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Dialogues and Audiences for the Chinese School as Traveling Theory**

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# Navigating the Core-Periphery Structures of 'Global' IR: Dialogues and Audiences for the Chinese School as Traveling Theory

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## Abstract

The Chinese School is not the only attempt to construct a geographically based 'school' in International Relations (IR) and this chapter therefore situates the Chinese School within the broader 'global' discipline. Firstly, it argues that the Chinese School debate is a way of navigating between core and periphery in a discipline notorious for its American dominance. The Chinese IR discipline was virtually imported from the US, remains deeply influenced by and focused on the US discipline. Chinese School theorizing therefore largely has recognition in the US as the primary goal and its focus on theorizing China's 'peaceful rise' should primarily be read as a response to American 'China threat' discourses. Second, as a school among other schools, the Chinese School is inspired in *form* by other periphery 'schools' in a US-dominated discipline, most notably the English and Copenhagen schools. Even in *content* Chinese IR shares some affinities with the English School in the classical/traditionalist focus on theorizing ancient Chinese thoughts and history. However, even the English School was imported to China from the US, and the engagement with other so-called European 'schools' such as the Copenhagen, Aberystwyth and Paris schools in critical security studies has been more marginal, although some of these schools seem to speak to the concerns of the Chinese School. Third, the Chinese school is often seen as a natural product of China's rising power. But there has been little engagement with IR in other so-called 'rising powers', like Brazil and India, where there have been similar concerns about the dominance of Euro-American IR theories and voices calling for a recovery of indigenous resources. The paper finally argues that the prospect for recognition of a Chinese School depends on its navigation of these center-periphery structures and what audiences it engages with.

## Biographical note

Peter Marcus Kristensen is a researcher at the University of Copenhagen. His main field of research is the sociology of the International Relations discipline, rising powers and non-Western perspectives on international relations. His recently submitted PhD project explores non-Western perspectives on security, power shifts and future world order in the cases of China, India and Brazil. It involved fieldwork in China, India and Brazil and more than 100 interviews with leading academics and think tank scholars. His articles on the sociology of IR have appeared in peer-reviewed journals like *European Journal of International Relations*, *International Political Sociology*, *International Studies Review*, *International Studies Perspectives*, *Journal of European Public Policy*, *Pacific Review* and *Third World Quarterly*.

## Introduction

The Chinese School debate has become more outward-looking than the more defensive and inward-looking debates about 'IR with Chinese Characteristics' (Chan 1997; Geeraerts and Men 2001, 269). Interventions in the Chinese School debate seek to enter 'global IR' and this chapter reads the Chinese School as an effort to become a 'traveling theory'; a theory rooted in the Chinese geocultural context but able to travel and to carve out a space in the 'global' IR discipline. The prospect of becoming a traveling theory depends on the Chinese School's navigation of the core-periphery structures of 'global' IR, however. There is not really a 'global' IR discipline in which ideas and theories, or at least the best ones, travel seamlessly through space. As I will further argue below, IR is a stratified space with asymmetric core-periphery structures of communication. In the most simplistic formulation, there is not one IR discipline but several national disciplines of which the American core dominates most syllabi, textbooks, journals and conferences. The Chinese School and the Chinese IR discipline has largely imported IR from the U.S. and taken 'American IR' as 'global IR'. This is a problematic assumption and it is necessary to take other national disciplines, and thus potential audiences, into account when situating the Chinese School in 'global IR'.

This chapter views the Chinese School from the outside-in focusing on its position(ing) in the core-periphery structure of global IR; the Chinese School in relation to the *core* 'American social science'; the Chinese School as a 'school among schools', mostly schools in the European *semi-periphery*; and finally, the Chinese School compared to IR in other 'rising powers' from the *periphery*, like India and Brazil. Firstly, the Chinese School operates in a discipline notoriously dominated by an American core and is put forward as an alternative to this American core. The Chinese IR discipline was virtually imported from the U.S. and remains deeply influenced by and focused on the U.S. discipline. Chinese School theorizing seems to have recognition in the U.S. as the primary goal and its focus on theorizing China's "Peaceful Rise" is largely a response to American "China threat" discourses. Second, as a school among schools, the Chinese School is inspired in *form* by European 'schools' in the semi-periphery of this U.S.-dominated discipline, notably the English and Copenhagen schools. Even in *substance* Chinese IR shares some affinities with the English School—which was imported to China from the U.S.—in the traditionalist focus on theorizing ancient Chinese thoughts and history, but the engagement with other so-called European 'schools' such as the Copenhagen, Aberystwyth and Paris schools in critical security studies has been marginal although some of these theories seem to speak to the concerns of the Chinese School. Third, the Chinese school is often seen as a natural response to China's rising power. But there has been little engagement with IR in other so-called 'rising powers', like Brazil and India, where there have been parallel concerns over the dominance of American and Eurocentric theories and voices calling for a recovery of indigenous resources, albeit to a lesser extent and in different ways than in China. The chapter concludes with a call for audience diversity and the exploration of alternative (e.g. South-South) dialogues for the Chinese School as traveling theory.

### **The Core: The Chinese School and the "American Social Science"**

Stanley Hoffmann's argument that IR is an "American social science" has been repeated so many times that it has become an "evergreen" (Friedrichs 2004:1) and "truism" (McMillan 2012). Long before Hoffmann, French scholars argued that IR was a "spécialité américaine" displaying an "excès de rationalisme et d'esprit systématique" and "quasi mathématique" inclination in some of its work (Grosser 1956:637, 640; see also Duroselle 1952:698). Other Americans had also noted that IR was an "American invention" with "patriotic biases" (Neal and Hamlett 1969:283; see also Olson 1972:12; Welch 1972:305–306). And several scholars since Hoffmann argued that IR remained preoccupied by American foreign policy concerns and/or ahistorical, scientific,

behavioralist, and quantitative ways of doing IR that were peculiarly American (Gareau 1981; Alker and Biersteker 1984; Krippendorff 1987; Smith 1987; Wæver 1998). Despite its parochial nature, IR produced in the American 'core' dominates textbooks, syllabi and journals all over the world, while IR done all over the world rarely travels to the U.S. 'core' (Robles 1993; Strange 1995; Biersteker 2009; Holsti 1985).

China is no exception and the quest for a Chinese school can be read against the backdrop of U.S. hegemony. It is well-documented that Chinese IR was built on an American foundation. American foundations played an instrumental role in providing the foundation for Chinese IR by supporting institutions, translations, visiting scholarships and academic exchange in the 1980s (Lampton, et al. 1986; Zhang 2003:342–344; Shambaugh 2011). A young generation of Chinese scholars went to the U.S. to do their doctorate or post-doctorate, some brought American IR theories back and rose to prominence as translation theorizers (Kristensen and Nielsen 2014). Even scholars who would later lead the theorization of Chinese thoughts and debate the Chinese School were educated in the U.S. and initially known as proponents of American theoretical paradigms (e.g. Yan Xuetong as neorealist and Qin Yaqing as constructivist). Many observers note that IR scholarship in the 1980s and 1990s mainly translated and applied Western theories (Johnston 2002:35; Qin 2007:316, 2009:194; Ren 2008:296; Wang 2009:106). The conventional historiography of Chinese IR is that it did not become an independent discipline until American theories were imported and translated in the 1980s and 1990s (Song 1997, 2001; Zhang 2002, 2003; Qin 2007, 2009). Compared to IR in other countries, and their receptiveness to U.S. imports, it should be noted that Chinese academia had a unique trajectory: it moved from the closedness, isolation and dismantling of academic life of the Cultural Revolution, which created an almost *tabula rasa*, to a policy promoting learning from the West, especially the U.S., which also opened for funding from U.S. foundations. The convergence of these conditions is hardly found elsewhere.

The influence of U.S. theories is evident in the three, almost proxy, debates that shaped the history of Chinese IR according to Qin (2011). In the 1990s, American realism was introduced as a challenger to previously dominant Marxist theories. The translation of Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* "attracted intensive attention" and, followed by Waltz and Gilpin, pushed "realism to the most conspicuous height in China's IR studies." (Qin 2011b:238). Yan Xuetong's *Zhongguo Guojia Liyi Fenxi* (An Analysis of China's National Interest) and other realist works challenged Marxist orthodoxy by focusing on national interest, not class or ideology, as the primary "independent variable" (Qin 2011b:238–239). Realists won and Marxist IR was marginalized. But then liberal theories were introduced. Keohane's *After Hegemony*, Keohane and Nye's *Power and Interdependence* and Rosenau's *Governance without Government* were translated and Wang Yizhou's *Dangdai Guoji Zhengzhi Xilun* (An Analysis of Contemporary International Politics) is emphasized as an important work introducing liberalism. This led to a "dramatic increase" in liberal IR stressing globalization, economic and non-traditional security, international institutions and other topics (Qin 2011b:240–244). Liberalism then became dominant. But then, if the logic was not already clear, at the turn of the millennium constructivism was introduced when Qin Yaqing translated Wendt's *Social Theory of International Politics*. Within a few years, constructivism had surpassed realism and liberalism to become the dominant paradigm. This tripartite theoretical constellation, known from American IR, thus emerged in China too and debates about China's role in the world (revisionist or status quo) took place among adherents of each (Qin 2011b:245–248).

It is somewhat paradoxical that Chinese scholars debate whether China will be a revisionist or status quo power, whether it will overturn the American-led liberal order or integrate into it—all problems infused by a *status quo* perspective. It is worth emphasizing that not only American theories were imported, but also American debates and security concerns. Chinese scholars have engaged with the American discourse on China and the various 'China threat' theories in their

culturalist and neorealist guises. In the mid-1990s, Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis, along with the democratic peace thesis, became a "hot topic" and several Chinese scholars responded with critiques (Wang 2002:7, 2009:106). Johnston's (1995) work on China's "cultural realism" that posited Chinese strategic culture as a *parabellum* culture, not a pacifist Confucian culture, also attracted some dissatisfaction. US debates on the "China threat" theory (Bernstein and Munro 1997; Gries 1999; Mearsheimer 2006) also triggered suspicion and opposition from Chinese scholars: "'The Democratic Peace Theory', 'Clash of Civilizations', and 'China Threat' arguments and so on all try to enhance the identity of the western world. This is better shown in the argument of 'The End of History'. Thus, it is no surprise that the western scholars don't believe in the non-western world and look down upon them." (Wang 2007:200–201). Dissatisfaction with American theories led Chinese scholars to ask why there was no Chinese IR theory (Qin 2011b:250) and if it was time to move from "copying" towards "constructing" (Wang 2009)?

A peculiarity of the typical history of Chinese IR is the narrative on development 'stages' where the import and learning of American theories is seen as a catching up, or ripening, process where Chinese academics had to undergo the same development stages as Americans (a teleology reminiscent of modernization theory) only later to negate it and bring about a new stage (or perhaps Marxism). The 'end' stage, however, is a post-Western utopia beyond national parochialisms. Rather, in the end a Chinese school will emerge to address Chinese questions. The logic is clear: if "theory is always for someone and for some purpose" (Cox 1981:128), namely the U.S. and its purpose of maintaining hegemony, Chinese IR has now 'matured' enough to have its own theory or "big idea" that serves *its* purpose of assuming a greater role in the world through peaceful rise (Qin 2007:328, 2011b:474). The core problematic for any theory, the Chinese School included, should be "specific, relevant, conspicuous, and present", must concern "the theorist and the policy maker alike" and "needs solutions" (Qin 2007, 328). Theories are seen as problem-solving devices. Hoffmann's argument that IR is "An American Social Science" is invoked to make the same point: "Mainstream American international relations theories often claim to be universal, but in fact they are rooted in American culture, practices, and problems." (Qin 2012:69). It logically follows that a Chinese School would be rooted in the culture, experience and history of the Chinese people.

In a more classical Marxist formulation, Wang Yiwei (2007:191, 208) argues that existing theories are "vulgar" because they are really Western theories (represented by Anglo-America) that explain only modern Western history, are 'problem-solving' only for the U.S. and, as class theories, legitimize the Western international system. Vulgar theories, therefore, "can only be negated by the so-called Chinese School" which will automatically be produced when China dominates the world's productive forces: "Once these undeveloped countries rise, their wills should be expressed in the international system, making it possible to deconstruct the western system. This will be the real revolution of international relations. This is the theoretical and temporal background for censuring western IRT and approaching the possibility of a future Chinese School." (Wang 2007:194). The search for a Chinese School is also driven by a Marxist sociology of knowledge: i.e. that theory should guide political practice and that dominant theories are necessarily theories of the dominant class/state (Tickner and Wæver 2009:336). Some argue that this practico-political concept of theory is particular to Chinese IR. Contrary to "Western epistemology" where the purpose of theory is "explaining and predicting", it is argued, the Chinese concept of theory is ideological: theory must instruct practice the "right" way and must be normative or "revolutionary", not "empty" (Geeraerts and Men 2001, 252). The lingering influence of Marxism as meta-theory, is one of the explanations why the drive towards developing a national theory has been so strong in China. There is nevertheless a certain irony in using Cox' critical theory arguments not only to expose how certain problem-solving theories serve hegemonic classes and nations, but also to argue that China needs to build a problem-solving theory for the Chinese purpose.

Theories are envisioned as political, not in the sense of constituting the worlds they describe, but as a problem-solving tool for one's nation-state and the challenges it faces. The core purpose of the Chinese school is thus seen by many to be the "peaceful rise" of China (Qin 2011b:245; Acharya and Buzan 2007:290; Ren 2008:300-301). The concern with "peaceful rise" is a response to hegemonic American IR theory, particularly "China threat" theories (Qin 2011b:245-248). Yet this is also a paradoxical way of countering U.S. hegemony because even a theory about "peaceful rise" operates on a discursive terrain defined by the American concern over the rise of new challengers to U.S. primacy. As Zhang Yongjin argues, "Ironically, the analytical concepts and theoretical assumptions of this counter-discourse are defined in the orthodox neorealist terms characteristic of the 'China threat' discourse. The constraining power of the 'China threat' discourse is so considerable that even recent discussions of China's 'peaceful rise,' it is argued, have to be conducted in such a way as to avoid 'triggering fear that Beijing harbors revisionist intentions.'" (Zhang 2007:113). In other words, not only is the Chinese counter-discourse framed by the concepts and concerns of realist American IR discourse (can power transitions be peaceful, is China a revisionist or status quo rising power, will it overturn the liberal world order?), it also operates in a discursive field where even academic statements are read as signs of China's peaceful or threatening intentions.

The desire is nonetheless to speak back to Western, mostly American, discourse on China. This raises a number of dilemmas apart from the reflexive security dimension. In order to speak back and be taken seriously in Western-American discourse, Chinese IR scholars try to combine a universal and scientific western IR language about how to know the world (epistemology) with a local Chinese vision of modern China's being in the world (ontology) to construct their own IR theory—simply put, to be "uniquely universal" (Wang 2013). Arif Dirlik argues that this combination of universal scientism and unique Chinese characteristics is a product of seeking recognition within mainstream IR: "So long as they are recognized a voice of their own – and whether out of a disposition to scientism that is a legacy of "scientific" Marxism or because of an enchantment with the "advanced" social sciences of the "West" as represented by its mainstream (and influential) representatives – Chinese scholars seem quite prepared to fall in with the universalistic assumptions of Euro/American IR theory" (Dirlik 2011:148-149). The combination of theoretical universality (in order to enter the dominant discourse) and Chinese uniqueness (in order to carve out a unique identity within it) is also a product of a reading of the "American social science" argument that is more critical of the "American" than the "social science" part (Callahan 2004:306). The underlying idea is that there is nothing wrong with the science-based hegemonic project *per se*—if only it could be less American and more Chinese. The resulting hybridization of epistemological identity and ontological difference seeks to produce a "recognizable Other" that speaks the same sophisticated (civilized? modern? advanced?) scientific language as Western-American IR, but retains its Chinese distinctiveness, its exoticism, "its slippage, its excess, its difference." (Bhabha 2004:122). The exotic Chinese trait distinguishes it and makes it Americanized and Westernized rather than American and Western. Hybrids are, to use Homi Bhabha's (2004:122) term for mimicry, "*almost the same, but not quite*".

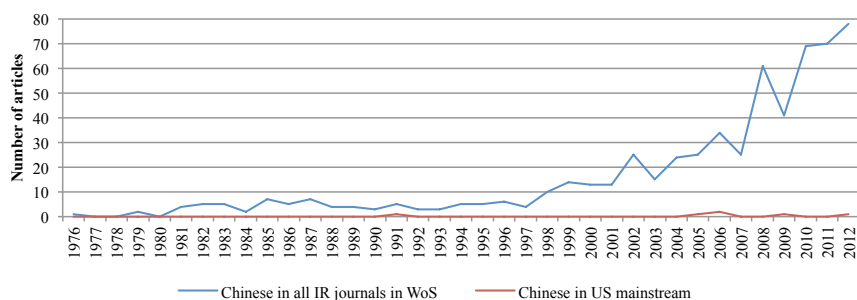
There is room, and even a desire, for difference but only insofar it speaks a universal language. The *Chinese Journal of International Politics* (CJIP) and the "Tsinghua approach" (Zhang 2011) provides one of the most illustrative examples of this hybridization of unique experiences and universal assumptions. CJIP, which was established with support from MacArthur Foundation, explicitly focuses on "the theoretical, policy, and the analytical implications of China's rise [and] Chinese ideas, historical and contemporary, about international relations and foreign policy." (CJIP 2010:2) while also encouraging "modern methodology" such as quantitative-statistical methods (CJIP 2012). Several CJIP articles embody the hybrid logic, such as game-theoretic analyses of the

Tributary System (Zhou 2011) and the Opium War (Zhou 2010), a game-theoretical reading of the ancient Chinese philosopher Mozi (Li 2009), a categorization of pre-Qin philosophers (pre-221 BC) along the lines of Kenneth Waltz's three levels of analysis (Yan 2011:chapter 1) and a reorganization of the ancient philosopher Xun Zi's thoughts into independent and dependent variables and power formula according to "modern scientific standards" (Yan 2008:140). Articles often conclude with policy advice for China. The American social science advising the American Prince is replaced by an Americanized Chinese social science advising the Chinese Prince.

CJIP thus provides an outlet for theoretical studies on ancient Chinese thought, history and experience in IR, but the role of 'China' is primarily to provide ontological difference within an epistemological and methodological framework set up by the "modern scientific standards" of the West. Chinese experiences and philosophies function as sources of unique local data on which to test and enrich universal theories. The strategy of the Tsinghua approach and CJIP is to buy into theoretical and meta-theoretical assumptions of American IR and then make a contribution by recovering ancient Chinese thinkers—a project in which Chinese scholars have a comparative advantage in terms of language and access. But the 'recovery' of China's different historical modes of being (Spring and Autumn Period, Warring States, Imperial, Revolutionary) within a universal theoretical framework, aiming to 'fill in the gaps' missed by Eurocentric IR, eventually produces an even more totalizing and universalizing discourse (Dirlík 2011:148). It is, at best, 'worlding' IR in the sense of opening up for different ways of being and experiencing the world, but not different ways of knowing the world. This way of navigating the core-periphery structures of IR is a product of seeking recognition mainly in the American core discipline, which, as a subfield of political science, has found unity more in rationalist and statistical methods (game theory, formal modeling, etc.) compared to a more sociologically and historically inclined European IR (Wæver 1998:713). The U.S. focus is supported by survey data showing that Chinese scholars prefer to publish in Chinese or American journals and by bibliometric data from CJIP showing that most of its cited sources and published authors are either Chinese or American (Kristensen 2015b).

There is no consensus about one Chinese school, one Chinese characteristic or one Chinese tradition but rather a number of debates about it. The Tsinghua approach represents only one approach, arguably the most extreme one, but most other attempts at Chinese IR theorizing also have recognition by the U.S. mainstream as the primary goal. Such recognition will not come easily if one is to judge from the critique of Jack Snyder who does not have "confidence in the generalizability of the results when Chinese international relations scholars state that the core theoretical problem of the Chinese School should be 'China's peaceful rise'". Snyder believes that it misses "the point of what is normally called theory", namely, "value-neutral terms that carry across time and space for comparative purposes" (Snyder 2008:4–5). Even if it was recognized as a proper universal IR theory, it may still be difficult to achieve *attention* for a Chinese School. As Acharya and Buzan note, "the problem is not to create such theory but to get it into wider circulation" (Acharya and Buzan 2007:296). This requires access to the infrastructure of 'global IR', 'international' journals primarily controlled by Americans and Europeans. If one looks at IR journals in the Web of Science, however, China-based scholars are rarely published:

Figure 1. China-based scholars in Web of Science IR journals



As the figure indicates, the absolute number of China-based scholars published in IR journals is growing and in 2012 accounted for 78 articles out of 2990 published articles (2.6%). Half of the publications throughout the period 1976-2012 are in journals like *Issues & Studies*, *World Economy*, *Chinese Journal of International Law*, *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, *Journal of World Trade*, *Pacific Review*, *Emerging Markets Finance and Trade*, *Washington Quarterly* and *Space Policy*. Chinese scholars are less present in the mainstream American IR journals such as *International Organization*, *International Security*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *Security Studies*, *World Politics* and *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. In fact, only 6 of 4505 articles published by these journals from 1976-2012 (0.1%) had a geographical affiliation in China. So it is no surprise that CJIP has been established as an alternative outlet for Chinese scholars but modeled on the scientism of American journals.

In sum, the Chinese IR discipline and the Chinese School project has been fixated on American IR, albeit without much success in terms of obtaining recognition. The following sections situate the Chinese School among other non-American schools in the not-so-international discipline.

### The Semi-Periphery: The Chinese School Among European Schools<sup>1</sup>

The Chinese School is not the only IR theorization following the geography-plus-school formula. Other theories produced outside the U.S. have also been labeled geographical ‘schools’ and it is interesting also to see the Chinese school in this perspective. Most famous is the English school. The English School gained popularity in China as scholars became aware of the dominance of American approaches to IR (Ren 2008:297). Ironically, as Zhang (2003:93) showed, the ideas of Bull and Wight traveled to China via North America (U.S. textbooks and journals) and their increasing popularity is an odd testament to the predominance of U.S. theories. Wang also observes that several younger and Chinese-educated scholars “appreciate but don’t fetishize American IR theories and, since they increasingly visit both the U.S. and Europe, take a broader and comparative look at available theories, drawing heavily on English school and other non-American IR theories.” (Wang 2009:109). He further argues that “China can probably learn more from the English School than from American IR theory since China enjoys more historical and cultural similarities with the UK than the U.S. In addition, the English School is more open to the idea of variations between different international systems that can accommodate non-Westphalian politics.” (Wang 2009:117). The English School is seen as a historically nuanced and less deterministic approach to China’s rise.

<sup>1</sup> This section draws upon another paper on Chinese and European IR (Kristensen 2015b).



Several scholars note that the classical, historical and philosophical approach of the English School is embraced by Chinese scholars as more compatible with Chinese intellectual traditions than American scientific and quantitative approaches (Zhang 2003:99–100; Qin 2009:191; Wang 2009:109). English School scholarship on China and by Chinese scholars has also traveled back to Europe. The ‘English School website’ (2015) even has two bibliographies; one on the English school in general, and one on the English school for China. The bibliography for China contains 92 articles written about China or by Chinese scholars using the English school by August 2013. Moreover, *Review of International Studies*, perhaps the closest to a home for the English School, is by far the Western journal that has been most receptive to Chinese scholarship (Kristensen 2015a).

The English School also gained popularity for its form as a geographical ‘school’ that is different from dominant American theories. Proponents and critics of a Chinese School have explicitly mentioned the inspiration from the English school model (Ren 2008:297; Chen 2011:4). In a comprehensive study of the English School’s travelogue to China, Zhang argued that the English school was received as an “IR theory with English characteristics” which made it a model for how to theorize in a U.S.-dominated discipline. As a non-American theory that developed independently around the notion of international society and thus distinguished itself from American theories, it was a model for how to develop ‘IR with Chinese characteristics’ (Zhang 2003:95–96). More recently, when the Chinese School debate gained momentum, Wang argued that advocates of the Chinese School were “Moved by the presence of an English School and a Copenhagen School” (Wang 2009:110). The Copenhagen School has been emphasized as another example of a non-American school that has served as a model for the Chinese School (Wang 2009:110; Paltiel 2011:376; Qin 2011a:463).

The mere presence of European schools inspired Chinese IR scholars: if there can be geographical schools in England and Copenhagen why is there no Chinese school? (Ren 2008:297; Wang 2009:110; Zhang 2011:3). As a Chinese scholar put it in an interview: “We Chinese try to argue that we need to have a Chinese school because we have a British school or a Copenhagen school. So why do we not have a Chinese school? So some Chinese try to argue this and also I think it is a good thing for us because Chinese foreign policy is quite different sometimes from the Western countries’.” (cited in Kristensen and Nielsen 2010:59). The European geography-plus-school strategy is seen by some proponents of a Chinese School as a blueprint for how to carve out an international niche for different geocultural perspectives. But as a critic argues, the Chinese use of the English School relies on a “(mis)perception that the name implies and supports the construction of a Chinese School of IR” (Alagappa 2011:211).

While the Chinese School is envisioned as a theory *by*, *about* and *for* China, this was less of a conscious strategy in the case of the English or Copenhagen School. The English or Copenhagen schools have been developed primarily (but not only) *by* scholars based in England or Copenhagen, but they are not *about* English foreign policy or that of the city of Copenhagen, and it is less clear how they might work *for* the purpose of England or Copenhagen/Denmark (for a critique of the imperialist ideology embedded in the English School, see Callahan 2004). European schools are also embedded in certain geocultural contexts, indeed, but their concepts like ‘international society’ or ‘securitization’ have also traveled beyond it. In contrast, the Chinese School project of speaking back to the ‘West’—speaking *by*, *for* and *about* China—seems to reproduce the very hegemonic logic where the ‘West’ remains the place where theory speaks for the entire world, the place of Knowledge and Science, while ‘China’ speaks for itself. Moreover, as critics argue, the Chinese School has been engaged in self-promotion and was coined before much substantive work had been done (Yan 2011), while the European schools were often coined by others, usually critics, to signify a body of work published by scholars clustered in certain institutions and/or countries: this goes for the English School (Jones 1981), Copenhagen School (Mcsweney 1996) and also other European

school in critical security studies like the Paris School (Wæver 2004?) except perhaps the Welsh/Aberystwyth school (Bilgin 1999 or; Smith 1999?).

European schools like the Aberystwyth, Paris and Copenhagen Schools in security studies have also been seen as theories that navigate the core-periphery structures of a U.S.-dominated discipline from a certain geo-cultural standpoint (Wæver 2012). Apart from the common 'form' as geographical schools, however, the Chinese School project has little in common with these critical European schools in terms of intellectual substance. Some reasons for this lack of engagement may be that new European schools are more concerned with non-traditional than traditional security threats, tend to be more reflectivist (European) than rationalist (American) by interrogating the very concepts of security, threat and risk, and that they are too critical, constructivist and 'academic' and thus not directly policy-relevant and problem-solving (for China's foreign policy), as the common critiques of critical security studies go (Bigo 2008:118). The emancipatory and critical politics of European Schools, in particular, provides a plausible explanation for why they have not been influential in China (Kristensen 2015b). Critical theories are not influential in Chinese IR, primarily due to the import of 'problem-solving' American theories (Zhang 2007; Wang 2009; Dirlík 2011). This marginalization applies not only to critical security 'schools' from the geographical semi-periphery (Europe), but also theoretical approaches in the periphery of the American mainstream, such as post-structuralism, feminism and post-colonialism. It is not that there is no criticality in Chinese IR whatsoever, but the room for dialogue with critical theories depends on the object of critique. Critical Chinese scholars direct their critique against international imperialism rather than domestic authoritarianism (Zhang 2007:118-119). Critical theory is thus invoked mainly to critique American hegemony in IR theory and advocate a Chinese School in its place, not to critically interrogate how a Chinese school might become a servant of the rising Chinese state and its hegemonic project (Qin 2007:328, 2011b:474).

Despite these differences, however, there are overlaps in the search for a more international and less U.S.-dominated discipline that takes the local conditions of knowledge production seriously and provides a space for non-US theories. European and Chinese IR would have much to gain from an engaging in further inter-regional dialogue on IR theorizing in a notoriously US-centric discipline. Thus far there has been little such inter-regional engagement, however. This goes not only for Sino-European theory dialogues, but a range of other inter-regional dialogues such as that with IR theorists in other so-called 'rising powers' like India and Brazil.

### **The Periphery: The Chinese School and IR Theorizing in Other Rising Powers**

Stanley Hoffmann (1977) once argued that IR was born and raised as the U.S. rose to global power post-WWII. The *political circumstances* in a country with expanding global interests combined with *institutional opportunities* for academics to advise policymakers and the *intellectual predisposition* that all problems could be solved with the scientific method led to the birth of IR as a discipline that was to whisper in the ears of the new post-war Prince (Hoffmann 1977). The convergence of these three conditions distinguishes the American trajectory, argued Hoffmann, but his emphasis on the power-knowledge nexus raises the question if today's emerging Princes also need IR research, perhaps even theories, to support their rise to global power? Although the political circumstance of being a 'rising power' is a crude macro-political condition for academic production, it is nevertheless worth drawing some comparisons between China and other countries usually perceived as 'rising': Brazil and India. As there has been little theoretical engagement between Chinese, Brazilian and Indian IR, the following focuses on potential rather than actual theory travels as in the preceding sections.

IR in Brazil also experienced immense growth in institutions, programs, scholars and research

Peter Kristensen 19/8/2015 11.35

**Kommentar [1]:** I put question marks because it is always a little tricky to figure who actually coined those terms, especially with Bilgin and Smith. But this is not a strong preference, you can remove them if you prefer.

since the 1990s (Herz 2002; Miyamoto 2003; Santos and Fonseca 2009). Like in China, the growth of the discipline has been accompanied by a growing awareness that IR is an ethnocentric enterprise dominated by the *North* 'American Social Science' (Herz 2002:9; Jatoba 2013; Lorenzini and Doval 2013:10–11). While Brazilian IR scholars also express their dissatisfaction with the unequal global structures of production and consumption of IR theory, the drive towards developing a 'national theory' is not as distinct as in China. The line of thinking that comes closest to the Chinese School debate is the so-called "Brasília school" (Escola de Brasília) that focuses on what its proponents call 'international insertion' through the 'logistical state' (some proponents do call it the Brazilian or Argentine-Brazilian School, however, see Saraiva 2009:30, 32). 'International insertion' has long been a dominant topic in Brazilian IR (Herz 2002) and Latin American IR theories on dependency and autonomy more generally (Tickner 2003:328), so the Brasília School can hardly claim ownership over it nor to represent Brazilian IR or even the diversity of work done in Brasília. The Brasília school is nonetheless interesting for a comparative study vis-à-vis the Chinese School.

Senior scholar at University of Brasília, Amado Cervo, has been called the "author of the Brasília school" (Actis 2012:403) but he himself also mentions Luiz Bandeira, José Flávio Saraiva, Argemiro Procopio, Antônio Lessa, Antônio Trindade, Alcides Vaz, Estêvão Martins, Antônio Ramalho, and Carlos da Costa Filho as critical, although not unanimous, thinkers related to the school (Cervo 2003:20; see also Bernal-Meza 2005:295; Caballero 2009:21). Cervo has actively promoted the school denomination although he usually refers to Raúl Bernal-Meza as the inventor of the term Brasília school (Cervo 2003:20, 2005:216, 2007:3). Bernal-Meza, a Chilean-born Argentina-based scholar, defines the School as an "epistemic community of foreign policy thinking" (Bernal-Meza 2006:71, see also 2009:155). Like some scholars in the Chinese school debate (notably Qin 2007; Wang 2007), Brasília school scholars critique American theories based on the notion that all theories contain certain values, purposes and national interests (Cervo 2003:5). Critical minds, Cervo argues, require "introspective formulations derived from cultures or national interests" (Cervo 2003:5). In Bernal-Meza's description of Cervo, the development of indigenous Brazilian concepts should support Brazil's foreign policy as an "emerging nation" and those "Brazilian concepts would replace the macro-theories of (supposed) universal scope, developed by the academic thinking of the "centers", mainly the United States." (Bernal-Meza 2010:201). Saraiva also maintains that concepts and theories in IR have national origins. American theories ranging from Morgenthau's realism to post-modern constructivism "are useful to the national strategic apparatus" of the U.S., but "function to those outside the system, especially to peripheral capitalist countries, as hegemonic accommodation theories." (Saraiva 2009:20). These "old and arrogant" American theories that reflect the "desires and wants" of Americans experienced a crisis in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and now Brazilian, Latin American, Asian, African and European scholars seek to build new visions and concepts for IR (Saraiva 2009:22–24).

Like in China, there was also resistance to the "Clash of Civilizations" thesis in Brazil, but the response was the vision of a "multicultural and multiracial Brazil" (Bernal-Meza 2010:195). Generally, however, culture and East-West difference plays a lesser role in Brazilian IR than the North-South cartography and the corollary concern with economic insertion into the global capitalist system. The focus on North-South rather than East-West identities is a product of multiple factors: first, Brazil is seen as Western but multiracial and part of the Global South; second, it is a legacy of dependency and core-periphery theories that stress international political economy over both culture and security concerns; third, it is a product of the fact that there are no culture-based 'Brazil threat' theories in the American mainstream that scholars feel compelled to counter. As Saraiva argues, the school is characterized by studying international *insertion* rather than international *conflict* (Saraiva 2009:30).

The central problematique of international insertion (inserção internacional) relies on a

different worldview than that of China's peaceful rise. Brazil is articulated as a periphery country that is economically, politically and even academically excluded from the core of the international system, if not entirely outside it, and the main project is to formulate strategies of insertion. More weight is given to political economy and development than to security and war, a characteristic perspective of the global South compared to the North, argues Cervo. Inspired by Latin American structuralism and dependency theory, the Brasília School departs from a critique of how global capitalism, through Ricardian notions of comparative advantage and free trade, instigated center-periphery structures that perpetuated underdevelopment (Cervo 2003:9; see also Saraiva 2009:29–32; Giacalone 2012:338–339). In a hybrid of structuralist theory and an approximation of realist IR theory, the strong 'logistical state' paradigm is envisioned as the tool for Brazil's international insertion (Cervo 2003:22). The logistical state "does not go passively to market forces and the hegemonic power" but envisions the state as an active instrument to 'insert' Brazil in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world, including "the design and management of world order" (Bernal-Meza 2010:208). While the discourse of 'inserting Brazil' conveys an image of being outside of the system and seeking to penetrate its barriers of exclusion, the discourse on the 'peaceful rise of China', by contrast, does not imply that China was outside but rather that it stumbled for a century—due to Western and Japanese imperialism—and is now erected to its rightful place. Both 'rise' and 'insertion' have a peculiar Freudian ring, but a psychoanalytical exploration of rising power discourses must be a topic for further research.

Metatheoretically and methodologically, the Brasília School is quite different from the Chinese School. While Chinese IR was built on American scientific foundations, the Brasília school is historical and inspired by French scholars Duroselle and Renouvin (Saraiva 2009:33–35). It is characterized by a narrative-conceptual and historiographical, rather than "theoristic", approach (Saraiva 2009:30). Several scholars associated with the Brasília School see their discipline as 'History of IR', which is closer to diplomatic history, not 'IR' (Santos 2005). Saraiva traces how what was to become a "Brazilian School of History of International Relations" was imported by Cervo from France (Saraiva 2003:21–23). It is also striking, especially compared to the Chinese case, that all of the above-mentioned scholars have their doctorates from either Europe or Brazil. Apart from the inspiration from this "French School" (Bernal-Meza 2005:295), the English School also provides inspiration for national and regional conceptualizations, even though it remains another 'Northern' theory that "serves this part of the world only as another national reference" than American IR (Saraiva 2009:28–29, 36). The link to French and British *historical* traditions partly explains why "Brasília school" proponents do not advocate a Brazilian theory, but a move away from universal theory towards locally "rooted" concepts (Cervo 2008).

The Brasília School and its development of Brazilian concepts is, like the Chinese School, intended as a guide to Brazilian foreign policy (Cervo 2003:7). The emphasis on policy relevance has been called the "Brazilian Way" of doing IR where the focus is on finding the "best foreign policy", not the "best theory" (Fonseca 1987:273–274). The problem-solving impetus of the Brasília school is thus open to many of the same critiques as the Chinese School, namely of being uncritical, ideological and nationalist by serving the state project. Also similar to the Chinese School, this has primarily been an internal debate, which has attracted little attention from mainstream scholars and journals—even from outside Brasília and not all scholars at the University of Brasília identify with the school. However, other IR "schools" were also more introvert in their early years, which may be a necessary condition for developing a distinct school of thought. Another condition is that of debate, competition and opposition. Schools of thought are defined in opposition to each other. While there has actually been debate about the Chinese School (Kristensen and Nielsen 2013; we even argue that opposition is its main driver), this is less obvious in the case of the Brasília school, which appears more like a group of like-minded scholars, some of whom are

keen on promoting their unity and profile through the school label. Nevertheless, there are overlaps and potentials for dialogue between the Brasília and Chinese schools and there is certainly a potential audience for the Chinese School in Brazil. As Saraiva concludes: if IR is to become a world, rather than American, discipline “one must still study (and this is an excellent working agenda for the next years) the Chinese thought in depth, its concepts and five thousand year-old perception.” (Saraiva 2009:38).

The discontent with the Eurocentrism of IR has a longer history in India. Scholars have long criticized the reliance on theories imported from the West. One of founding figures of Indian IR, M.S. Rajan, argued already in the 1970s that the state of Indian IR was “inadequate when we consider India’s size and the place India occupies in the comity of nations and the role India plays in international affairs.” (Rajan 1979:77, see also 1997a:2, 1997b:157). It was puzzling why India as a leading non-aligned nation could be satisfied by relying on knowledge imported from abroad (Rajan 1979:84, 1994:213–214) and why India played a leading role in decolonization but did not set in motion a parallel process of “intellectual decolonization” (Harshe 1997:74). The sense of paradox has been growing in recent years. While India is emerging as a power in world politics, stock-takers are puzzled that the discipline of International Studies has not kept pace (Alagappa 2009a:3; Mattoo 2009a:37; Shahi 2013:50). Like in China, there is an expectation that India’s geopolitical rise will eventually lead to stronger conceptualization and theorization in the Indian IR discipline, that “India’s aspiration to attain major power status in the contemporary world order offers a promise for its [IR discipline’s] take-off.” (Shahi 2013:50). The power-knowledge linkage leads to the expectation that “rising powers seem to get the IR they need.” (Bajpai cited in Mattoo 2009b). This logic is evident when Indian scholars compare themselves to their Chinese colleagues.

Indian comparisons to China provide an interesting outside-in view on the Chinese School. In a stocktaking exercise on Indian IR, Muthiah Alagappa deplors that “In comparative terms, India, which had the more developed international studies programmes and institutions in Asia in the 1950s and 1960s, has since fallen behind East Asian countries, particularly China.” (Alagappa 2009a:4). Prominent Indian scholar, Kanti Bajpai, also laments that Indian IR, which was leading in the developing world until the 1980s, has recently been overtaken by China, Korea and Japan (Bajpai 2009:109). India’s lagging behind China is seen as disappointing given India’s linguistic advantages, its comparatively longer history of IR and political advantages such as academic freedom (Alagappa 2009a:4). In terms of theory, Alagappa’s benchmarking against China notes that “the number of Chinese scholars doing conceptual and theoretical work has increased dramatically”, that Chinese scholars have *both* imported and translated “Western IR classics” and made “a concerted effort to reclaim Chinese traditions and classical thought to develop a Chinese school of IR” (Alagappa 2009b:12). These scholars further argue that India should learn from the Chinese who are recovering and theorizing their own tradition in IR. While cautious about the pitfalls of the Chinese School project, Alagappa admires its seriousness and the project of recovering indigenous traditions, which might be a fruitful common ground for Sino-Indian theory dialogue. To argue that “China has been at the forefront in elevating the importance of IS as a field of study” (Alagappa 2009b:9) ignores the frustrations of Chinese IR scholars about Western dominance in IR and that there has so far mostly been *debates* about how to develop a Chinese School. Nevertheless, the Chinese School project serves as a role model.

Like in China and Brazil, Indian calls for indigenous theorizing also depart from a critique of dominant American and Western theories. Familiar critiques invoke Hoffmann’s argument that IR is an “American Social Science” (Mattoo 2012) and argue that “global IR, a U.S.-dominated discipline, reflects American policy interests” such as non-proliferation and not India’s policy interests such as security or development (Basrur 2009:105; see also Paul 2009:133–134). Specifically on nuclear issues, Rajesh Basrur argues that a major weakness in the literature is “the

tendency to lean heavily on Western, especially American, Cold War discourse on the basic concepts of deterrence despite the enormous difference in the practice of deterrence” (Basrur 2009:101). He suggests that “IR in India needs to examine its own experience thoroughly and jettison the lens of American deterrence theory if it is to be truly productive.” (Basrur 2009:102). T.V. Paul suggests that Indian IR should challenge American IR theories in areas where India has its own experiences, e.g. “democratic peace, nuclear deterrence, peaceful rise and civilizational IR” (Paul 2009:134). Moves to develop “indigenous research programmes” are motivated by an awareness that IR theories taught and researched in India should not only be “received discourse” (Alagappa 2009b:18; Mallavarapu 2009:173). Instead, indigenous Indian theorizing should focus on “India-situated puzzles” that can enrich existing IR concepts and theories and develop new ones (Alagappa 2009b:18).

It is still widely acknowledged that “There is no Indian school of IR” (Shahi 2013:51). There is generally less interest in developing a national school or theory (Acharya 2011:626), but there are some elements of an Indian School *debate* even though it is far from as dominant as in China. A few scholars see the lack of an Indian school as disappointing considering India’s civilizational history and heritage. Amitabh Mattoo, for example, who explicitly compares to Chinese IR debates over how to develop a Chinese theory based on traditional philosophy argues that “Tragically, there is not recognizable Indian school of IR despite the rich civilizational repository of ideas on statecraft and inter-state relations.” (Mattoo 2009b). More recently, however, Mattoo argued that Indian IR scholars have been “unusually productive” and are now at the “tipping point” of emerging as an intellectual power (Mattoo 2012). The time has come to speak back to the West, to produce rather than consume: “Having absorbed the grammar of Western international relations, and transited to a phase of greater self-confidence, it is now opportune for us to also use the vocabulary of our past as a guide to the future.” (Mattoo 2012). Mattoo encourages Indian scholars to develop an “Indian grammar” based on rich civilizational resources and ancient Hindu scriptures like the Mahabharata. He criticizes Hoffmann’s argument that IR is an American Social Science for ignoring that “thinking on international relations went back, in the case of the Indian, Chinese and other great civilizations, to well before the West even began to think of the world outside their living space.” (Mattoo 2012).

Other scholars oppose the construction of an Indian School, but nevertheless agree that IR is Americocentric and that the Indian tradition provides a rich and under-theorized resource. For example, Basrur argues that “While I do not advocate the notion of an Indian ‘way’ in IR, I do believe that IR in India as a discipline would benefit immensely if it were to be less an Indian variant of a U.S.-dominated discipline.” (Basrur 2009:105–106). Navnita Behera also encourages the recovery of indigenous Indian thoughts, but opposes the creation of an Indian School *per se*. Behera attributes the poor conceptualization of Indian IR to the Gramscian hegemony Western IR theories have acquired over the “disciplinary core of Indian IRT” and argues that this has produced a situation where Indian IR scholars do not recognize their own history and philosophical traditions (such as Kautilya) as a potential source of IR theory (Behera 2007:341). By implication, an ‘Indian School’ attempting, like the Chinese School, to hybridize Western and Indian traditions would remain caught within a Western discourse that suppresses radically alternative, local visions. There should be no Indian school, Behera argues, because re-imagining IR from India is not about creating an Indian School. It is about redefining IR itself. The road to a truly post-western IR is not ‘native’ theory but a more thorough rethinking of the discipline, the cultural embeddedness of its theories and a more fundamental problematization of the West/non-West dichotomy between a dominant West and a dominated non-West (Behera 2007). The goal is ‘post-Western’ IR, not for Indians to get a niche within the traditional discipline, like the Chinese School, which essentially seeks to supplement (or substitute) American parochialism with Chinese parochialism. In line with

this argument, the keynote address at the 2013 Indian Association of International Studies conference “Re-imagining Global Orders: Perspectives from the South” by Amitav Acharya urged Indian scholars to promote “syncretic universalism, rather than create a distinct Indian School of IR. It is in this sense that India offers a potentially rich source of the development and advancement of the Global IR.” (Acharya 2013:10).

Although there is a general resistance to the label ‘Indian School’, most scholars seem to favor the recovery of Indian civilizational, cultural, philosophical and religious traditions if it steers free of nativism. One of the first to emphasize this was Bajpai who argued that even though it is not recognized as IR theory, “there is a long recorded, and respectable body of Indian thought which can profitably be interrogated.” (Bajpai 1997:43). Bajpai proposed a “programme of recovery” of these Indian ancient traditions if Indian IR is to move beyond the notion that “theory is something that Westerners do” but simultaneously warned against “lapsing into uncritical nativism or seeking some essentialist ‘Indian’ vision.” (Bajpai 1997:43–44). Similarly, Siddharth Mallavarapu suggests studying Indian “traditions of implicit theoretical thinking” rather than “theory” *per se* to open up for alternative modes of communicating knowledge from other times and spaces, for example Ancient India, that may not conform to theory as we know it today (Mallavarapu 2009:167). “Civilizational IR” is seen as an area where Indian scholars can contribute to global IR by theorizing Indic civilization, India’s religious traditions and Gandhian and Nehruvian traditions that all “offer powerful counterpoints to Western approaches.” (Paul 2009:139).

Like in China, the recovery of an Indian tradition serves the dual purpose of differentiation vis-à-vis Western IR and of conferring a sense of identity, history and pride to Indian IR. It provides difference, something “Westerners” cannot easily understand or access (cf. Kristensen and Nielsen 2013b). The logic of comparative academic advantage infuses Bajpai’s argument that “a recovery of a ‘tradition’ will help construct a research programme in which Indians should have physical, linguistic, and philosophical access, particularly to the older materials which outsiders, in general, will find it hard to match.” (Bajpai 1997:44). The recovery of ancient Indian history and philosophy also serves the purpose of giving Indian IR a history: “it will invigorate the view that Indians have a history of thought” (Bajpai 1997:44). Here one can point to the revival of “Indian ways of knowing” composed by a non-violent ethos (Behera 2007). In a puzzle reminiscent of China’s peaceful rise, Gandhian non-violent resistance is seen as a promising approach to “peaceful change” and power transition: “The need of the hour is for comparative theorizing of the logical bases of Gandhian and other non-violent approaches, and about the conditions under which peaceful transitions take place.” (Paul 2009:139). The recovery of Indian traditions also reflects Indian policymaking where “reference to Ashoka, Buddha, and Gandhi continues to be a diplomatic catchphrase.” (Upadhyaya 2009:79).

As should be evident in this case, too, there are parallel conversations in Chinese and Indian IR: There is a common resistance to American-Western dominance, a feeling that a ‘rising power’ should have its own perspective on IR and that ancient cultural resources offer promising resources for this. Thus far these conversations have run on parallel but disconnected tracks, however, and there has been little Sino-Indian (nor Sino-Brazilian) dialogue, primarily because the Chinese School has taken the American mainstream as ‘global IR’ and thus its primary audience. This is not surprising given the core-periphery or ‘hub-and-spokes’ patterns of IR communication in which most peripheries are connected to the core, most often as receivers of discourse, while few of them are connected to IR in other periphery settings (Kristensen 2015b). Theories do not travel completely random routes. But these core-periphery structures are not inevitable, they can be navigated, and the Chinese School would benefit from broadening its audiences in its search to become a traveling theory.

## Conclusions: Audience Diversity and the Chinese School as Traveling Theory

While IR with “Chinese Characteristics” was more defensive, a protective shield against the inflows of Western IR theory in the late 1980s and 1990s, today’s Chinese school project is more offensive and outward-looking. The Chinese school debate aims not to ignore global IR debates completely, but “to participate in theoretical debate in the global IR community while addressing theoretical issues in terms of China’s national experience.” (Zhang 2002:104), not to replace, but to enrich existing IR theories with China’s unique experiences (Qin 2011b:250). However, the Chinese theory debate is still mainly an internal Chinese debate and when seeking to enter ‘global IR’ it has mostly focused on one particular audience: the United States. This is no surprise given the clout of American IR and its historical influence in China. The Chinese School, and Chinese IR more generally, has had little success entering the American mainstream IR theory discourse, however. The Chinese School may therefore benefit from a broadening of audiences. Other theoretical schools in the European ‘semi-periphery’ or similar theory debates in other rising powers in the ‘periphery’ of global IR are just some of the potential audiences that are currently very marginal.

The relevance of engaging in inter-regional dialogues depends on whether the Chinese School is envisioned as ‘something they do in China’ that serves only China or whether it aims to develop ideas that scholars elsewhere would be able to use as thinking tools. The former vision of a Chinese School—by, for and about China—will probably find non-Chinese audiences only among China-watchers, while the latter could inspire wider theoretical debates and even be useful to Indians, Germans or Brazilians. It is not that in order to travel a theory must necessarily be universal and devoid from context. Quite the contrary, it is not obvious that universal knowledge claims detached from all traces of tempo-spatial origins travel more easily than particular and geoculturally rooted ones. As Edward Said argued, traveling theories always bear a trace of their geocultural origins and, at the same time, are transformed and modified as they travel to other conditions (Said 1983). Whether a theory will travel successfully depends also on the “conditions of acceptance”, the tolerance or resistance it confronts in different locales (Said 1983:157–158). In that respect, it is remarkable that a theory project as instrumental and self-promoting as the Chinese School has not given much consideration to the conditions of acceptance or resistance it will encounter in different contexts. This is not to argue that the Chinese School should strategically engineer its travels and audiences, but that knowledge is never made exclusively in one place and consumed in its original version in another place, it is made as it travels.

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