Chinese School of International Relations: How Theory Creates Diplomatic Strategy and Vice Versa

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Chinese School of International Relations

How Theory Creates Diplomatic Strategy and Vice Versa

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Abstract:
The article attempts to trace the evolution of the Chinese school of international relations and the influence that Qin Yaqing's "relational theory of world politics" arising in its depths and claiming universality has on the formation and implementation of the diplomatic strategy of China's partner relations. The process constructivism and normative requirements—the recognition by partner states of the core national interests of the PRC—act as a theoretical pattern in the article.

Keywords: Chinese school, international relations, Qin Yaqing, relational theory of world politics, diplomatic strategies, partnerships, normative requirements, core interests, pivot partners, broker partners.

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CHANGE OF IDEOLOGICAL ATTITUDES OF THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

Some theoretical transformations started by the Communist Party of China (CPC) in the late 1970s had a direct impact on the formation of a national school of international relations and Chinese world-system concepts. First of all, this concerned the assessment of the content of the modern era. In 1977, Deng Xiaoping assumed that "war can be avoided." In 1985, this assumption developed into the idea that the absence of prerequisites for a world war was possible for a long period of time. The concept that the era of wars and revolutions had given way to an era of peace and development gave rise to a major strategic idea: the main goal of China's diplomacy was now to defend national interests (Qin, 1996; 2011, p. 3), which was reaffirmed at the 12th CPC Congress (September 1-11, 1982), while the term 'interests of the proletariat' disappeared from all party documents. It was a complete renunciation of ideology in foreign policy and a signal to the Western community that China was ready to integrate into existing international organizations on generally accepted and understandable grounds (Hu, 2009, p. 3; Xu, 2006, p. 19). The 14th CPC Congress (October 12-18, 1992) removed the term 'proletarian internationalism' as the basis of the country's foreign policy from the CPC Constitution (Chu and Jin, 2008, p. 77). The transition of the CPC to less rigid ideological attitudes allowed Chinese scholars (most of whom naturally were and still are CPC members) to study and initially copy Western theoretical approaches in their international studies without fearing repression.

The *"Chinese School"* now represents the consensus that IR theory should be developed within China, and that this should be independent from government ideology and related to the wider pursuit of theory in IR globally. But it does not yet represent a single-core idea or approach, and most likely it will become a vehicle for several approaches linked mainly by the fact that they represent Chinese voices, and/or draw on Chinese sources. Probably also there will remain some tension between those who want to develop

a theory that is in some sense a national IR or foreign policy theory for China and those who want mainly to develop a significant Chinese voice in the global IR theory debates (Wang and Buzan, 2014, p. 25).

RESEARCH PARADIGMS

Liang Shoude attributes the development of the Chinese School to the great progress achieved in translating Western classics on IR into Chinese, preparing textbooks in accordance with the requirements of the main Western theories, and developing international relations as an academic discipline (Liang, 2005; Qin, 2007, pp 313-340). These efforts involved a wide range of big theories: realism, liberalism, and constructivism, which still have dominant positions in Chinese international studies. An analysis of journals issued between 1978 and 2008 shows that 45 percent of publications in 1978-1990, 69 percent of publications in 1991-2000, and 75 percent of publications in 2001-2007 used these theories (Qin, 2008, p. 306). Chinese scholars study these theories, teach them in their institutions, introduce the Chinese community of international affairs specialists to them, and apply them in their analysis of China's international relations and foreign policy. Other areas outside the "big theories" are also developing (Gao, 2009; Go, 2014).

As *Wang Yizhou* admits, Chinese scholars developed a methodological consciousness too late, only at the turn of the 21st century, when the issues of methodology and normative writing, differentiation of toolkits of various sciences and their use, differentiation and rivalry of scientific schools, and the division and merger of scientism and humanism were included in the Chinese discourse agenda (Wang, 2006, p. 17). At the same time, as shown in Table 1, the overall percentage of theoretical articles remains fairly stable (18 percent) and this trend continues.

Chinese experts focus their *foreign policy analysis* on power in international relations – 23 percent, security – 23 percent, international institutions – 17 percent, cooperation – 12 percent, international morality – 8 percent, culture – 8 percent, unions – 6 percent and

human rights– 3 percent. *Research paradigms* in Chinese theoretical studies had the following priorities:

International political economy – 20%,
Geopolitics – 18%,
Realism – 16%,
Liberalism – 10%,
Constructivism – 10%,
Marxism – 7%,
Feminism – 6%,
English school – 6%,
International political psychology – 4%,
Eclecticism – 2%,
Normative theories – 1% (Liu and Li, 2016, pp. 4, 5).

Table 1. Number and percentage of theoretical articles in general publications on international relations in the PRC, 2010 – 2014

Article's type	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**Total / %**
Theoretical	131 **(21%)**	110 **(19%)**	106 **(18%)**	99 **(17%)**	76 **(13%)**	522 **(18%)**
Empirical	457 **(73%)**	437 **(76%)**	462 **(78%)**	444 **(75%)**	466 **(81%)**	2,266 **(76%)**
Others	38 **(6%)**	30 **(5%)**	24 **(4%)**	51 **(8%)**	37 **(6%)**	180 **(6%)**
Total	626	577	592	594	579	2,968 **(100%)**

Source: Liu Ming, Li Kaisheng (ed.). Zhongguo guoji guanxi yu waijiao lilun qianyan: tansuo yu fazhan [China's international relations and advanced diplomatic theories: research and development]. *Shanghai shehui kexueyuan chubanshe* [Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press], 2016, p. 3

Until the 1990s, Marxism held a dominant position in Chinese IR studies, but this prevalence declined as China launched its policy of reform and openness (Qin 2008, pp. 15, 16; Wang, 2011, pp. 95, 96). Some scholars, such as Wang Cungang, Cao Yongxin and Go Shuyong, still adhere to this approach (Wang, 2009a, pp. 46-50; 2009b, pp. 6-12; Cao, 2009; Go, 2006; 2007, pp. 23-30), but we cannot say it has been pushed to the periphery of Chinese international studies, because

there is a wide network of Marxist institutions in the system of the Academy of Social Sciences and universities of China which employ a large number of young researchers.

The loosening of the Marxist straightjacket in the late 1970s gave rise to the development of a wide range of theoretical approaches within China's strict political system. This, in turn, created demand for Chinese content, which was met by a return to Chinese history of the "Spring and Autumn" and "Warring States" periods. The traditional approach has begun to dominate in the Chinese IR school. Many scholars, including Yan Xuetong, Qin Yaqing, Ye Zicheng and others, draw on ancient Chinese history and traditional political theory to analyze China's international relations (Yan and Xu, 2008; 2009; Yan, 2011; 2015; Ye, 2003; 2005, pp. 64-67; 2007). Zhao Tingyang focuses more on traditional Chinese philosophy as a theoretical basis for China's international relations (Zhao, 2003, pp. 2-33; 2005; 2006, pp. 29-41; 2009, pp. 5-18).

"DEBATES," "DISCUSSIONS," "INNOVATIONS"

The notions of 'debate,' 'discussion' and, especially, 'innovation' are rather vague in meaning. For example, Qin Yaqing (2011) argues that Chinese studies on IR theory (IRT) went through three debates: the first one was between orthodox scholars (conservatives) and advocates of the reformer school, who discussed the assessment of the current state of international relations—"war or revolution" or "peace and development." But this debate was held after the 12th CPC Congress had resolved this theoretical issue (see the beginning of this article), and the publication of 15 articles on this subject in the journal *World Economics and Politics* in 1982-1983 had no fundamental significance. The second debate, between "Chinese realists and liberals" who discussed how to best implement national interests, was, according to Qin Yaqing, caused by the publication in 1996 of Yan Xuetong's book *Analysis of China's National Interests*. In this book, the young scholar, who received a PhD in the United States, set forth classical approaches of American scientists, which was beyond the understanding of the Chinese academic

community, for which only "class interests" of the state could exist. The third debate—a tripartite dispute between realists, liberals and constructivists about a peaceful rise of China—was caused by the publication of articles in the West, claiming that a peaceful rise of China was impossible. The entire "polemic" of Chinese scholars was reduced to a refutation of this claim.

Wang Yiwei and Han Xueqing (2016, Loc. 1356-1708) in their "debates" describe the formation of "Chinese School" rather than analyze the IR theory proper.

The first "debate" was about Chinese characteristics. The development of an "IRT with Chinese characteristics" was first discussed at a major conference in Shanghai in 1987. In the 1990s, Liang Shoude was the most active participant in the discussion of IRT with Chinese characteristics (Liang, 1994, pp. 15-21). He proposed breaking free from the Western theoretical discourse and building a Chinese IR theory. Skeptics, among them Song Xinning, insisted that an "IR theory with Chinese characteristics" would be an overly ideologized concept (Song, 2001 pp. 61-74). Nevertheless, Zhang Minqian proposed building a Chinese IR school in 1991, and perhaps he was the first to use the term 'Chinese School' (Wang and Dan, 2008, p. 343). During the next decade, this term became widespread. Mei Ran (2000, pp. 63-67), Re Xiao (2000, pp. 19-25) and Wang Yiwei (2002, pp. 4-10) became active supporters and proponents of the "Chinese School." Although the name changed from "IR theory with Chinese characteristics" to "Chinese School," the starting point and goals remained the same—the creation of a Chinese IRT.

The second "debate" was about Chinese theory and the expediency of "Chinese School." By the beginning of the 21st century, the controversy over the name had subsided and the majority of scholars had accepted the term 'Chinese School.' Qin Yaqing gave the following definition: "The Chinese paradigm refers to the theory study with Chinese ideology and philosophy, … its characteristic concept should be from unique Chinese international thought or Chinese perspective" (2008, p. 18). Some scholars held that the term 'Chinese School' was "more systemic and characteristic to describe a theory" (Wang and

Dan, 2008, p. 344). The only opponent to the creation of the "Chinese School" was Yan Xuetong, who emphasized that IR theories should be universal (Yan, 2006, p. 1; 2011, pp. 252-259). Qin Yaqing made the most significant contribution to explaining the need for the Chinese school (2005, pp. 165-176; 2007, pp. 313-340; 2011, pp. 231-257). Although, according to his own estimates, only five percent of the results of research conducted for 30 years from 1978 to 2007 had relation, in one way or another, to a Chinese theoretical paradigm, these results nevertheless became influential in the Chinese academic community (Zhang Zhizhou, 2009, pp. 74-79; Zhang Jianxin, 2009, pp. 9-16) and led to the creation of Chinese theories (Zhao, 2005; Qin, 2012; Yan, 2015).

The third "debate" was about ways to create the Chinese school. Whereas in the 1990s Chinese IR scholars reached a consensus on building a Chinese IRT, after 2000 the discussion focused on how to build it. In this regard, there arose a question about ways and methods of building a Chinese IRT. Yan Xuetong with his "Qinghua approach" (or "Qinghua school"), who objected to the name "Chinese school," nevertheless held that traditional Chinese thinking and the world systems of "Tianxia" ("All-under-heaven") and "Chaogong" (tributary system of international order in *tianxia*) are not only enough to build a Chinese IR theory but they can also enrich the existing Western theories. Yan Xuetong concluded that the pre-Qin philosophy would serve as the basis for a Chinese IR theory. Despite the difference in their approaches, Yan Xuetong and Qin Yaqing are regarded as major scholars contributing content for the "Chinese school."

It is known that the main problem of the American IR theory is the preservation of hegemony, while for the English school it is the formation and development of the international community. What will determine the Chinese school of IR? According to Qin Yaqing, "relations" (*guanxi*) are the basic concept of Chinese traditional society and culture (Qin, 2012). Zhu Feng and Shi Yinhong believe that Chinese IR studies should focus on key issues related to China, but that they should also include other IR theories. Of course, universal theories are applicable to problems of China; therefore, Chinese studies will never

be completely new so as to challenge existing Western theories (Shi, 2004, pp. 89-91; Zhu, 2003, pp. 23-25).

Chinese realists, liberals, constructivists and followers of the English school are part of a global discussion and can be classified as research paradigms of the Chinese IRT. There are studies that can be identified as "Chinese schools" because they are based on clearly expressed Chinese elements: Qin Yaqing's relational approach, Yan Xuetong's Tsinghua approach, and Ye Zicheng's geopolitical approach. These approaches seek to recover Chinese history and traditional political ideas as resources for understanding both the foreign policy of China and world politics in general. This traditional approach is expanding and, at a minimum, it should help bring the history of China and its political theory into a wider IR discussion. Chinese concepts can be understood as a critique of and corrective to the inherent cultural West-centrism of rationalist IR theory. In addition, there is the Shanghai school's international symbiosis approach, which unites Western and Chinese theoretical approaches (Hu, 2012, pp. 35-43; Su, 2013, pp. 4-23; Ren, 2015), and Tang Shiping's independent theoretical works on the social evolution of international politics, which do not correspond to any of these approaches and which were written in China in English and mainly published in the West. Tang Shiping does not rely on Chinese history and philosophy but focuses on world history and universal theories. This is why he writes in English and appeals to the Western reader (Tang, 2010, pp. 31-35; 2013). It was only in 2017 that his main work, *The Social Evolution of International Politics* (Tang, 2017), was translated into Chinese.

DOMINATION OF "RELATIONS" AS A CONSTANT VARIABLE

Qin Yaqing's Relational Theory (2012), known since 2016 as the "relational theory of world politics" (Qin Yaqing, 2018), is the more developed, scientifically substantiated and "universal" theory accepted by the Western academic community. It integrates ancient Chinese political ideas into existing international theories. Qin uses ancient Chinese metaphysics, logic and philosophy as his instruments. Using

this method, he tries to explain the dynamics of modern international relations.

Relations as a constant variable. Qin Yaqing has developed a general theory of relations that is deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture and is a key idea in classical Chinese works, in particular, in *I Ching* ("Book of Change"), viewed by Confucius as a fundamental concept of governance. Most Western social theories begin with rationality. In Chinese culture, the most important concept is "relationality," a concept that is as important as rationality.

The theory consists of three main components: process in terms of relations, meta-relationship, and relational governance. It argues that the process is ontologically significant and is defined in terms of dynamic relations. The meta-relationship, according to Chinese dialectics, is the yin-yang relationship. It is the "relation of relations" and represents the essential nature of all relations, including relations between humans, between social groups, and between nation-states, as well as between humans and nature itself. Relational governance focuses on the governing of relations among actors rather than actors per se.

Relations and processes are viewed as ongoing interactive relations embedded in social practices and producing social meanings. Processes are relations in motion, or a complex of interconnected and dynamic relations formed through social practices. In the relational theory, therefore, the process is ontologically significant, and relations are the primary unit of analysis.

The meta-relationship and the nature of relations: Chinese dialectics. Qin Yaqing uses *I Ching* which explores the yin-yang relationship and which states that this relationship is primary and most fundamental. Qin is sure that Chinese dialectics or Zhongyong (the middle course or mutually inclusive way) provides the epistemological essence of the relational theory. Like the Hegelian dialectics, Zhongyong, in Qin's opinion, sees things in opposite and interactive poles, but unlike it, it assumes that the relationship between the two poles (yin and yang) is non-conflictual and that the poles can co-evolve into a new, harmonious synthesis, a new form of life containing elements of both poles. Thus, relations emphasize the connectivity of various actors in the Universe

and the complexity of relations between different actors in it and the relation of relations between yin and yang, or what Qin Yaqing calls meta-relationship. The Chinese dialectics understands the yin-yang meta-relationship as fundamentally harmonious; interaction between them is a process of harmonization, while harmony is realized through Zhongyong, or the mutually inclusive way (Qin, 2012, pp. 76-111).

"RELATIONS" OF PARTNERSHIP IN MODERN CHINESE DIPLOMACY

"Relations," rather than "norms" and "rules," have become the main content of the new approach in China's foreign policy. Over the past twenty-five years (1993-2018), China has been successfully implementing its diplomatic strategy of "relations" of partnership (see Table 2). In 2018, the number of countries with which China has signed partnership agreements has already reached 100 (Grachikov, 2019, pp. 83-93).

Table 2. All countries and regional associations with which the PRC has established partnerships, 1993 –2014

Type of relations	ASIA	EUROPE	AMERICA	AFRICA	OCEANIC	TOTAL
Strategic partnership	24+1	14+1	7	5+2	2	56
All types of partnership with countries and regional associations	28+1	20+1	8+1	8+2	3	72

Source: Men Honghua and Liu Xiaoyang. Zhongguo huoban guanxi zhanlue pinggu yu zhanwang [Chinese Partnership Strategy: Assessment and Perspective]. *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* [World Economics and Politics], 2015, no. 2, p. 82.

The theoretical basis of this diplomacy is the relational theory of Qin Yaqing who, based on social constructivism and the Chinese philosophical tradition, has developed a theoretical model for processual constructivism. Conceptualizing relations and viewing them as a solid theoretical core, processual constructivism, according to Qin Yaqing, is a network of relations in international society which helps a nation-state (that is, China) shape its identity and produce international

power. *Processual constructivism* is a theory of evolution at the system level, which focuses on interactive practices between states, emphasizes independent ontology of social processes, and plays a significant role in building international norms and state identities (Cao, 2017, pp. 36-54).

Chinese scientists now actively use the relational theory, as an analytical framework, in their studies of international relations, in particular, Sino-U.S. relations (Mo, 2015, pp. 16-40), and regional relation-based governance (Chen and Wang, 2016, pp. 93 -112). Apart from Qin's relational theory, China's academic community is working on the "theory of balance of relations" (guanxi junheng lilun) proposed by Taiwanese scholar Shi Zhiyu, which is more often used to analyze China's foreign policy practices.

According to Chinese scientists, "relations" in international politics are a balanced structure or a cognitive result, formed in interaction between social actors, which reflects the main characteristics of the degree of trust between actors and which is also the basis of their predictable behavior in the future (Chen and Wang, 2016, p. 99). In international political economy, relation-based governance has the following four specific features. First, relation-based governance is not a result of negotiations on an agreement but of a consensus which ultimately leads to the creation of a governance system marked by informality and non-commitment (Ang, 2014, p. 334). Second, relation-based governance is an executive mechanism without a frozen, fixed form; it is the basis of a consensus of interests and trust. Such governance is marked by uncertainty, ambiguity (mohuxing) and flexibility (linghuoxing), which allows regulating and adjusting relations simultaneously with changes in the social environment; therefore costs associated with the formation and transformation of relations are very low. Third, relation-based governance usually has long-term goals and focuses on ambitious, strategic and global objectives. Speaking of short-term or local interests, such governance is basically aimed at implementing long-term and common goals—for example, economic interests are put above political and security interests. Fourth, as regards value orientations, relation-based governance is inclusive in nature and open in form (Chen and Wang, 2016, pp. 99, 100).

"RELATIONS" AND THE NORMATIVE APPROACH: RECOGNITION OF CHINA'S CORE NATIONAL INTERESTS

The successful implementation of the social constructivist approach in the theory and strategy of relations of partnership in world politics has markedly increased the number of China's partner countries, which has allowed China to form a certain matrix of normative requirements (see Table 2)—the degree of recognition by partner countries of China's core national interests which, if combined, concern a very sensitive issue for China, namely, its territorial integrity. First of all, Beijing seeks recognition by other countries of the "One-China" principle and their unequivocal support of China's position on Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang and, in the future, China's sovereignty over islands in the East China and South China Seas.

Table 3. Criteria for the degree of support of core national interests of China by partner countries

Degree of support	**Criteria of support of core national interests**
0	Mention of the One-China principle, without mentioning Taiwan, Tibet and other core interests of China
1	Mention of the One-China principle, recognition of the PRC government as the only legitimate government, renunciation of formal relations with the Taiwan region (while maintaining informal economic and cultural ties with the Taiwan region); opposition to any moves aimed at violating peaceful unification (escalating the complicated situation over Taiwan)
2	Mention of the One-China principle, recognition of the PRC government as the only legitimate government, renunciation of formal relations with the Taiwan region, opposition to the entry of Taiwan into any international organization on behalf of the state. Support for the peaceful unification of China and opposition to any outside interference (in the process of peaceful unification) and to Taiwan's plans to create "one China, one Taiwan" and "independent Taiwan"
3	Mention of the One-China principle, recognition of the PRC government as the only legitimate government; mutual support of important or core interests, such as sovereignty, territory and stable development; non-entry into alliances directed against a partner country; prevention of activities on one's territory that harm the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a partner country; support of China's core interests concerning Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang

Source: Sun Xuefeng, Ding Lu. Huobanguo leixing yu Zhongguo huoban guanxi shengji [Explaining the Upgrading of China's Partnership: Pivot Partners, Broker Partners and Beyond]. *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* [World Economics and Politics], 2017, no. 2, p. 62.

Table 4. Classification of China's state-partners

	Broker Partners	Not-Broker Partners
Pivot Partners	Egypt, Russia, Sudan	Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Cambodia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, Ukraine, Iraq
Not-Pivot Partners	Algeria, Argentina, Ireland, Brazil, Bulgaria, Belgium, Poland, Denmark, Germany, Ecuador, France, Congo, Costa Rica, the Netherlands, Canada, Kenya, Romania, Peru, Mexico, Nigeria, Portugal, Tanzania, Turkey, Venezuela , Spain, Greece, Hungary, Jamaica, Italy, UK, Jordan, Chile	UAE, Ethiopia, Angola, Australia, Equatorial Guinea, East Timor, Philippines, Fiji, South Africa, Republic of Korea, Colombia, Laos, Maldives, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Thailand, Brunei, Singapore, New Zealand, India, Vietnam

Source: Sun Xuefeng, Ding Lu. Huobanguo leixing yu Zhongguo huoban guanxi shengji [Explaining the Upgrading of China's Partnership: Pivot Partners, Broker Partners and Beyond]. *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* [World Economics and Politics], 2017, no. 2, p. 63.

The deepening of relations of partnership and their natural diversification has brought about the need to further improve normative requirements. Now partner countries are graduated according to the degree of their influence in their macro-regions and the possibility of using their potentials to expand China's diplomatic resources in these regions. Partner countries have been divided into two narrower groups—pivot partners (which support China's core national interests) and broker partners (used by China to expand its foreign policy resources). For analysis, Chinese authors have used classification (development/increase in the number of partner countries) and key assumptions—division into pivot and broker partners—as a dependent variable. To make the results of research, which involved a large body of statistical data, more reliable, they have added the following variables: presence/absence of bilateral disputes (on territorial issues, human rights and trade), economic influence and interdependence in trade, the possibility of obtaining potential partners (from among friends of China's partners), the level of arms trade, and integrated power (Sun and Ding, 2017, pp. 63-67). The obtained results (Table 3) show that only three countries from among China's partners—Egypt, Russia, and Sudan—are the most

reliable partners of China, which meet all criteria not only for pivot partners but also for broker partners, while the United States did not even qualify into the table.

* * *

The influence of the Chinese school on the world academic community increases from year to year, which is evidenced by numerous publications in international journals (among others, see Tin-bor Hui, 2010, pp. 124-138; Acharya, 2011, pp. 619-637; Dellios, 2011; Shambaugh, 2011, pp. 339-372; Kristensen and Nielsen, 2013, pp. 19-40; Wang, 2013; Thuy, 2014; Noesselt, 2015, pp. 430-448). Russian researchers, mostly sinologists, also carefully study the fruitful efforts of their Chinese colleagues in understanding global politics and developing independent theoretical concepts (Zhang and Korolev, 2010, pp. 96-110; Voskressenckii, 2013, pp. 82-96; Kuznetsov, 2014, pp. 166-177; Krivokhizh and Soboleva, 2017, pp. 76-84). In recent years, scholars of the Department of Theory and History of International Relations of Russia's Peoples' Friendship University have taken the lead in studying the "Chinese school" as a non-Western content of the IR theory (Grachikov, 2014, pp. 49-65; 2016, pp. 68-80; 2017, pp. 47-65; Pon'ka, Bel'chenko and Zabella, 2017, pp. 76-86).

China has gradually evolved from a consumer into a producer and exporter of international knowledge. It feels confident on the Western market of think tanks, educational services and discussion platforms on important issues of world politics. The shift of not only world power but also the production of international knowledge to China is already a real phenomenon of modern IR theories.

Qin Yaqing's "relational theory" and the diplomatic "relational practice" based on it have allowed China's foreign policy to create an integral, multi-level global "relational network" as an alternative to the existing system of international relations. At the same time, it is not in direct conflict with this system but tries to adjust and integrate into it as its integral and potentially dominant part.

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