

## The Quest of Finding Chinese International Relations Theory

Preechaya Kittipaisalsilpa

Graduate School of International Relations, International University of Japan, Japan  
Email: preeki18@iuj.ac.jp

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### Abstract

Paper presents International Relations theory (IR) development in China as the quest of examining whether why, so far, there is no Chinese IR theory emerging from Chinese IR community. The central argument of this paper is to break down the conception of knowledge in IR theory. The main objective is to define and explore a puzzle of how knowledge has been conceived in mainstream IR theory. The paper draws international relations (IR) theory development in China as the quest of examining whether why, so far, there is no Chinese IR theory emerging from Chinese IR community. In conclusion, paper argues that the question is best answered by the positivism marks on the IR knowledge generation. The paper lays a conclusion of the main question by taking account of Acharya and Buzan (2010) in terms of the analysis of knowledge claims in mainstream IR.

**Keywords:** *Mainstream International Relations theory, Chinese IR theory, Knowledge, Chinese IR community.*

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### 1. Introduction

To make sense of international politics, one often turns to ‘International Relations theory’. Throughout the history of theorising IR theory, there has been an ongoing debate over how the generation of the body of knowledge in IR theory is conceived and studied by distinguishing between Western and Non-western approaches. Many scholars claim that IR theory has been continually dominated by a singular American-dominated worldview (Booth & Smith, 1995; Wæver, 1998). Hoffmann (1977) defines mainstream IR theory as being an American social science and national IR communities are clustered into regional groups with distinct characteristics, such as the Anglo-American way of doing IR theory. Chen (2011) and Falk (2004) both argue that IR theory has not only been largely based on Western-American methods of theorising but is recognised as an ‘American social science’ dominated by American scholars and methodologies based on an American world-view. Consequently, Gill (1993); Smith (2002) question the dominant system in IR theory in which there might be a hegemonic position in theorising IR theory. Boulding (1990) argues that to make the study of IR complete, one must erase those legacy perspectives that inherited from western political thought. Tickner and Wæver (2009) straighten the argument by affirming that mainstream IR theory always contains Western elements. It always promotes the rise of Western schools of thought by acknowledging the voices and influences of western scholars while non-western remain marginal voices. Therefore, with such a dominant voice in IR, the discipline might provide no room for non-western IR theory to develop.

The central argument of this paper is to break down the conception of knowledge in IR theory. The main objective is to define and explore a puzzle of how knowledge has been conceived in mainstream IR theory. The paper presents international relations (IR) theory development in China as the quest of examining whether why, so far, there is no Chinese IR theory emerging from Chinese IR community.

### 2. Methodology

The paper uses a qualitative method in a replication of the study. It firstly analyses the framework how mainstream IR theory conceives valid knowledge. Following, it examines the Chinese IR community by giving a particular attention to the development of IR study and theorizing in China. This case has been selected because of the recent increase in the research and study accomplishments of Chinese IR communities in an attempt to generate greater potential in developing and theorising its own IR theory. The paper answers by reflecting on mentioned arguments, identifying structural limitations and artificial drawbacks, and suggesting directions for future research in this area.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 The History of Mainstream IR Theory

The academic study of mainstream IR originally emerged immediately prior to the First World War (Brown & Ainley, 2009). During 1914-1918, Schmidt (1998) demonstrated that the early foundations of the study of IR began as a sub-field of political science worked in by American political scientists in the US. Initially the primary concern was to establish the scope and domain of political science; little space was thereby opened up for analysis of international relations. In the US, according to the role of the American IR scholars and how the US responded to the First World War, the discipline of IR increasingly had more attention paid to it and its status was elevated from that of a sub-field of political science. Later the American scholars began to desire the establishment of the long-standing independent theoretical discipline and school of IR. Through the late 1940s, the systematic philosophy of science method was increasingly borrowed in the efforts of European and American scholars to explain international politics realistically (Becker, 1972; Wright, 1955). According to Hollis (1991), two basic intellectual approaches in the US have shaped the development of the social sciences, including the study of American IR theory and the development of American IR theory. Two early foundation textbooks in the field, written by Carr (1939) and Morgenthau (1946), developed a framework of analysis which quickly became the general major's core study in the IR field. It should be noted here that classical realism which was regarded as the most prominent school in the IR field emerged from the American IR School.

After the Second World War, the IR school became more popular in the field study of the international social system (Brown & Ainley, 2009). Subsequently, the scientific approach was borrowed to develop a new theory based upon natural science. Correspondingly, the effort to classify theory in the scientific turn provoked three major disciplinary debates. Those debates then shaped and underpinned the scientific principles in theorising mainstream IR theory and American IR theory (Booth, 2004). After the Second World War and onset of the Cold War, the position of Anglo-American studies of IR representing a long-standing sub-field in political science itself emerged as a mainstream IR school. The development of the subject has come into its own.

To respond to the question of why the 'American school of IR' has the characteristic essence and claim to be referred to as 'the mainstream IR school', firstly, the idea of developing IR theory clearly emerged from the efforts of US scholars in trying to understand the international system and analyse the conception of theory in the study of IR. Secondly, the main schools of thought in IR theory, which later become the grand theories in the study of IR, emerged from the American body of IR knowledge. According to Wright (1964), as in all fields, mainstream IR also has a widespread range of theories which can be separated into two groups; grand theory and middle-range theory. Examples of the grand theories in mainstream IR include the classical realist theory of Morgenthau and the Neorealist theory of Waltz which is taken to be the 'core of IR study'. Thirdly, throughout the history of the establishment of IR Theory there has long been an effort to scope out and logically categorize IR theory with the help of philosophy of science (Der Derian, 1989). A positivist or scientific approach is undeniably leading the way in theorising, a point demonstrated by the popular rational choice approach to studying IR theory. As Walker (1989) argues, the discipline of American IR has been formed in the area of post-war social science and the epistemology of research methods. Therefore, the body of knowledge in American IR or mainstream IR clearly involves the unique characteristic that is shaped by both the unique experience of historical, ontological claims of knowledge processing and epistemological knowledge contributions from scientific methods.

#### 3.2 Development of Chinese IR Institution

The development of Chinese IR institutions can be traced back and categorised into three main dimensions; the early stage of 1953-1964, the second stage of 1964-1979 and the modern stage of 1979 to the present.

The first stage began following the reformation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. The PRC formally established the first IR research programme at the Renmin University of China. The central mission of establishing the programme was to train Chinese scholars to carry out research in the field of IR (Wright, 1957). The second stage characteristic features were interpreting the actions of leaders such as Mao

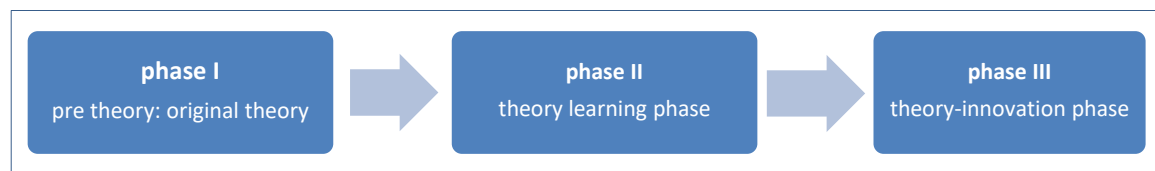
and Lenin and utilising mainstream IR thinking as a means of understanding the state's enemies. According to Gong (1989), the early task of studying IR during this period was to 'study from the enemy in order to conquer them'. The third stage in the development of IR theory in China emerged after Deng Xiaoping's reformation. As a result of the Opium War in 1840, the early development of the third stage had the purpose of answering the question 'should China open up to the rest of the world?'. In the effort to find the answer, Chinese scholars began to develop IR discourse.

Two transformations have been made in the field of IR education and research. Firstly, there has been an effort in translating the work of Western thinkers into Chinese languages in order to facilitate a better understanding of IR theory (Qin, 2007). The first Chinese translation was the book '*Politics Among Nations*' written by Hans Morgenthau, which respectively received great attention from the Chinese IR community. However, Morgenthau's work was translated into Chinese forty-two years after the first edition was published in 1948 (Qin, 2009a). Furthermore, the Chinese editions of Waltz's works in mainstream IR were translated approximately twenty years following their original publication in English. Those textbooks are very influential and as a result of the high interest in early IR development in the Chinese IR community, these works have been pushed to the pinnacle of scholarly reputation in China's IR studies (Yan & Xu, 2009).

The second transformation occurred in the mid to late 1990s. Due to the influence of mainstream IR translation and research it served as a stimulus for the Chinese IR community to establish a more independent academic discipline and research culture. According to Qin (2010), in the early translation of publications, most of the translated works were heavily based on classical realist mainstream IR assumptions, which resulted in the domination of realism in early Chinese IR discourse. After the end of the Cold War, the awareness of wider varieties of theories in IR such as liberalism and constructivism has been increasing and have been consistently introduced through translation (Qin 2010). Furthermore, there have been an increasing number of younger Chinese IR scholars who have become more mainstream-oriented thinkers. As a result, other mainstream IR theories have been transmitted to China and progressively established their roots in the Chinese IR community. As a final point, the history of the development of the Chinese IR School has just emerged to become a part of mainstream IR discussion over the past centuries. The discussion involves the development of theorising IR theory and research contributions in China. It is claimed that Chinese IR theory has been reassembled and is intimately linked with how mainstream IR developed and how the mainstream IR community practices their theory.

### 3.3 Theorising Practice in the Chinese Context

As was stated, the paper has presented ways in which mainstream IR theorising IR theory with the help of philosophy of science. Even though there are many divergent features within the discipline, there is broad agreement over the purpose of generalizing theory as a set of observations and theory testing. In this sense, their general 'agreement' about 'theorising theory' is of the same essence. Similarly to the process of theorising development of the Chinese IR community, according to Figure 1, it can be distinguished into three phases: the pre-theory phase, the theory learning phase and the theory-innovation phase (Qin, 2010; Suzuki, 2009; Zhang, 2003).



**Figure 1** The narrative of theory phase

The first phase is described as the period in which there is no awareness about the theory. The research in this phase emerges from a set of collective observations which are made mainly on the basis of individual understanding and intellectual wisdom. As a result of the observation, the foundation of an original theory is created. The second phase is introduced when the academic institution in the field first possesses an emergent collective awareness and begins to build an agenda of critical analysis from the original theory. For

instance, in the mainstream IR sphere, there are major debates among scholars and such debates contain criticism, different scholarly opinions and analysis of existing theory.

The final stage includes many tests and applications of original theory. Here is when the new theory is developed out of the other original existing theories. As was noted in the second chapter, Popper describes the evaluation of the new theory in the following terms. If the core component of the original theory cannot be applied to explain social reality, there are two ways in which the new theory can emerge; verification or falsification of the original theory.

Firstly, scholars would turn to other related fields, combine the two core features together and establish the new assumptions of a new theory. Secondly, if they find sufficient evidence that the existing theory cannot any longer explain the situation, they can disaffirm the original theory by falsifying it and establishing a new set of theories. For example, Waltz borrows ideas from the field of micro-economics to establish his market-like international system. Wendt established his constructivist thought by borrowing heavily from sociological analysis while realists falsified the utopian state idea of utopianism (Carr, 2001; Waltz, 2001; Wendt, 1992).

Therefore, the narrative between the development of the Chinese IR community and the history of the practice of theory can be narrated as follows; the pre-theory phase started after China unlocked itself to the outside world and lasted from 1979 up to 1990. This was then followed by the second phase which began in 1990. Currently, Chinese IR is still in the deepening stage and is yet to arrive at the third stage which will be discussed later.

#### ***Phrase I: Pre-Theory Phase***

The development of pre-theory practice (phrase I) begins after the first establishment of an IR-related programme and extends until the end of the second stage of the development of IR in China. The reason that these two stages are recognized as the pre-theory phase is because during 1953-1979 there were few theoretical concerns among Chinese IR scholars and also there was no sense of developing their own school of thought (Peng, 2014). Wang (2009) states that during that time, there was no specific institution for international studies, there was no comprehensive arrangement, and the research quality was comparatively poor.

The term theory in that time served as the guideline, rules and the principles which were conceived and carried out only by top political leaders while others could only follow. The scholar's job was only to provide the foreign policy to the government (Zi, 1998). Since the early definition of theory was understood mostly as the strategy set forth by political leaders in the government, most of the research that was carried out did so in terms of demonstrating the interpretation of policy and the descriptive analysis of current international events.

#### ***Phrase II: Theory Learning and Analysis Phase***

In the second phase theory learning begins and extends up to the third stage of the development of China IR institutions from 1991. There are four important features within this development phase which will now be discussed.

Firstly, the second phase contains the debate among Chinese scholars between realist and liberal schools of thought. The core of the debate is the underlying question of China's position in the international political system (Noesselt, 2014). In this phase, Chinese scholars began to use IR theoretical paradigms as a standard for evaluating and researching international affairs. This development marks the point at which Chinese scholars moved forward from the pre-theory learning (phase I) to theory learning and analysis (phase II).

Secondly, as is discussed above, during this period, the Chinese IR community began to publish translated books along with the introduction of a wider variety of theories. The Chinese IR community began to acknowledge that theory is not merely a guideline for foreign policy interpretation but also a set of knowledge and offers a different standpoint from which IR scholars observe the political realm. This led to the great effort to transcend the domination of knowledge-oriented in Chinese IR community (Zhang, 2003). Subsequently Chinese IR academic scholars started to pay more attention to the discipline of IR theory in China. During 1996 to 2001, the great third improvement occurred in the Chinese IR community both in terms of quality and quantity. A recent survey demonstrates that ten IR journal publications have published

over three thousand articles written by Chinese scholars covering major IR areas, which is many times more than those published in the previous decades (Qin, 2007, p. 315–32).

Thirdly and most importantly, although three major contributions were made during the second stage, the research and Chinese IR community are hugely influenced by mainstream Eurocentric IR theory and the American scholarly tradition. According to Wang and Buzan (2014), it was during this stage that most of the core theories in mainstream IR were translated into Chinese languages and distributed in China. Chinese scholars began to apply Mainstream IR theory to Chinese issues, in particular the younger scholars; they tend to follow the standard of the mainstream-oriented discipline (Kristensen & Nielsen, 2013; Qin, 2010).

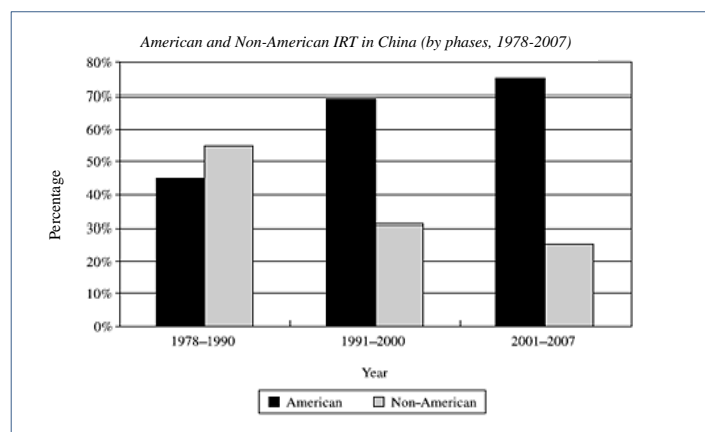
In the meanwhile, this continual tenacious effort in translating mainstream IR books into Chinese language boosted the influence of mainstream thought in the Chinese IR community. This tendency continues until the present day. As the result, this last contribution serves an important role in shaping the academic identity and characteristics of the discipline of IR in China.

### ***Phase III: Theory-Innovation Phase***

As for the third phase, theory-innovation or theory building, many scholars including Chinese scholars state that Chinese IR is still in the second phase (Qin, 2009b, 2011; Schneider, 2014). They claim that during the past centuries there has been no single core theory that emerges from the Chinese IR School. Qin (2009a), in highlighting his searching quest for Chinese IR theory, demonstrates that IR theory research in China has successfully overcome the pre-theory phase and broadened to the second phase. Yet, it is not entering the last theory innovation phase.

Firstly, the achievement of IR theory research in China and the tenacious learning process has been accomplished mostly through the translation of mainstream IR classics and discourse. Acharya and Buzan (2010) reason that Chinese IR has consciously taken the definition of theory from the mainstream basis of IR theory as the original knowledge pattern. The early Chinese IR scholars rather than being critical, accepted mainstream IR knowledge production as the foundation of their knowledge (Callahan, 2014). As is claimed above, the development of Chinese IR since 1949 to the present emerged from interpreting and following mainstream Anglo-American thought.

Furthermore, the dominance of mainstream IR theory has been greatly and increasingly influential on Chinese IR while the Chinese philosophical tradition tends to decrease significantly as time goes by (Qin, 2011). Figure 2 (Qin, 2009a, p. 192) displays American (mainstream) and non-American (Chinese traditional philosophy), influences in Chinese IR academic institutions from the late 1970s to 2007. American influence in China was approximately only 43 percent during the first period; however, it rapidly rose to approximately 73 percent in 2007. On the other hand, non-American IR theory progressively dropped from 53 percent in 1978 to only 23 percent in 2007. From the table, it can be observed that there are an increasing number of Chinese researchers borrowing mainstream analytical frameworks and methodologies in order to explain and analyse the international realm rather than using traditional Chinese philosophy (Noesselt, 2014).



**Figure 2** American and Non-American IR theories in China by phase 1978-2007

Thirdly, recent research by Chen (2011) and Wang (2013) has found that Chinese IR may now have its own discipline of IR which is built through the reinforcement of the analysis of mainstream IR theory and its reconceptualization. However, it still does not have the discipline of its own Chinese school. As Schneider (2014) puts it, Chinese IR needs to embark on its own discipline and not just draw from the mainstream body of knowledge. Last but not least, Qin's analysis of the statistics collected over thirty years reveals that only 5 percent of the total publications focus on Chinese perspectives written by Chinese scholars. Correspondingly, there are only 5 articles that were published during the pre-theory phase and in the second phase there were only 39 articles published annually. This survey indicates that Chinese scholars have no interest in establishing a well-defined Chinese IR theory (Qin 2009a, p.195).

As a consequence, Chinese IR theory development is still in the second phase of development with its gradually increasing level of knowledge in the second phase. According to the examples above, the Chinese IR School exhibits little effort to develop new theory. It rather offers the analysis and criticism of original theories. It is most likely at the stage in which the Chinese scholars learn to analyse and begin to produce the research that relates to introductory theory. In the next section, the chapter will explore the reasons why the final stage has yet to emerge in Chinese theorising of IR theory.

### **3.4 Quest of Finding Chinese IR theory**

Much recent research proclaims that the academic environment in the Chinese IR community might not be conducive to generating any IR body of knowledge for two reasons (Johnston, 1995; Zheng, 1999). Firstly, it lacks an awareness of 'international-ness'. Secondly, mainstream IR discourse has taken the dominant place in Chinese IR. These two reasons will now be deliberated upon.

#### ***Lacks of an awareness of 'international-ness'***

There are two important concepts in traditional Chinese philosophical thought; the Confucian worldview and the tributary system, which are the foundations that entail that China has no any essence similar to the concept of 'international' systems that is established in mainstream IR. The first claim comes from China's history and traditional world view and intellectual mind-set which has roots in Confucianism. In Confucianism, there is a concept of 'Tianxia' which means the space under the heaven (Liu, 1955). The concept is defined as the combination between god, nature and the way of heaven. The Tianxia concept contains three ideas of the Chinese world view. Firstly, it holds the concept of subjectivity; a solitary ego without any opposite alter ego (Johnston, 1995). Therefore, it is premised on the belief that China was the cultural centre of the world and all humankind (Zhang, 2014). Secondly, it holds the idea of 'great harmony' in the aim of constructing the harmony of the whole world. It is believed that there is a unity of nature and human kind where the conflict is avoidable by remaining the great harmony between states. The third is the idea of the relationship between the father and son in family hierarchy, which is the foundation upon which the Chinese mode of governing is established. In Confucian belief, the relationship between people is like a father taking care of his son. Therefore, those elements in Confucianism of the Chinese understanding of the world create a belief in utopianism in which everyone can have a complete and perfect world unity. Thus, it is believed that it would lead to world peace and world harmony (Callahan, 2008; Zhao, 2005).

The second is the tributary system that is based upon the 'Tianxia' concept that serves as a means of continuity of the practice of inequality in the social system. This system was practiced and governed by the Chinese emperor between 221BC and the early 1800s. The tributary system is modelled on the notion of the state, which builds on the Confucian perception of the family (Zhang & Buzan, 2012). Thus, the Chinese tributary system serves as the system which enlarges the relationship of the family on a large scale. This system has lasted without any rival or equal members for the past 2000 years which creates a perception among Chinese people that they are the strongest and the most civilized state among its regions (Zhang, 2007b). Since there is no such awareness of maintaining their sovereignty, China is likely to perceive that there is no need to change this state of social consciousness and organisation in relation to its international concerns.

#### ***The dominance of Mainstream IR discourse***

After the breakout of the Opium Wars in 1840s, launched by Great Britain, Chinese society gradually began to have a clear awareness of other states. The result of the War was that it forced the Chinese to change

from a self-governing isolated state to one that opened its door to other states (Gong, 1989). Throughout the following era, there were two uprisings that arose in China resulting in many changes in China's culture, economy and politics. The first was the democratic revolution led by Sun Yat-sen and the second was the Chinese Communist Party revolution. Both of the revolutions boosted the dominance of the mainstream discourse in the Chinese context. Since then a new chapter has begun in Chinese history which resulted in the end of the two traditional Chinese systems; tributary system and Confucian philosophy.

First is the end of the tributary system of inequality. A consequence of the Opium War was that it demonstrated to the Chinese that not only were their technologies backward but also their forms of governance and ways of learning were also ineffective. The end of these social systems marks the collapse of traditional Chinese intellectual history. The modernization desire had led to the reformation in the 1898 and 1911 revolutions respectively. The revolution and reformation movements are very much shaped by the mainstream Western idea which aimed to break the Chinese world view of unequal social relationships (Dillon, 2009). Its spearheaded can be traced back to the Qing Dynasty, followed by the Boxer uprising by foreign troops in 1899-1901 and the collapse of the two-thousand-year-old Chinese empire due to the failure to deal with the pressure of the West.

The second is the end of Chinese traditional Confucian philosophy that was caused by the rise of the influence of mainstream IR. China began to accept more Western culture, technology and philosophical thought through the Westernization movement (Chesneaux, 1979). The country began to question Confucianism. The philosophical thought that followed in China can be divided into two major oppositions; the Chinese-learning school and the Western learning school (Zheng, 1999). The Western-learning school holds that Confucianism beliefs are the fundamental problem of the downfall of ancient China. The confrontation of these two schools reflects the confrontation of the two cultures running in China (Gong, 1989). Meanwhile, after the war the Chinese came to raise the awareness of the international realm and the concepts of the international and sovereignty were acknowledged. Accordingly, the Chinese traditional Confucian philosophy and other old forms of Chinese ideology and culture surrendered to the Western capitalist invasion (Zheng, 2005; Zhang, 2007a). Following this, the establishment of the PRC in 1949 brought an end to the old form of the Chinese traditional system of thought. During the following years, the attitude of 'the study of Western learning' and the application of mainstream techniques for practical purposes in China become mandatory. It is clear that the latter, the process of learning from the Western-learning school, has become the dominant discourse not only in Chinese IR learning but also in the modern Chinese IR community. The situation continues to the present day.

In the progress of forming IR theory with the help of philosophy of science, many claim that to build one theory there must be a 'specific core problem' which is perceived through a particular event that other theories cannot be used to explain. Thus, the new theory is formed as a tool to explain that specific problem in a specific circumstance (Callahan, 2008; Song, 2001; Wendt, 1999). According to Lakatos (1978) once the core theory is formed, the new theory can emerge. Speaking of the core theory in IR theory, taking mainstream IR of Anglo-American scholars in the 1990s as the example, they see one problem in common; the pressing issue of how to retain hegemony in the post-Cold War international regime (Gill, 1993). Later, Neorealism took the theory of the 'balance of power' which was driven by classical realism as a theory to prevent war and developed it into a more sophisticated theory.

As has been discussed in the theorising practice, the development of the study of IR in China is still ongoing and continually changing. The reason why the Chinese IR community has not yet found its own core problem in theorising its own theory is that it lacks both of the academic resources and the core problem in theorising its own theory. Still, there has been effort expended in the search for a distinctive contemporary Chinese IR theory. Many Chinese scholars see the possibility of Chinese IR theory. Schneider (2014, p. 4-10) summarises more recent Chinese scholarly and influential works on traditional Chinese philosophical frameworks including Qing's political Confucianism, Zhao's *Ti*xia system and Qin's relational constructivism (Shih, 2007; Yan & Xu, 2009). Moreover, in terms of historical perspective, Chinese scholars such as Shih Chih-yu's image approach and Qin's 'procedural constructivism' offer a rethinking of how historical event and experience relationships work compared to mainstream state relations (Qin, 2009b, p. 36). However, the knowledge base of recent Chinese scholarly influential works is different from the structure of the mainstream IR body of knowledge. The methodological process in theorising in Chinese IR

and its searching quest for its own theory does not involve hypothesis testing and observation. Rather, it is the 'origin of knowledge' that is generated in the process of building its theory that is not neutral. Chinese IR accepts and reproduces its knowledge foundation based on non-scientific claims (Wang, 2009). As post-positivists state, knowledge cannot generate an 'objective reality' if that knowledge is produced and formed by a variety of ontological factors such as cultural beliefs and meanings. The intellectual body of knowledge that is used in generating a theory in Chinese IR consists of Chinese self-identity, character and traditional preconceptions about Chinese human nature and the social world (Song, 2001). Unlike Neorealism, which emerges itself out of the classical historical box, the effort in theorizing Chinese IR theory is still trapped in ontological claims about past knowledge. It thus cannot compete with the knowledge, purely produced through the scientific rational method which is more objectively produced and more reliable in making objective sense of the world.

Hitherto, the Chinese IR community has been searching for the right track to theorise its own theory. From the beginning of the paper, it has been narrated that the most likely problem that resulted in the Chinese IR community not having its own theory is firstly the relationship between China and international society and secondly, resulting from the first problem, is the lack of its own resources. Over two thousand years ago there was no concept of sovereignty, nationalism or internationalism in the Chinese worldview. It only in the past few centuries that China has unfastened its relationship with the international system. Since China has always been an outsider, it is thus very difficult for China to come outside of its own shell and immediately find its position in an international system of which it has never been a part. According to Yahuda (1997), Chinese views of the international always take a very complex interdependent form. The absence of relationships with the outside world results in difficulties for China taking the decision to be involved both in conflict and cooperation. Hesitance in entering and leaving international society has been the fundamental problem in the Chinese IR context. This is a first task that Chinese IR scholars have to find the solution to before pursuing its own theoretical framework.

Secondly, due to the lack of institutional resources and specific problems in theorising and practicing its own core IR theory, Chinese scholars by necessity must return to its original historical philosophy such as the Confucian worldview in terms of its perspective as a harmonizing political framework. In addition, building up the theory from the Chinese worldview perspective is clearly challenging the mainstream IR discipline. Throughout this paper, it has been shown how the Chinese IR community has been producing their IR body of knowledge and how recent effort has gone into trying to create its own theory based on a Chinese perspective. Though, those Chinese intellectual IR resources are indeed rooted in characteristics of human consciousness and reflect Chinese cultural and historical presuppositions and perspectives of human reason (Zhang & Buzan, 2012). This comes back to the post-positivist question of, if the knowledge is produced through this academic environment, can it still be objective and valid? Although they are using the methods as a set of rational observations, the knowledge generated inside its body is certainly unsystematic and unreliable. The evidence of this claim could be seen in the rejection of the old Chinese traditional intellectual resources that are narrated and presented above.

After examining knowledge generation inside the Chinese IR community, the answer to the question 'why is there no Chinese IR theory?', is that knowledge generation inside the Chinese IR school is certainly different from mainstream IR. According to Wang (2013) although Chinese IR scholars are trying to overcome the heavy dependence on mainstream IR knowledge frameworks and influence, it is still difficult since most of the Chinese IR scholars clearly recognise mainstream IR as the original foundation of valid knowledge in IR practice. The proof that the knowledge generation in mainstream IR is objectively valid and can be used universally is that Chinese IR scholars have been depending on mainstream IR frameworks and its methodological practice since the emergence of the Chinese IR community until the present day.

#### 4. Conclusion

From the beginning, Chinese IR community has been searching for the right track to theorise its own theory, however, it has not found one. The paper lays a conclusion of the main question by taking account of Acharya and Buzan (2010) in terms of the analysis of knowledge claims in mainstream IR. Firstly, mainstream IR theory discovers the right paths for understanding IR. Throughout Chinese history, there was no concept of internationalism in the Chinese worldview. It was only in the past centuries that China has



unfastened its relationship with the international system. China has always been an outsider, thus it is very difficult to immediately find its position of which it has never been a part. According to Yahuda (1997), hesitation in entering and leaving international society has been the fundamental problem in the Chinese IR context. Secondly, mainstream IR has acquired hegemonic status in IR. Chinese IR community has been producing their IR body of knowledge and recent effort has gone into trying to create its own theory based on a Chinese perspective. However, those Chinese intellectual IR resources are indeed rooted in characteristics of human consciousness and reflect Chinese cultural and historical presuppositions (Zhang & Buzan, 2012). Nevertheless, the knowledge generated inside its body is certainly unsystematic and unreliable. The evidence of this claim could be seen in the rejection of its own Chinese traditional intellectual resources during its transitional period. Thirdly and fourthly, non-Western IR does exist but is hidden by language barriers and difficulties. Chinese IR community has had difficulty in translating mainstream IR theory records which are mostly written in English. As Chen (2011) argues, the Chinese IR community can never surpass all language barriers because the translation narrative 'will always remain incomplete' compared to the original. Conversely, if non-western IR theory does exist yet, is hidden from the mainstream IR theory by these barriers, other non-western IR theories might be hidden not just from the mainstream IR vice versa (Shani, 2008). Thus, in order to validate the possession of a body of knowledge in non-western IR theory, non-western scholars such Chinese scholars have to turn back to the mainstream IR body of knowledge as the 'original valid pattern' in theorising its own theory. The proof that the knowledge generation in mainstream IR is universally valid is, Chinese IR scholars have been depending on mainstream IR methodological practice since the emergence of the Chinese IR community until today. Lastly, mainstream IR begins to theorise before non-western IR communities. The mainstream-dominated direction in IR theory has been registered with an increasing frequency of existing power relations for centuries. In the process of theorising, the discipline establishes who plays the role of actor and who plays the role of audience. As far as the visions of finding Chinese IR theory is concerned, there is no doubt that the mainstream IR school has the advantage of being the first in the field which enabled them to develop their theory earlier (Shih, 2007). However, according to Dougherty and Pflatzgraff (2001), the genuine body of knowledge is made when body of knowledge can satisfy the scholar's need for explanation. The condition that the mainstream school began earlier did not cause a big gap for the Chinese to catch up in terms of research production. In the final analysis, it relies on the outcome of the body of knowledge production in mainstream IR being universally valid. The history of knowledge generation in mainstream IR theory is built from sources of 'essential empirical data' rooted and reproduced from epistemologically and logical methodology (Prozorov, 2011; Wang, 2009). If Chinese IR scholars can generate such kind of knowledge, the catching up game between Chinese IR scholars and the mainstream IR scholars will certainly come to an end.

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