中英 defines “Chinese school” as “a general term for IR theories with Chinese characteristics, but not limited to a single school” [Pang 2003, 25].

Western scholars, such as Amitav Acharya of American University and Barry Buzan of London School of Economics and Political Science, have focused on the development of IR theory in non-Western regions, especially in Asia [Acharya and Buzan 2009; Buzan and Acharya 2021]. Acharya and Buzan argue that the enthusiasm and commitment of Chinese scholars to establish a Chinese school of IR is an important step toward constructing a global theory of IR. They make a point that China’s efforts stand out and are more realistic than those of other Asian countries, such as South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and India [Acharya and Buzan 2017]. Issues surrounding the Chinese school have also been analyzed in Japan, by Xu, Kawashima, Mōri, and Chen [Jo 2012; Kawashima 2014; Mōri 2018; Chin 2021]. Mōri summarizes the discussions on international political theory in China since 1978 and states that, with the formation of China’s great power consciousness and changes in its self-awareness, Western international political theory was accepted in China and the Chinese school of IR theory was gradually formed. She states, however, that there are many difficulties in universalizing the argument for a Chinese school of IR [Mōri 2018]. Thus, there are unresolved problems surrounding the Chinese school of IR regarding the content of the theory itself and its universalization.

This paper examines Chinese diplomatic philosophy, its acceptance of Western IR theories, and the struggle for constructing a Chinese school of IR. It will summarize how Chinese scholars have accepted Western IR theory and how this has led to the efforts to establish the Chinese school of IR.

2. CHINESE DIPLOMATIC PHILOSOPHY AND ITS ACCEPTANCE OF WESTERN IR THEORIES

This section examines the theory of IR in China since the founding of the People's Republic of China in conjunction with the history of Chinese diplomacy. The diplomatic philosophy expressed by the Chinese leaders could be interpreted as a theory of IR that contained extremely Chinese understandings of international relations with universal significance. It can be looked upon as an achievement the "Chinese school" can be proud of.

First, let us look at the period of Mao Zedong's rule, 1949 onward. In China, the nineteenth-century concept of the sovereign state was used as the basis for regaining its independence and equality with Western countries. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, China reinforced the concept of the sovereign state with ideals combining the Five Principles of Peace, and Marxism-Leninism [Kawashima 2014, 100]. From the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 until around 1960, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) entered the socialist camp after its founding. China took the "leaning to one side" (*yibiandao* 一边倒) policy toward the Soviet Union until about 1960. During this period, China, as a socialist country, invited many advisors from the Soviet Union. Socialist theories were brought into China, making Chinese IR theories reliant on Marxism.

Regarding the concept of sovereignty, the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" were adopted. The five principles—*i.e.*, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence—were confirmed by Zhou Enlai and the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in June 1954. Those principles reflect the rules of nineteenth-century European international society, but for socialist developing countries like China, national sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs were important to ensure their independence in the international community. More than half a century later, China still crowns the Five Principles of Peace as the most important quasi-rules in China's foreign policy.

As relations between China and the Soviet Union deteriorated in the 1960s, the CCP effectively abandoned its "leaning to one side" policy toward the Soviet Union. It was during this period that China attached great importance to the

“intermediate zone” (*zhongjian didai* 中间地带), separating the two superpowers. The theory of the “intermediate zone,” originally presented by Mao Zedong in June 1946, was China’s way of recognizing the world structure. Mao observed that the major conflicts after World War II occurred not between the U.S. and the Soviet Union directly but between the countries in the intermediate zone. The theory of the “intermediate zone” did not appear in official Chinese literature until 1958. The Chinese government did not want to be seen as having raised objections to the U.S.-Soviet bipolar structure of the Cold War [Mōri 2018, 26].

In 1974, Mao Zedong revealed his strategic idea, “three worlds” (*sange shijie* 三个世界). He stated, “as I see it, the United States and the Soviet Union belong to the first world. Japan, Europe, and Canada, which were in the middle, belong to the second world. We all in Asia except Japan belong to the third world. So does the whole of Africa and Latin America.” In April of the same year, Deng Xiaoping presented the idea of the “three worlds” at the UN Special Session on Resources. This strategic idea of “three worlds” also shows an inclination toward the “dependency theory” that has been popular internationally since the 1960s. Dependency theory is a strategy of economic development that was proposed in Latin America in the 1960s and is based on the idea that capitalist societies have a dominant position as the center and a subordinate position as the periphery, in a relationship of domination and subordination. China at that time had a strong self-perception of belonging to the Third World as a developing country and also acting as the leader of it.

During Deng Xiaoping’s reform and opening-up period in the 1980s, China claimed to practice “independent foreign policy” (*duli zizhu* 独立自主). This formulation of the 1980s seeks progressively normalized relations with both the United States and the Soviet Union while preserving China’s options to struggle against the hegemonism of the two superpowers. In the 1980s, the IR theory, originating in the West, was gradually introduced to China. China turned toward a path of modernization that placed top priority on economic development and attempted to integrate itself into the international community. The introduction of political science theories, including IR, was promoted. Although many Chinese scholars still based their discussion on Marxism, the realism theory gradually began to attract attention in China. Important concepts such as the power politics and balance of power were studied, and realist classics, such as Morgenthau, were translated into Chinese [Qing 2008, 15–16]. Some researchers argued for an IR theory with Chinese characteristics during this period. This movement reflected the policy of building socialism by using Chinese characteristics which were proposed by the CCP in 1982. Some Chinese scholars claimed to build China’s history of IR based on Marxism-Leninism and Zhou Enlai’s Five Principles of Peace [Kawashima 2014, 104].

In the 1990s, marketization had rapidly progressed after the democratic

movement of 1989 and Deng Xiaoping's south tour talks (*nanxun jianghua* 南巡讲话) in China. In addition to realism, IR theories such as liberalism and constructivism were also introduced to China. At the same time, Chinese scholars began to develop new views on key concepts of international politics, such as national interests and sovereignty, in line with the new international environment.

Focusing on national interests (*guoyi* 国益), in 1996, Yan Xuetong 阎学通 of Tsinghua University published the book, *Analysis of China's National Interests*. Yan caused a major step forward in China's national interests by departing from the traditional stage, which had emphasized class nature, and stepped up to the stage of scientific research based on Western concepts of international politics and academic norms. He proposed that national interests exist objectively in foreign relations and international affairs and should be vigorously defended [Yan 1996]. Yan's study of national interest provoked a great response. It has been praised for its realist approach to analyzing national interests.

Regarding sovereignty (*zhuquan* 主权), Wang Yizhou 王逸舟 of Peking University also made a new proposal in 1994 against the background of the new international situation after the Cold War. He pointed out that the classical Chinese view of sovereignty was gradually becoming less compatible with the new international situation due to globalization. Wang pointed out ten factors, including the interdependence of countries, as constraining sovereignty in the new era, and argued that China must solidify its view of sovereignty that is consistent with its national interests and has a global perspective [Wang Y. 1994]. Wang argued that sovereignty tends to become multi-stratified under globalization and that the concept of human rights should be at the core of China's new view of sovereignty [Wang Y. 2000]. Thus, Chinese scholars have transformed its important concepts of national interests and sovereignty as well as perceptions of globalization and security issues.

Between 2001 and 2007, there was a further increase in the translation of Western IR theory. Some studies have begun to apply constructivism theory to Chinese diplomacy. Guo Shuyong 郭树勇 of Shanghai Jiao Tong University explains that Chinese society has the social foundation to utilize constructivism and is capable to elevate it to the level of mainstream theory. He argues that, in China, constructivism has plenty of room for development and a bright future, and that it can specifically help China's peaceful rise and its interpretation of the Taiwan issue [Guo 2004b].¹

The English school of IR has also attracted much attention among Chinese scholars. Known works of the English school, such as those of E. H. Carr and Hedley Bull were translated into Chinese. The English school has flourished since the 1980s as an alternative to the American mainstream of IR studies. Shi Bin 石斌 of Nanjing University analyzed the characteristics of the English school and

pointed out the differences between American and British theories. He claimed that China should learn from the English school and its unique theoretical perspectives, the setting of core theoretical issues, its ontology and methodology of historical research, and the logical thinking of IR [Shi 2005]. The English school of IR inspired Chinese scholars to create the Chinese school of IR, which aimed to localize the IR theory.²

Since 2008, China continued its rapid economic growth and successfully hosted the Beijing Olympics and the Shanghai World Expo. As China's influence in the international community expanded, there was much discussion in China about how to behave as a major power. There was also a debate on whether or not the strategy of "hide its capabilities and bide its time" (*taoguang yanghui* 韬光养晦) had become outdated. The strategy was adopted when China was isolated from the international society in the first half of the 1990s. He contends that China has already become the world's second superpower and that applying the *taoguang yanghui* strategy to China's foreign behavior has been doing more harm than good [Yan 2011]. Yan's statement surprised researchers in neighboring countries.

By around 2010, China began to clash with neighboring countries over its maritime interests in the South China Sea and the East China Sea. The Chinese government began to assert "China's core interests" (*Zhongguo hexin liyi* 中国核心利益) that China should defend at all costs. China has already become a world superpower and is no longer a developing country. China's overseas expansion has increased Chinese national interests abroad. Nonetheless, China still respects the Five Principles of Peace as the most important quasi-principle of its diplomacy. Expansion and non-interference are contradictory, at least from Western perspectives. As China's engagement with foreign countries increases, Chinese scholars are widely debating the question of how to define China's national interests and whether changes should be made to the traditional interpretation of the principles of sovereignty and non-interference.

Table 1. Chinese Diplomacy's Changes in 70 years

Era	Diplomatic Strategy	Mainstream IR Theory in China
1950s	Leaning to one side of the Soviet Union	Marxism
1960s	Intermediate zone	Dependency theory
1970s	Three worlds	Neorealism
1980s	Independent foreign policy	Neorealism
1990s	Hide its capabilities and bide its time	Neo-functionalism, neorealism, neoliberalism
2000s	Partnership	Neoliberalism, constructivism, neorealism, English school
2008 onward	China's core interests	Chinese school

Source: The author prepared this elaboration with reference to Mōri [2018, 18].

3. THREE APPROACHES TO CONSTRUCTING A CHINESE SCHOOL OF IR

In this section, we will look at three approaches to constructing a Chinese school of IR. According to Qin Yaqing, the three are the classical approach, the traditional approach, and the interdisciplinary approach [Qin 2008]. First, let us look at the arguments of prominent scholars who take the classical approach.

3-1. CLASSICAL APPROACH

The classical approach is the attempt to interpret international strategy and diplomatic thought from the perspective of Marxist theory. This approach argues that the classics of Marxist-Leninist theory and the international political and diplomatic thought of Chinese leaders are the foundation of Chinese IR theory. Li Bin 李滨 of Nankai University argues that, in order to theoretically persuade the people that socialism is the best choice to realize a peaceful world of justice, emphasis should be placed on the study of international theory and the logic of world justice [Li 2005].

Chinese scholars have been trying to update the content and interpretation of Marxism. Guo Shuyong explains the potential application of Marxism to Chinese diplomacy as follows. The stagnation of Marxism in the study of IR was due in part to the somewhat narrow perspective that had been adopted, in addition to the fact that the communist movement had become weak. The Marxist system of thought is complex but can be broadly divided into four main categories. Those

are classical Marxist thought on IR, Marxist thought on IR with Soviet characteristics, Western Marxist thought on IR, and Marxist thought on IR with Chinese characteristics. Among these, the research focus of Marxist thought with Chinese characteristics has shifted to China's peace and development, the rise of the nation, and its entry into the world. In addition, future research on IR thought based on Marxism will also need to make use of theories originating in the United States, such as realism, neo-institutionalism, and constructivism. Marxism remains useful in understanding the external behavior of China, a socialist country, but it must not become outdated by not incorporating Western theories [Guo 2004a].

Although the number of academic findings has decreased, there are still a certain number of Chinese scholars who use Marxism to study IR.³ By updating their research to include new perspectives and to adapt to changes, Chinese scholars are attempting to apply Marxism to China's foreign behavior and interpret the problems of the rise of emerging powers.

3-2. TRADITIONAL APPROACH

The traditional approach attempts to understand traditional Chinese thought, especially Confucianism, and its application to the contemporary international order. For Chinese scholars, what is the most attractive in the creation of the Chinese school is to study traditional Chinese political and cultural thought. An increasing number of studies are developing IR theories using Chinese history, culture, and political thought. Because of the rapid pace of China's economic growth, traditionalists are once again looking back to Chinese traditions and asserting the legitimacy of the non-Western sense of self and Chinese culture. The view of "all-under-Heaven" (*tianxia* 天下), the Sino-barbarian order (*huayi zhixu* 华夷秩序), and the tribute system (*chaogong tixi* 朝贡体系) are China-centric and philosophy-based ideas.⁴ One of the leading theorists is Zhao Tingyang 赵汀阳 of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, whose concept of "all-under-Heaven" has attracted much attention from abroad.

Zhao Tingyang: "All-under-Heaven"

Zhao Tingyang presents the concept of "all-under-Heaven," or *Tianxia*, from the perspective of political philosophy. According to him, the Chinese theory of "all-under-Heaven" is based on the idea of *Tianxia*, the realm of world politics, that transcends the realm of international politics composed of nations [Zhao 2008]. The English books, *Redefining a Philosophy for World Governance* [Zhao 2019] and *All under Heaven: The Tianxia System for a Possible World Order* [Zhao 2021] systematically summarize the "Tianxia theory" by Zhao.

- Tianxia is a concept which spots spiritual vitality. It involves a spiritually vitalizing relationality among persons and a spiritually vitalizing relationship between the way of humanity.
- Tianxia is also a methodology, and Zhao attempts to explain how Tianxia as a concept can be used to understand the theoretical spaces of history, social institutions, and political order to the extent of redefining the concept of political order.
- The Tianxia concept itself involves profound affective dimensions, as it carries with it the entirety of Chinese history, its traditions, its experience, and its spirit.
- The Tianxia system is to be established on the basis of three constitutional concepts: (1) the *internationalization of the world*, inclusive of all nations in a shared system that constitutes a world with no negative externalities; (2) a *relational rationality* that gives priority to minimizing mutual hostility over the maximizing of exclusive interests and stands in contrast to individual rationality and its pursuit of the maximization of self-interest; and (3) *Confucian improvement* requiring *one improves if-and-only-if all other improve*. It is a nonexclusive improvement for all [Zhao 2021, xv].
- Zhao presents the Tianxia theory as a “philosophy for the world,” which is the foundation of Chinese political philosophy, and tries to solve the globalized problems with the theory.

Zhao’s Tianxia theory has had a great influence on philosophy and international relations in academia not only in China but also in the West. The Tianxia theory has attracted scholars from other fields of study, including the history of ideas and philosophy and IR theory. However, it has also been noted that there are limitations in explaining international relations through Chinese history. Dialogue between the scholars in humanities, such as history, history of ideas, and international politics, is not easy. There is also the question of whether it is possible to draw implications for contemporary Chinese diplomacy from history. Contemporary China is based on the concepts of nation-state and sovereign state, which are not easily compatible with ancient thoughts and ideas [Kawashima 2014].

4. INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

The interdisciplinary approach combines Chinese and Western ideas to explain the world and Chinese experience and focuses on finding the interface between Chinese and Western academic thought. We will examine the discussions of

three leading theories, Qin Yaqing’s “relational (*guanxi* 关系) theory,” Ren Xiao’s 任晓 “symbiosis (*gongsheng* 共生) theory,” and Yan Xuetong’s “moral (*daoyi* 道义) realism.”

Table 2. Three Approaches to Constructing a Chinese School of IR

	Classical Approach		Traditional Approach	Interdisciplinary Approach
Core Concept	Marxism	Neo-Marxism	Theorizing traditional Chinese political and cultural thought	Combination of Chinese and Western ideas
Scholars and Their Theory	• Li Bin	• Guo Shuyong	• Zhao Tingyang: “All-under-Heaven”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qin Yaqing: Relational theory • Ren Xiao: Symbiosis theory • Yan Xuetong: Moral realism

Source: The author prepared this elaboration.

Qin Yaqing: Relational Theory

Qin Yaqing, a leading scholar in constructing the Chinese school of IR presents the “relational theory,” and discusses how relationality shapes China’s foreign behavior. The relational theory is within the theoretical framework of constructivism. *A Relational Theory of World Politics* systematically summarizes the relational theory. The following are the main points of his argument [Qin 2018].

- The world consists of relations, and relations broadly influence people’s thoughts and behavior patterns. The logic of relations defines status, status determines the scope of interests, and interests drive people’s behavior. Relationality, therefore, determines the rationality of behavior.
- The concept of relationality shifting the focus from individual actors to the relations among actors is the key in the relational theory. The ontology of relationality examines the unfolding processes whereby relations create the identities of actors and provide motivations for their actions.
- Relationality helps us understand IR. For example, China’s policy toward Russia is first put forth in light of its relationality with the United States. U.S. policy toward Japan is also determined based on its relations with China.
- Managing relationality is an important issue in international politics, both in history and in the present.

When Qin published his article on the relational theory in Chinese [Qin

2009, 2012], it provoked a huge debate in the Chinese IR academic community [Gao W. and Lu 2010]. Since then, many studies have been published and supplemented Qin's argument.⁵ The relational theory is the most widely cited theory in the international community.

Ren Xiao: Symbiosis Theory

The "symbiosis theory" has been proposed by Ren Xiao of Fudan University and other scholars from universities in Shanghai.⁶ The concept of symbiosis was introduced into Chinese IR discourse in 2011, and since then many Shanghai scholars of IR have been discussing the "symbiotic international system." The symbiosis theory is categorized within the theoretical framework of liberalism and examines the shortcomings of the Western-led international system. It particularly focuses on the history of large-scale wars and argues that the ancient East Asian international system was successful while denying the effectiveness of the Western-led international system. The arguments of Ren Xiao have been summarized as follows [Ren 2019, 2020].

- Symbiosis does not deny the existence of individual interests, whether individual or national.
- Symbiosis begins with the recognition that there is a plurality of things, and that plurality is the basic and essential form of things. Both a homogeneous multitude as well as a heterogeneous multitude can be symbiotic. There should be a symbiosis of different kinds that is tolerant of others.
- Symbiosis is different from coexistence. Coexistence is a state of equanimity in which one lives for oneself and others. On the other hand, symbiosis is a higher state that transcends these states.
- Symbiosis is a state in which actors are not isolated from each other but interconnected, in which there are multiple interactions among actors, and actors are activated by each other's actions.
- The essence of symbiosis is the quest for constructive development and growth through interaction and mutual complementation based on plurality. The spread of symbiosis and the way of survival and growth of the international community should be considered from the perspective of the spread of symbiosis and the way of survival and growth.
- Symbiosis is the view that things are always interdependent. Power in symbiosis theory does not necessarily mean that one party is dominant simply because it is more powerful and capable. Furthermore, in a symbiotic system, all parties involved are interdependent.

Yan Xuetong: Moral Realism

Yan Xuetong of Tsinghua University discusses China's rise from the perspective of moral realism. Moral realism is within the theoretical framework of neoclassical realism, and at the same time incorporates the moral philosophy of thinkers such as Xunzi from the pre-Qin period of China. Yan tries to explain the mechanism for a rising state to replace the leadership of a dominant state in an international system by formulating a systematic theory. In his English book, *Leadership and the Rise of Great Powers*, he elaborates on moral realism [Yan 2019].

- Moral realism is a theory that specifically addresses international relations. “Morality” refers solely to governmental morality, whereby leaders' actions will be judged according to national interests and national capability.
- The different leadership types of the dominant state and of rising states could reshape the international configuration, order, norms, world center, or even the international system as a whole [Ibid., xiii–xiv].
- Political leadership serves as the core independent variable in the theory, and its values consist of different types of leadership at either the domestic or international level.
- Political leadership has a major impact on a nation's foreign strategic orientation.
- The basis of the leading position in the international community is “power.” That power must be both moral and material. If China wants to become a leader, it must have the right combination of material power and moral power.

In addition, Yan Xuetong led the “Tsinghua approach” within the Chinese school of IR. Yan and his colleagues launched the project “Ancient Chinese Thought and Modern Chinese Power” and analyzed the historical international order in East Asia. They discuss the theme of the strategic rise of great powers [Xu and Sun 2016].

5. DIFFICULTIES AND EXPECTATIONS IN CONSTRUCTING A CHINESE SCHOOL OF IR

More than twenty years have passed since Chinese scholars began to discuss the need for constructing a Chinese school of IR, and from 2006 to 2012, there has been an increase in the number of discussions and works on the Chinese school of IR. When Qin Yaqing submitted his “relational theory,” it provoked a large debate in the Chinese IR academic community. The discussions on the “relation-

al theory,” the “Tianxia theory,” and the “moral realism” were not only published in Chinese but were also translated into English by major publishers in the United States and the United Kingdom.

While the English school has been solidly founded and widely referred to in the world’s IR studies, the arguments of Chinese scholars have not yet been widely cited, generalized, and recognized. Individual studies by prominent Chinese scholars may attract attention, but there is no shared effort to publish research as a Chinese school of IR, nor do international scholars apply the theories of the Chinese school to their own countries’ foreign behavior. Chinese scholars, seemingly share the view that the establishment of a Chinese school will face many difficulties in the future.

Pan Wei 潘维 of Peking University argues that the Chinese academic community has become overly dependent on China’s historical and cultural characteristics, in the process of establishing the Chinese school in recent years. To establish the Chinese school, it is necessary to interpret the development of China and the world from the perspective and standpoint of contemporary China with a dynamic vision and innovative theory [Pan 2020]. Men Honghua 门洪华 of Tongji University in Shanghai also raised the following issues. Chinese research on international political theory lacks originality. China’s IR academy should achieve theoretical innovation, to construct Chinese international political theory that can be better understood by other countries [Men 2016].

Guo Shuyong suggests four points necessary to establish the Chinese school of IR. The first point is to integrate concepts that reflect the main research findings in China. After clarifying the characteristics of China, it is necessary to systematically present concepts that reflect the new changes in contemporary society. Various scholars have argued differently, but their views are not unified. The second is an abstraction. This means abstracting the objects and means of research to enhance the universality of the theory. The third is internationalization. Chinese IR scholars should try to gain an international audience. By receiving wide-ranging criticism from abroad, Chinese scholars will reexamine and continually revise their arguments. The level of research will be raised. The fourth point is innovation. A nation with a large number of intellectuals can constantly innovate its theories. Without the achievement of the above four points, the construction of a Chinese school of IR will be difficult [Guo 2017].

Barry Buzan, a prominent British scholar, has great hopes for the construction of Chinese school of IR. He compares the English school and Chinese schools of IR from six perspectives: origins, founders, and organization; naming; context; aims and intentions; theoretical sources; and historical projects. His arguments are as follows [Wang J. and Buzan 2016, 141–142].

- There are various ways in which certain strands of IR theory development

in China might intertwine with English school themes.

- The normative orientation arising out of engagement with history and political theory is one. Another is overlapping interests both in relation to Chinese history as a model for types of international society that differ from those in Western history and to the contemporary rise of China and its impact on regional international society in Asia and on the Western global international society.
- The English school debates hierarchy as an institution of international society, and this might mesh with Chinese thinking on order and harmony under the tribute system.
- As Chinese schools and IR schools in China develop and evolve, they might learn lessons from both the things that the English school has done well and the things it has done not so well. They might thereby avoid certain problems, prepare themselves for those that cannot be avoided, and more safely and effectively chart their way into the global debates in IR.

On the other hand, Yan Xuetong questions whether it is necessary to insist on establishing a Chinese school of IR. He states that China has a history of thousands of years and a rich legacy of ideas and theories, therefore, it is quite difficult to summarize and represent the whole picture of China with a single idea or theory. China's rise is a great opportunity to develop the Chinese theory of IR. If academic innovation that respects objective facts can be brought about, we can realize an era in which China's IR theory will flourish. However, Chinese scholars' insistence on establishing a Chinese school of IR may lead them to determine the direction of their research. Such choices could undermine intellectual and theoretical innovations [Yan 2018]. Yan urges Chinese scholars to prioritize enriching IR theory based on traditional Chinese thought and forming a more universal discipline, rather than making efforts to establish a Chinese school of IR.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper examined China's diplomatic philosophy, its acceptance of Western IR theory, and its attempts to establish a Chinese school of IR. The diplomatic philosophy expressed by the Chinese leaders could be interpreted as China's original IR theory that contained extremely Chinese understandings of international relations with universal significance. It could be also looked upon as an achievement the "Chinese school" can be proud of.

Chinese scholars adopted Marxist theory first. Then, they accepted the Western IR theories, realism, liberalism, and constructivism. They are also inspired by the English school of IR to create the Chinese school of IR, which aimed to local-

ize the IR theory. To localize the IR theory, Chinese scholars have studied traditional Chinese political thought and traditional philosophy and have tried to apply it to contemporary Chinese foreign behavior. Zhao Tingyang presents the theory of “all-under-Heaven” from the perspective of political philosophy. According to him, the Chinese theory of “all-under-Heaven” is based on the idea of Tianxia, the realm of world politics, that transcends the realm of international politics composed of nations. Qin Yaqing presents the “relational theory” and discusses how relationality shapes China’s foreign behavior. Yan Xuetong discusses China’s rise from the perspective of “moral realism.” Yan tries to explain the mechanism for a rising state to replace the leadership of a dominant state in an international system by formulating the theory of moral realism. Studies of IR in China have made remarkable achievements since the advocacy for the construction of the Chinese school of IR.

Universalization of the theories is key to whether a Chinese school of IR will be established in the future. The question is whether it is possible to apply a Chinese IR theory using concepts of Chinese traditional philosophy to the foreign behavior of other countries. It is important for Chinese IR theories to be internationally recognized, by the United States, the United Kingdom, and neighboring countries, especially Japan which has deep historical ties with China and will play a pivotal role.

Wang Yizhou has developed the theory of “creative involvement (*chuangzao de jieru* 创造的介入)” arguing that China ought to be actively involved in regional conflicts to create an international image of a responsible power, and China should actively and constructively intervene in global affairs through international organizations and regimes [Wang Y. 2011]. China should develop values that can be shared with the rest of the world and overcome its principle of non-interference in internal affairs, thus assuming a genuine role as a member of the international community. When China comes to have values that it can share with the rest of the world, Chinese IR theory will receive more attention and be cited by international scholars.

NOTES

- * The author highly appreciates Professor Mōri Kazuko’s insightful comments and suggestions in writing this paper.
- 1 There are also studies using constructivism in the Chinese school of IR discussions such as Gao Qiqi [2014].
- 2 There is some research concerning the English school to study Chinese diplomacy such as Shi [2004].
- 3 There are several research projects on Marxism to study Chinese diplomacies

- such as Cao [2007] and Wang Cungang [2011].
- 4 There are several research papers to examine China-centric and philosophy-based ideas in order to apply them to contemporary Chinese foreign behavior such as Fang and Jin [2009], and Sun [2013].
 - 5 There are several research papers to supplement Qin's argument such as Gao Shangtao [2010] and Su [2016].
 - 6 A theory of symbiosis in the world community is being developed by a group of Shanghai-based scholars, and a "symbiosis school" has grown up, such as Ren [2015] and Su [2016].

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