During the 1980s international studies in the People's Republic of China enjoyed a genuine renaissance, if not a birth. In part this was related to the resurrection of political science as an academic discipline, but international studies have also developed their own identities in a series of disciplines. Today most of the sub-fields of international studies enjoy separate identities on Chinese campuses and in research institutes.

Analytically, international studies in China reflect a myriad of influences. The Chinese Weltanschauung is quite eclectic. But no

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2 See Thomas Bernstein, 'Political Science', in Anne Thurston and Jason Parker (eds), Humanistic and Social Science Research in China (Social Science Research Council, New York, 1980); Harry Harding, 'Political Science', in Leo Orleans (ed.), Science in Contemporary China (Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1980); Zhao Baoxu, The Revival of Political Science in China (Institute of East Asian Studies, Berkeley, 1983); Lu Weihuai, 'Sociology and Political Science Should Be Studied as Independent Sciences', Hongqi [Red Flag] (January 1988).

3 These sub-fields are: international politics (guoji zhengzhi), international economics (shijie jingji), international political economy (guoji zhengzhi-jingjixue), world history (shijie lishi), strategic studies (zhanluexue), defence studies (guofangxue), and area studies (diquxue).
foreign intellectual tradition is more potent, even today, than that of the Soviet Union.

Institutionally, the Soviet influence on China’s international studies community dates back to the late 1930s when Comintern representatives helped the Chinese Communists organize intelligence collection against the Japanese. It reached its zenith during the 1950s, but can still be found today in the structural organization and annual research plans of institutes. Many of the key institutions involved in international studies (the CCP Investigation Department, the New China News Agency, the Foreign and Defence Ministries and their affiliated research institutes, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and universities) were recipients of innumerable Soviet advisers during the period of the Sino-Soviet alliance. While it is difficult to gauge the total numbers of Soviet advisers and the numbers of Chinese students, intelligence analysts, and bureaucrats trained in the field during the war years and the 1950s, of importance here is the fact that the ‘first generation’ of China’s international studies specialists were preponderantly Soviet-trained. This is seen most clearly not in terms of personnel, but in the inordinate influence of ‘Sovietized’ – and especially Stalinist – categories of terminology and interpretation in Chinese analyses of world affairs during that period.

Soviet DoctrinalRevisionism and the Chinese Response

To understand the Soviet (particularly Stalinist) influence on Chinese assessments, one must consider the rigid Chinese adherence to the two-camp thesis. For the Chinese, the post-war international system was structurally bipolar. To be certain, this dichotomous view of international politics had its genesis in the worldview of the Yan’an leadership (c. 1937-42). The two camps – socialist and imperialist – headed by the Soviet Union and the United States respectively, not only contended with each other but also for the allegiance of all countries and peoples in Mao’s ‘intermediate zone’. To both Stalin’s and Mao’s way of thinking, the antagonism between the two camps was implacable.

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Central to Stalin's assessments of international relations (and hence to Chinese assessments during the 1950s) was his analysis of advanced capitalism and interpretation of Lenin's 'theory' of imperialism. In his later years, Stalin's views on the economic nature of advanced capitalism and the political relationship of monopolies to the capitalist state were challenged by political economist Yevgeny Varga. The Stalin-Varga controversies go to the root of the Soviet interpretation of international affairs because the two-camp thesis and the prognosis for the development of the socialist world was inextricably linked to the diagnosis of the longevity of capitalist states in their imperialist phase of development. Much has been written about the Stalin-Varga controversies, but the nub of the debates centred on the relationship of monopoly capital (the 'finance oligarchy') to the capitalist state, the sustenance of capitalism as an economic and social system, and the chances for war between imperialist states. These were all central concerns of Lenin in his *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*.

In brief, Varga argued that the relationship between monopolies and the capitalist state demonstrated new properties, namely that the capitalist state embodied the interests of the entire bourgeois class and that the state and monopolies penetrated each other. On this basis, according to Varga, a qualitatively new phase of 'state-monopoly capitalism' had emerged. Moreover, Varga argued that because of this inter-penetration advanced capitalism could 'stabilize itself,' and that war both among capitalist states and between imperialism and socialism was not inevitable.

Stalin would have none of it. In his *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR* (1952), Stalin articulated the extreme view that the capitalist state was 'subjugated' to the monopolies; capitalist economies had entered a 'general crisis' and that their collapse was imminent; and war between capitalist states was inevitable. Varga not only lost his debates with Stalin, but his job and institute (IMEMO) as well. He was lucky not to lose his life. With Stalin's death in 1953 Varga, IMEMO, and his analyses all enjoyed a rehabilitation. By the time of the 20th CPSU Congress in 1956 and Khrushchev's

denunciation of Stalin, the views of Varga and those around him had gained currency. Khrushchev declared that 'the Marxist-Leninist precept that wars are inevitable as long as imperialism exists' was no longer valid. Moreover, Khrushchev rejected Stalin's 'subordination thesis' with respect to the monopolies-state relationship, and articulated the view that, while beset with economic problems and class conflict, capitalism (especially the American variant) was not in danger of imminent collapse. Khrushchev's enunciation of the policy of peaceful coexistence directly challenged the reified conception of two-camp hostility.

How did the Chinese cope with such heresy? As Soviet doctrine changed, to what extent was Chinese doctrine altered?

As Soviet international relations specialists began to view the world more in terms of nation-states rather than rival camps or systems, the Chinese opted for the rigid Stalinist interpretation. The Chinese stood firm on questions of intra-bloc unity with respect to Tito's breakaway, Polish revisionism (although Mao was initially intrigued by Gromulka's reforms), the Hungarian uprising, and West European Communists' attempts to seize power through the ballot box rather than armed revolution. As the Soviets reverted to more flexible and, to the Chinese, heretical assessments of monopoly capitalism, Chinese analysts clung to the more dogmatic and deterministic Stalinist interpretations of the 'general crisis of capitalism' combined with a Maoist optimism about world revolution. The Chinese accordingly took the uncompromising position of the three 'no peacefuls' (san wu he): no peaceful competition, no peaceful coexistence, and no peaceful transition to socialism.

It was not until after the Sino-Soviet break that Chinese analysts began to question the Stalinist interpretation of these questions. Beginning in 1964, analysts at the Institute of International Relations (the institutional forerunner to the current China Institute of Contemporary International Relations) and in the world economy research section of the Philosophy & Social Sciences division of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (the forerunner to the CASS Institute of World Economics and Politics) began to put forward Vargo-esque interpretations in internal neibu (classified) studies. They began to analyse American monopoly capital not in terms of a unitary Wall Street

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6 Hough, ibid, p.199.

finance oligarchy, but rather ‘ten big financial groups’ (shì da cāituan) that competed fiercely amongst themselves for profit and control of the political domain. They began to question Lenin’s core assumptions about the ‘moribund’ nature of imperialism (why had it not yet died?) and the inevitability of capitalist war (why had it not broken out?).

These doubts were raised in internal studies, but were reportedly rejected on ideological grounds by Kang Sheng and Chen Boda. In any event, these views and the analysts who articulated them were abruptly brought into disrepute by the onset of the Cultural Revolution in 1966.

The first signs of doctrinal revisionism in the sphere of international relations, as the Cultural Revolution ebbed, came in the form of Deng Xiaoping’s speech to the Sixth Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly in 1974. Deng’s speech was a forerunner of Mao’s ‘Theory of the Three Worlds’, which lumped together both superpowers as hegemonists (the First World), the other developed states (regardless of political system) as the ‘Second World’, and all developing countries (including China) as the ‘Third World’.

Following Mao’s death, the arrest of the Gang of Four, and Deng’s second rehabilitation, Chinese international affairs specialists and political economists began in 1978 to reopen the debates on imperialism, state-monopoly capitalism, and the doctrine of the inevitability of war. In the years between 1978-84 debate on these issues reached polemical proportions in internal (neibu) professional journals – particularly Shìjiè jīngjì yù zhèngzhì neicān [Reference Materials on World Economics and Politics], the internal journal of the CASS Institute of World Economics and Politics. Importantly, by the end of these internal polemics Chinese analysts had come to many of the same conclusions that their Soviet counterparts had reached during the Varga and Khrushchev eras. Interestingly, many of the Chinese scholars involved in these polemics had in fact been exchange scholars in Varga’s institute during the 1950s. It was there that they had first encountered Stalinist dogma; twenty-five years later these individuals (many now in the CASS Institute of World Economics and Politics) led

8 Interview with former IIR member, September 1986.
9 ibid.
the way in the de-Stalinization drive in China. For international studies, it was not so much Maoist theories that required revision as it was Stalinist dogma.

In brief, those involved in the polemics reached the following conclusions. First, the majority concluded that the relationship of the monopolies to the capitalist state was one of 'coalescence' (jiehe or ronghe) rather than 'subordination' (kongzhi, congshu or zhangwo). This view is consistent with that of Lenin (and earlier Hilferding), but represents a direct rebuttal of Stalin and the view that had prevailed in China since 1952. While this was the majority view, one key contributor to the polemic, Qiu Qihua (then director of the CASS Institute of World Economics and Politics and now of the Central Party School), decided that under conditions of nationalization of industry in many capitalist countries (particularly Japan, Great Britain, West Germany and Sweden) the state actually controlled the monopolies rather than vice versa.12 Another important contributor, Zhang Jialin of the Shanghai Institute of International Studies, even went so far as to argue that monopolies no longer existed in the United States, and therefore the whole issue of state-monopoly capitalism was moot!13 Zhang’s maverick ideas drew direct refutations from more orthodox theorists.

Secondly, with respect to the question of imperialism’s longevity, polemists concluded that the imperialist stage of capitalist development must be viewed as a long-term historical process (hen chang de lishi guocheng). As such, imperialism was not in danger of ‘dying’ (chuisi) anytime soon. Rather, Chinese scholars articulated the view that imperialism could exhibit continued ‘life’ for some time. But, ultimately imperialism would die, they thought, as to say otherwise would represent too heretical a departure from essential Leninism. This reinterpretation of imperialism’s longevity was put forth by a variety of scholars in research institutes, universities, and the Central Party School. Ultimately, it was the late international affairs specialist Huan Xiang who put forth the decisive view of imperialism’s sustained health.14

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12 See, for example, Qiu Qihua et al., Xiandai longduan zibenzhuyi jingji [Contemporary Monopoly Capitalist Economies] (Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, Beijing, 1982), p.42.


14 See, for example, Huan Xiang, ‘Guanyu “diguozhuyi chuisixing” de wenti’ [The Question of ‘Imperialism’s Moribund Character’], Zhongguo shehui kexue [Chinese Social Science], no.4 (1981), pp.89-90.
Huan based his analysis on the 'new technological revolution' taking place in the West, and the apparent ability of capitalist economies to 'renew' themselves.

Third, and following on Huan's analysis of the regeneration of capitalism despite periodic economic 'crises' (jingji weiji), no 'general crisis of capitalism' existed as Stalin and Mao had argued. Recessions caused retrenchments in capitalist economies to be sure, but science, technology, and new capital investment all permitted capitalist economies to rebound from troughs of the business cycle.

Fourth, revolution was not seen as imminent in the capitalist world, as the proletariat in the West enjoyed a relatively high standard of living. This conclusion was based on the critique of another core component of the Stalinist worldview, namely that as economic 'crises' deepened the capitalist proletariat became further and further 'impoverished'. Chinese Marxist scholars disagreed with this view – many after visiting the capitalist West – and they argued that instead of becoming inexorably worse off, workers in the West enjoyed a relatively comfortable standard of living and many had joined the middle class. Again, however, they could not dismiss the Marxist maxim of proletarian impoverishment outright. Thus, Chinese analysts adopted a compromise position by arguing that the capitalist proletariat was 'relatively impoverished' (xiandui pingkunhua) rather than being 'absolutely impoverished' (juedui pingkunhua).

Finally, Chinese scholars addressed the Leninist belief that during the imperialist epoch, war between capitalist states (and in Stalin's view between imperialist and socialist states) was 'inevitable'. They rejected both views. They cited as evidence the fact that since World War II there had been no major inter-capitalist wars or war between the United States and Soviet Union. Rather, they noted that wars tended to take place between developing countries and that the post-war balance of power in Europe had helped to preserve the peace. As a result, Chinese leaders, beginning with Deng, began articulating the view in 1983 that 'war could be postponed'.

In foreign policy terms, such revisionist doctrinal assessments made it possible for the Chinese – as it had the Soviets in the mid-1950s – to justify a policy of peaceful coexistence with the West. That is, imperialism was here to stay; having relations with the capitalist state was not necessarily equivalent to dealing with the financial oligarchy; the capitalist economies had much to offer a developing China; and optimism about world revolution was unwarranted. In arriving at these conclusions, Chinese Marxist theorists exhibited the continued influence of Soviet doctrine (in its Leninist, Stalinist, and post-Stalinist form) on
their assessments of world affairs and of the capitalist world in particular. While significantly revising many of the core components of the orthodoxy, they could not jettison the basic Soviet doctrine altogether.

Perspectives

These polemics are only some examples of the doctrinal and theoretical influence that the Soviet Union has exerted over the Chinese international studies community. Despite increased contact with the West in the past decade and its influence on Chinese social sciences, the Soviet influence on Chinese analyses of international affairs remains readily apparent. The first generation of Chinese international relations specialists and political economists continue to hold prominent positions in the Chinese international studies community. As long as China remains a Marxist-Leninist system and these individuals remain in place, the Soviet impact will linger. The question now is to what extent Gorbachev's 'new thinking' will influence Chinese assessments of world affairs? The evidence, to date, suggests that Chinese analysts are more comfortable with paradigms from the 1950s. They look backwards for answers to the future.

London, England
February 1991