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Special Issue

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Uneven Development vs. Searching for Integrity: Chinese Studies in Post-Soviet Russia

Alexei D. Voskressenski

Abstract

The article shows how problems in Soviet and later Russian sinology contributed to the uneven development of the discipline because ideology and dwindling resources, both material and human, influenced the integrity of the research and led to a transformation of Chinese Studies in post-Soviet Russia. By presenting an overview of Chinese Studies in Russia in key disciplinary segments over the last twenty-five years, the article reveals how the appearance of modern research themes addressing foreign policy issues, history, and law helped to produce methodologies for an integral interdisciplinary China research program that did not exist during Soviet times.

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There has always been a search for interdisciplinarity and integrality in international Chinese Studies, especially given the relatively long history of research on China and its national ambitions. The same has been, and still is, true for Russian Chinese Studies, a discipline that has always also had a practical side due to the two countries’ common border and their long and complex bilateral relationship. Two more salient reasons come to mind. First, in order to delve into Chinese studies one really needs to be interdisciplinary because the language itself is not enough to understand the history, culture, or politics of China; and vice versa, knowledge of its history, political science, or anthropology is useless without being acquainted with its language and cultural specificity. Second, China has been at the forefront of world politics, especially after it became the second largest global economy, with influence far beyond its borders, arousing the interest of a much larger scope of people than merely sinologists and businessmen. This second consideration presupposes interest in experimenting with new integral methods of modern social sciences that did not exist even thirty or forty years ago.

In explaining the traditional idea of the complexity and interdisciplinarity of Chinese studies, Vassili Mikhailovich Alekseev, arguably the most renowned and intellectually influential Russian sinologist of the twentieth century, has noted that China is a cultural/civilizational complex in and of itself, thus making sinology a scholarly discipline in the traditional sense of the word. Though it seems provocative in terms of the modern hierarchy in the social sciences, Alekseev’s idea reflects some pragmatic academic problems that confront anyone who begins research in Chinese Studies today: how to combine a necessary advanced methodological framework with a very specific object since China must be broader than any simple disciplinary framework. This problem is still not always resolved. There is also the need to use primary and secondary sources written by an army of professional historiographers whose task was—and still is, but with new advanced methods—to create a “correct” history written with Chinese characters that require years to study and are very different from alphabetical texts. The specifics of China as a research object lies today in the impossibility of understanding it within a single disciplinary framework. This relates to Alekseev’s idea of China being a cultural/civilizational complex that lies at the intersection of different realities and thus different disciplines.

In the twentieth century every well-established Chinese Studies
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program usually had a xiansheng (先生) of Chinese origin who helped with the texts and their interpretation in the context of another culture. Although Russia also used this “tool,” it also had an original tradition of understanding China “from the inside,” by professionally trained sinologists (old China hands or dragomans) who had lived in China for as long as several decades, felt China to be their native country, and could speak and read Chinese including wenyan (文言), the written classical language analogous to Latin in Europe. In Russia this trend began even before the Russian ecclesiastical mission that was founded long before any Russian or Western embassy or any other longstanding commercial or military missions. Other nations followed suit and “old China hands” who can explain what is going on in China are still in demand. However, in modern times when the social sciences (and Chinese Studies as one branch of the social sciences) have become “an industry of knowledge,” the ability to create a complex and integral vision of one’s research object relates to many other spheres: How deep is the nation’s academic tradition? How extensive is its material and social capital, and whether it can be used intensively and effectively, as well as how modern is its organizational structure for producing and disseminating knowledge? Inadequate material and social capital or outdated organizational structures will lead to uneven development of the academic disciplines and the knowledge within them, thus influencing or even hindering the appearance of interdisciplinary or integral research.

All this sets the stage for the birth of a field whose complexity presupposes its interdisciplinarity, though at different times it was understood differently. Many Chinese Studies programs in universities all over the world accordingly were created as interdisciplinary ventures and thus stood outside any specific disciplinary framework in the modern university structure. This tradition was followed by Russian universities. However, in Russia the situation was even more complex since the discipline of Chinese Studies was treated historically as a species of “practical knowledge.” Oriental linguistics and diplomatic history were needed for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to pursue diplomatic and commercial relations with a society that was distinctly non-Western and thus arguably required special skills to master it. This was a reciprocal process since China was also becoming closer to Russia, mostly through an infusion of translated books, some exotic goods, and later special missions. The conquest of Siberia and Central Asia brought to China’s
attention another pragmatic necessity—the need to understand the military dimensions of Russia’s relationship with Asia. Following this trend the Russian General Staff began to finance geographical expeditions, headed mostly by brilliantly educated military men (Przhevalsky, Obruchev, Mannerheim, Kozlov, and so forth,) who could combine geographic explorations and ethnographic findings with military or economic analyses of these faraway territories, albeit with a new strategic perspective due to the rivalry of the Great Powers in Central Asia and China. At that time, interdisciplinarity was understood as a historical description of a combined geographical, economic, military, and ethnological reality.

Another very important impetus for the search for interdisciplinarity and integrality in Russian Chinese Studies occurred after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, resulting in the creation of a Soviet state with rapidly growing political ambitions and military capabilities, whose newly created political elites desired to change the world, create new states, and reconfigure old ones in favor of the new Russian Red Empire whose sphere of interests included Eastern Europe, Mongolia, China, and later Vietnam, Korea, and Cuba. This resulted in the predominance of economy-centered but simplified Marxist analyses of all research domains, including history and ethnology.

This situation was reversed in the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union, creating yet a new impulse for pragmatism and real interdisciplinarity in post-Soviet Chinese Studies in Russia. Less ideologically biased but still economy-centered analyses prevailed, though in certain segments of knowledge they were substituted by sociological, political science methods, or civilizational approaches. Geopolitical change now coincided with a sudden lack of research funds, degenerating research structures, and the migration of people from research to business or other commercially or administratively profitable fields. This period was also marked by decreasing material and social capital in Chinese Studies as well as a loss of interest in China because of economic problems at home but at the same time by the rise of innovative intellectual efforts by sinologists themselves. However, these innovative attempts were not well received by the public.

Only by the mid-2000s did the broader research community, as well as the wider public in Russia, become more interested in China than they had ever been during the Soviet era. The general public (“ordinary” readers) was fascinated by the notion of “sacred” philosophical
knowledge as communicated by the *wushu* masters. The new political elite, after the collapse of the Soviet version of socialism, saw China as the only large and authentic socialist country, though it had generally been hostile to the Soviet Union, as well as, for some, was the last hope against triumphant Western liberalism. Another part of the Russian political elite, and the research community allied with it, saw in China a successful model of modernization and reform based on skillfully moderated social consensus and gradual de-Sovietization through careful political restructuring. The idea of Soviet-Chinese normalization and, later on, a Russo-Chinese partnership, the ups and downs in Russo-Chinese relations from hatred to partnership and later to an overreliance on each other exposed the need for Russo-Chinese studies to become a kind of new integrated field combining international relations, international political economy, and strategic studies. This was in order to ensure Russo-Chinese regionalization for the purpose of modernizing the economic, military, and technological spheres in both countries. The complexities of the modern age, which combine uneven globalization with a global economic recession and a patchy economic recovery, became the basis for analyzing international interconnectedness, both its positive and its negative sides.

All the aforementioned factors—the specifics of China Studies, linguistic as well as disciplinary, internal developments in Russia and its politics toward China, China’s initial success in modernization that resulted in its rise, as well as the complexities of the modern age—necessitated a break from the traditional methods of research and inquiry and the application of new interdisciplinary and integral approaches to this object of research or inquiry. It is still unclear how Chinese Studies in a post-Soviet Russia, still mostly a traditional discipline within the realm of history and descriptive economics where political affairs are seen as an extension of the official course, can resolve this important practical task. However, due to the “new fields” of inquiry (juridical studies, political economy, sociology, political science, and politics) combined with the achievements of the Soviet school (linguistics, historical studies, and economics), post-Soviet Chinese Studies seem methodologically better equipped for this task than during Soviet times, notwithstanding the lack of research funds, an outdated administrative structure, and an ongoing brain drain to business.

The above-mentioned “disciplinary approach” implies an approach connected to the traditional academic disciplines of history, political
science, economics, sociology, geography, and anthropology. Some of these academic disciplines in their modern forms are still underdeveloped in Russia or under-represented in specific segments of area studies; others are especially underdeveloped in post-Soviet Chinese Studies. However, an integrative, comprehensive, and interdisciplinary approach to the issue of global importance—the rise of China—has not yet evolved anywhere, Russia included, mostly because it is so challenging to bring about. Hence, a rising China, its possible place in a new world, and the consequences of this process are dealt with mostly in the field of ideology. This situation is prone to instability and the possibility of mistakes or miscalculations when it comes to choosing the right political course. Thus, given the practical considerations involved, further attempts at interdisciplinary and integral research on China will continue.

This article will briefly overview the development of Chinese Studies in post-Soviet Russia, particularly the historical roots of the foreign policies in question, Chinese economic history, and the political and legal background for the development, reform, and modernization of China. International politics is an essential component of any international studies agenda. This reflects the idea that any analysis of world events has to take into consideration their political nature, i.e., the government institutions and human interactions that feature both power and conflict. The analysis in question borrows the definitions of Sheldon Anderson, Jeanne A. K. Hey, Mark Allen Peterson, Stanley W. Toops, and Charles Stevens in their *International Studies: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Global Issues*, where they point out that “The power-and-conflict definition encompasses all governmental decisions and actions and also decisions and actions that occur outside government purview but that are nonetheless intensely political.” This article will also look at what was written in the field of political history as central to understanding current international relations. Another issue on the agenda is the economic history of China as this provides insights into economic trends in today’s China and the development and future of its economy. Illustrating the development of these fields inside post-Soviet China Studies may explain the deficiencies of the field, but will also reveal the portion of the literature that might be referred to as interdisciplinary or integral research on China. This research informs overall perceptions of China among the research and analyst in all major geographical centers of sinology located in Russia—Moscow, St. Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Chita, and Vladivostok.
1. Research on the Historical Roots of the Foreign Policy Doctrine and an Overview of the Historical Process

Research on the historical roots of the foreign policy doctrine and the relationship between history and foreign policy in the Soviet Union was a distinct subfield of Chinese political history because it arguably provided a possibility to explain current foreign policy developments and to resolve practical questions related to the border issues between the USSR and China. The flourishing of this subfield can be explained by the Soviet-Chinese split—the disagreements between the two Communist powers, one of which was the leader and the other of which was considered to be the follower—on the path to socialism. This resulted in the conclusion by Soviet analysts that the Chinese Communists had reverted to the foreign policy behavior of the Chinese emperors and thus had clearly betrayed “the cause of communism.” This idea partially freed research on Chinese foreign policy from Communist ideological indoctrination and helped bring more professional Soviet sinologists to this field, and sometimes to foreign policy as well. Two schools dedicated to research on Chinese foreign policy flourished, both in Moscow. One, the Institute of Oriental Studies, relied on research on ancient, medieval, and imperial sources in all their complexity; the other, the Institute of Far Eastern Studies, took a more pragmatic and modern approach to solving the problems in current Sino-Soviet relations and border questions, as understood mostly through the mainstream ideology. A third school, the Leningrad School of sinology, also engaged in fundamental research but it focused mostly on the ancient and medieval aspects of the Chinese foreign policy doctrine that were not very well covered in Moscow, such as China-Tibet relations in the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, China’s relations with the nomadic states of Central Asia, and so forth. All three schools are still the most influential in post-Soviet Russia together with the rival Vladivostok Sinological School, though little by little new centers of Asian studies are emerging in other regions. They do not necessarily focus on China, but the popularity of rising China presses them to pay more attention to sinological themes and to hire or prepare China specialists. However, due to the overall financial centralization of the Russian state, the small regional centers or emerging new centers still cannot rival the major centers of sinology.

The importance of tradition in the late Soviet Union enabled the transfer of knowledge and research stimuli from generation to generation
as well as the appearance of a new wave of research in this field in the early 1990s by students of well-known professors, such as Sergai Tikhvinsky, Vladimir Miasnikov, Boris Gurevich, Oleg Nepomnin, Leonard Perelomov, and so forth, who had started to specialize in this field in the early or mid-Soviet era. This older generation (except for Boris Gurevich who died in the 1990s) continues with projects elaborated on in the 1980s: Sergai Tikhvinsky and Vladimir Miasnikov with the publication of a series of diplomatic documents on Russian-Chinese and Soviet-Chinese relations as well as a summary of research on Chinese border policy (together with Ye. Stepanov). The younger generation has published books based on their PhD dissertations that were prepared during the final years of the Soviet Union or shortly after 1990. However, up until the end of the 1990s new publications on the subject were sporadic compared to Soviet times, and even current Chinese foreign policy doctrine and practices are less researched than they were previously. Rare exceptions to this trend are the books written by Yuri Galenovich. Galenovich belongs to the medium–old generation of Soviet sinology. Although most of his books were published in the 1990s and 2000s, Galenovich addresses most current issues related to Chinese foreign and internal policy and Russian-Chinese relations. He has authored Blank Spots and Trouble Zones in the History of Soviet-Chinese Relations, another book on the subject that was extended into a four-volume edition, The History of the Relationships between Russia and China, two other volumes on current relations between Russia and China, a series of books on Chinese-American and Chinese-Russian relations, his books on the triangular Russia-China-U. S. relationship, as well as his books on the hottest topics in their Russian and Chinese contemporary histories, including inter-party relations and the mainstream Chinese party vision of Sino-Soviet and Sino-Russian relations. So, amazingly, one author over the period of two decades (1990–2010) covered the questions most often raised regarding Chinese foreign policy and Sino-Soviet and Sino-Russian relations from a perspective that was fundamentally different from most of the research in the field during the Soviet era. Books by Galenovich greatly contributed to the creation of an integral vision of China, although in reality he concentrated on specific segments of China lore.

The most important work on border issues in Sino-Soviet and Sino-Russian relations is a volume on Chinese border policy that summarizes all the research on the topic during the Soviet era. Further research on
the history or current situation on the Sino-Russian border practically stopped in post-Soviet Russia due to a lack of interest by the Russian government because of the interim border agreements signed by the two countries as well as the dearth of researchers due to natural attrition and departure from the field.

2. Research on Political Culture and the Cultural Roots of Modernization in China

Post-Soviet sinology has been more successful in explaining the political culture of modern China. The reason for this has been interest among Russian politicians as well as researchers in the ideas that helped formulate a political course leading to successful reform. The major idea that evolved in the course of this research is that uninterrupted development helped formulate in China a unique civilization that arguably influenced the major historical processes in the Far East due to the dissemination of Chinese material and spiritual culture. China’s influence has been explained by its capacity over the centuries to accumulate knowledge of governance and principles of social organization, which were frequently mimicked by the Far Eastern regions that subsequently adopted them. One of the most interesting findings in Russian research on the political culture of modern China is that Confucian ethical principles lessened social aggressiveness, thus creating a new type of historical impetus: through consensus and social accommodation rather than the resolution of antagonistic conflicts through revolution, as arguably associated with a Western type of development. The major research question in this connection developed also as a political question: how to overcome cultural resistance to badly needed reforms, especially in view of the theory of Chinese spiritual and material supremacy. The underlying political motivation was how to ensure the move to a new stage of Russian development not by another revolution, as in 1917, but by the Chinese way as shown by Deng Xiaoping: rather than returning to the past with its compromised Soviet- or Chinese-style communism, by introducing reforms while preserving the social stability of the enormous state with millions of impoverished people. One of the conclusions is that in 1912 the core question for China was what should be taken into the future and what should be left in the past. This question was not resolved and became the reason for the civil war. In 1978, however, unlike in the 1920s and 1940s, China resolved this question primarily
through the advent of Confucianism in the economic and political practice of reform. Such important research and political questions resulted in a series of books related to the early period of Guomindang (GMD)-PRC political competition in China, and especially the publication of documents related to the Comintern’s heavy involvement in China.10

The period of publicizing documents on the Comintern’s activities and GMD-Chinese Communist Party (CCP) programs and their actual implementation in mainland China resulted in several original works. Andrei Karneev, Vitalii Kozirev, and Alexander Pisarev’s book (with an introduction by Arlen Meliksetov), *Power and Village in Republican China*,11 explains the tactical political mistakes of the GMD in Chinese villages that resulted in its loss of power and withdrawal to Taiwan. Another book, authored by Vladimir Men’shikov and Òleg Nepomnin, focuses on an explanation of the structural factors in China’s situation during the 1930s and 1940s, and especially the differences between the Nanjing, PRC, and Taiwan models of modernization as well as how the inconsistency of the reforms in Nanjing led to the defeat of GMD on the mainland.12 Historical explanations of the struggle for Communist reforms in China and their later model presented by Deng Xiaoping are presented by Mikhail Titarenko in his book of articles and presentations at scholarly congresses, entitled *China: Civilization and Reforms*.13 Another series published by the Institute of the Far Eastern Studies also develops along this line, whereas Leonard Perelomov focuses on analyses of Confucianism and its role in the evolution of different developmental doctrines in China.14 Perelomov argues that the specific ethical principles of Confucianism and their implementation in China’s political struggle after Deng Xiaoping’s return to political power enabled the country to establish a progressive political consensus that pushed forward its economic development. The above arguments are summarized in a book dedicated to the Chinese model of modernization, in which the author, a scholar at the Institute of Far Eastern Studies in Moscow, argues that at certain periods of Chinese history the evolving model of political consensus and Confucianism helped to create a new Chinese identity that actually enabled the country to proceed with the reforms during these years.15 The ideas in the book indirectly point to the policies of Russian reformers whose actions polarized their society, whereas the Chinese political elite were able to ensure stable reform and development without major political clashes.
3. Reconsiderations of Recent Chinese History

Not only are the cultural and political histories of modernization and its relationship to foreign policy a point of interest for post-Soviet historians. In the early 2000s interest peaked in a reconsideration of Communist China’s past and the role of the Soviet Union in this historical process. There have been several reprints of the classic Chinese history textbook, edited by Arlen Meliksetov, written at the end of the Gorbachev era but published in the 1990s. Later, two other versions of Chinese history appeared. One, authored by Victor Usov, heavily relies on the mainland Chinese vision of the country’s contemporary historical development. The other book, by Oleg Nepomnin, presents a much more objective vision of China’s development in light of the two “versions” of history, Communist and GMD. It is clear that periods of history not wholly covered by the primary sources attract much attention. Thus, Alexander Pantsov published his *A Secret History of Sino-Soviet Relations*, Nikolai Riabchenko concentrated on the years of confrontation, and Tatiana Zaozerskaya studied the role of Soviet specialists in the formation of the Chinese military-industrial complex.

This research resulted in an alternative and probably more objective vision of the reform process in China as a politically conflicted process, with successes as well as defeats for certain political factions. Yuri Galenovich published a pioneering series of books on the Tiananmen crisis and later in his other works also refers to the political struggles in China: from his detailed foreword to *The Unofficial History of the Chinese Reforms* to the translation of Chen Yizi’s memoirs *China: A Decade of Reforms*, as well as on Liu Shaoqi’s predicament during the Cultural Revolution. He has also published on China’s modern life, Chinese attitudes to Deng Xiaoping, his unofficial appraisals of the Chinese reforms, and Mao Zedong. These monographs present a more objective vision of the new China. His book *Novoye Litso Kitaya* (The New Face of China) analyzes three dimensions of reforming China: the situation in the Communist Party, the situation in society and Hu Jintao’s political and economic program.

The general vision of political development in China to a certain extent has been distorted by the overlap between these two contradictory modes—one biased toward the CCP vision that coincides with the Soviet version of Chinese political history before the split and another that favors the less official or even unofficial underlying sources, including...
the reasons for internal political struggles on both the mainland and Taiwan, which were censored before 1990. Thus in post-Soviet Chinese Studies both visions are present but cannot be easily reconciled. This situation contrasts greatly with the Soviet era. There were a number of books published on the system of state norms and legislative acts, as well as books on China’s current system of political governance. The system of state governance in China was researched mainly by the following authors: Konstantin Yegorov, Leonid Gudoshnikov, with his thorough chapters on the political systems of the mainland and Taiwan in the book *Vostok I Politika*, and Boris Doronin and Galina Stepanova on the relationship among the different parties in China.

In the political history of the last ten years, the formation and development of the two major political parties in China—the GMD and CCP—attracted particular attention. In the history of the GMD, the most interesting question for Russian researchers was how a corrupt and politically and militarily defeated party could rejuvenate itself in such a way as to defend the island part of China and later create a “Taiwanese miracle.” It is clear that after its defeat the GMD could not retain a democratic platform and needed to lean on the authoritarianism already introduced during its mainland period. The Taiwanese history of the GMD up to the 1980s clearly shows the theoretical effectiveness of the many things tried in mainland China in the 1930s–40s that nonetheless failed. However, the GMD and its leaders managed to rethink the political experiments of the so-called “Nanjing model of political development” during its history on Taiwan not only regarding economic issues—strongly supported by American economic advisers—but also in politics, the authentic model of political development. The GMD managed to rethink Sun Yat-sen’s political legacy and correct many mistakes in China during the period from 1920 to 1940. The course that was elaborated upon by Chiang Kai-shek in 1947 was fully implemented on the island. Albeit with many difficulties Chiang managed to increase the role of the party in the overall governance of the island in such a way as to ensure central governance by the newcomers from the mainland through Taiwan’s Administrative Chancellery. At the same time, the local governing process was led by the Taiwanese population. Though the system developed some cracks at the end, it could be seen as a tool to ensure the speedy development of the island. The GMD reform from 1950 to 1970 led to a reconsideration of overall policy during the Chiang Ching-kuo period in Russian Chinese studies.
the Taiwan multi-party system from 1990 to 2000 was of particular interest. Several books were published on Taiwan’s political history and political system,\textsuperscript{25} and others dealt with the Taiwanese multi-party system.\textsuperscript{26}

It should be noted that overall Taiwanese political and economic development was the object of particular attention. One book was dedicated to an overview of the Taiwanese way to democracy and another presented an overview of Taiwanese political and economic development.\textsuperscript{27} In addition, a Taiwanese citizen who studied in Russia wrote a PhD dissertation, though not published as a book, on the political development of Taiwan.\textsuperscript{28} In 2001 the Institute of Far Eastern Studies published an overview of research on the Taiwanese modernization model and also initiated a yearly publication of analytical materials on political and economic developments in Taiwan.\textsuperscript{29}

4. The CCP and Modernization in China

Notwithstanding these important publications, it is clear that the GMD was not at the center of official mainstream political research on China in post-Soviet Russia. Much more attention was paid to research on the Chinese Communist Party, starting from the Third Plenum of the CCP (1978). Two questions were of utmost interest: 1) How did the party, which was an offspring of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, manage to develop and change? 2) How did a party based on principles shared by both the CPSU and the CCP manage to reform itself and the entire society while the CPSU collapsed together with the Soviet Union itself? For this purpose, CCP history was divided into two major periods, with the latter, starting after the Third Plenum (1978), being considered structurally different since the party managed to elaborate on the main principles of China’s development by formulating the theory of “socialism with Chinese characteristics.” The reforms in China were seen as having established the harmony of “systemic modernization.” According to this idea, preserving social stability in China necessitated overseeing the development of the social sphere as formulated in the politics of “balanced development.” This “balanced development” worked toward both socio-economic change and the transformation of the party itself. The transformation of the party comprised party reform, reform of the people’s representative system, and reform of the government, particularly the juridical and law enforcement systems. This led to the growth of
intraparty democracy as well as the policy of oversight of cadres and the party control system. State and party interests in development helped formulate this essence of party policy: the evolution of the system of governance from the direct governance of the revolutionary era to indirect governance, the split between the government and party structures, and a new cadre policy that eliminated the existing gerontocratic system of governance and helped form a new mechanism for running the country. In order to formulate and research all the aforementioned topics a body of CCP literature was translated into Russian—documents from all the major party congresses and plenums as well as troves of Chinese research literature. This helped to create major research monographs, such as *How China is Governed*, as well as many others on similar topics. This body of Russian research literature provided a better understanding about the political process in China as well as about the logic of reform, including the logic of political restructuring.

5. Appraisals of the Legal Basis for Modernization in China and its Economic Successes

Issues pertaining to an understanding of the traditional and modern Chinese legal systems were traditionally understudied in the Soviet Union. Indeed, there were only two or three Soviet scholars specializing in Chinese law. Intriguingly, although the number of scholars on the Chinese legal system did not increase very significantly in post-Soviet Russia (there are currently about ten), the subject can no longer be considered under researched because of the many series of books on this topic published during the last twenty years. The desire to understand the logic of the successful reforms and China’s political and economic restructuring accentuated the need to study how the traditional legal system in China worked. The latter encompassed a system of ethical and moral considerations, a system of social control for violations of ethical norms and the law, as well as a system of repercussions for breaking the law. Research on the traditional legal system in the 1990s formed the basis for the modern Chinese legal system in such a way that the modern legal system can be seen containing two organic parts: the first part being the traditionalist view of the world together with the traditionalist subjective legal system, and the second part being the objective modern legal system and its subjective component in the sense that it is supported by the European legal system. This view of the Chinese legal
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The Chinese legal system was developed by legal specialists in a series of books on Chinese jurisprudence, e.g., by Yevgeni Kumanin; El’dar Imamov; and Alexander Petukhov and summarized in Yevgeni Paschenko’s book *Economic Reform in China and the Civil Law System*.\(^3\)

Analysis of traditionalism from the point of view of the legal system is important because it shows that traditionalism as a crucial part of Chinese life was changing the norms of modern law, therefore the declared juridical norms did not correspond to the real relationship between the authorities, the power elites, and the citizens. It is important to address these topics in view of the social and economic reforms that are going on in China. It is not clear from the research literature already mentioned how an analysis of this problem will deal with legal corruption since that relates to politics and the pitfalls of the modern political regime in China. However, as applied to historical development in China it could explain the defeat of the GMD and the victory of the CCP in 1949, or at least provide some important explanations. These explanations have been presented in the scholarly work by Andrei Karneev, Vitalyi Kozirev, and Alexander Pisarev, with an introduction by Arlen Meliksetov.\(^3\)

The aforementioned approach is also related to an analysis of the development of the juridical system in the People’s Republic of China. The evolution of the legal system in China and the amendments to the existing laws resulted in the creation of a new situation whereby amendments pertaining to the establishment of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” transformed Communist China into a “market economy regulated by the state.” These amendments became fixed in the Chinese Constitution. The transformation of the Chinese juridical system is reflected in Russian introductions to translated compilations of the Chinese criminal and civil laws as well as monographs on the modern Chinese legal system.\(^3\)

An attempt was also made to summarize China’s development during the years of reform, starting especially in 1990 when the Soviet Union began to collapse. This work began with a book by Vladimir Portiakov on Chinese economic politics during the Deng Xiaoping era in which he presents summaries of all the varieties of China’s extensive development.\(^3\) Amazingly enough with regard to Chinese economics—arguably the area that receives the greatest international coverage—Portiakov’s book is the only such major monograph in post-Soviet China studies of the 1990s. Books on the Chinese economy, other than those
by Yakov Berger and Vilya Gel’bras,\textsuperscript{35} were dedicated primarily to the historical formation of the CCP’s fiscal policy. Analyses of Chinese economic policy that has catapulted the country to be the second largest economy in the world were published only ten years after the volume by Vladimir Portiakov.

The fourth major book on Chinese economics published in Russia during the last twenty years is by Eleonora Pivovarova.\textsuperscript{36} This work explains China’s economic development by using the terminology and concepts of socialist political economics, which dominated such discussions in the Soviet Union during the 1970s and 1980s.

Another major book, in which China’s overall development is summarized in a more complex way, includes chapters by several scholars at the Institute of the Far Eastern Studies and is edited by Mikhail Titarenko, director of the Institute.\textsuperscript{37} In 2004, for the fifty-fifth anniversary of the People’s Republic of China, there was yet another attempt to summarize China’s development.\textsuperscript{38}

6. Instead of a Conclusion: From Uneven Development to a New Level of Interdisciplinarity

The first complex Russian research work on China and Russo-Chinese relations was written in English outside of Russia, but a Russian version of the book was published four years before the English version.\textsuperscript{39} While the English-language research community paid less attention to the book, in Russia it generated serious or critical comments on its methodological and theoretical basis as well as on the possibility of combining theory with substantive empirical evidence cited as “proof.” The criticisms were raised by Russian political scientists and historians, but the arguments for and against split according to which branches of the discipline the reviewers belonged—in reality at the center of the criticism was the idea of balancing China. The book has undergone two editions in Russia and after fifteen years is still on the reading list for students in international studies in Russian universities. Though the importance of complex research on modern China is never directly mentioned in this book, its methodology led to two more practical books of complex research on China—the first and, to date, the only joint Russian-Chinese-American research on China’s evolving international role to be published in Russian.\textsuperscript{40} The subsequent study \textit{Energy Aspects of International Relations in East Asia} promoted a complex under-
standing of East Asia and the Chinese role in the region as well as the possibility and consequences of reorienting Russian energy relations from West to East.\(^{41}\)

However, the general trend of uneven development in post-Soviet Chinese studies combined with the ongoing search for a complex understanding of China’s development resulted in the appearance of integral works in the 2000s. These attempts are worth being analyzed because of the pitfalls as well as the strengths of such complex interdisciplinary research in Russia and also because of their political implications. In 2006 Mikhail Titarenko and Boris Kuzik produced a significant volume *Russia and China 2050: Strategy for Co-Development* on the basis of research done by thirty academics at the Institute of Far Eastern Studies as well as the Institute of Economic Strategy that paved the way to an elaboration of the political concept of joint Russian and Chinese development up to 2050.\(^{42}\) The book became a practical, though unofficial guide for Russian official policy toward China in the coming years, probably up to 2010–11 or even later. Subsequently, it was subjected to severe criticism by many researchers, the most trenchant being by Alexander Khramchikhin, who analyzed the provisional results of the so-called co-development of Russia and China dating back at least ten years. He argued that these provisional results as well as the new global situation in the era of a rising China are detrimental to Russia’s interests.\(^{43}\) Khramchikhin tried to sum up his own vision of China, regarding China’s internal problems, including conflicting concepts of history, migration, geopolitical strategy, military modernization, ideology, the Russo-Chinese relationship, and so forth, as a challenge to Russia.\(^{44}\) However, he never criticized the methodology of this research; instead he concentrated mostly on the empirical evidence. Meanwhile, a body of researchers headed by Mikhail Titarenko and Boris Kuzik created an original framework called a “methodological matrix” that, as they argued, enabled them to combine qualitative and quantitative research on Russia and China in such a way as to put forward the concept of Russian-Chinese co-development. Though the methodology itself is questionable, it created the possibility of building a concept substantiated by empirical arguments.

Another criticism of the methodological matrix—its intrinsic optimistic bias that led to Russia and China being seen as equal economies—was correctly pointed out by Khramchikhin because at the time of its publication, seven years after the work by Titarenko and Kuzik, the empirical
evidence sharply contradicted its conclusions. However Khramchikhin, not being a sinologist and not constructing a structural methodological concept, created an interpretive work based on subjective statements that were seen as contradictory to Titarenko and Kuzik’s conclusions, thus rejecting the concept of Russian-Chinese co-development up to 2050. Khramchikhin’s most intriguing point was that a year earlier than Titarenko and Kuzik’s book a group of researchers at the Institute of Far Eastern Studies, headed by the Institute’s deputy director, Vassili Mikheev and in collaboration with Moscow’s Carnegie Center, published a study entitled *China: Threats, Risks, and Challenges to Development*.\textsuperscript{45} This book presented complex and integral interdisciplinary research that correctly identified all the major risks facing China as it developed and it analyzed such risks from the point of view of Russian national interests. Kramchikhin stated that the authors’ conclusions of these books arguably may be connected to some commercial or political interests of certain financial groups in Russia and China but he never further openly elaborated this issue. Notwithstanding the weakness of Khramchikhin’s arguments, he correctly pointed out that the lack of transparency in the research grant system enabled—and still enables—vested political and financial interests to influence the conclusions. This makes such conclusions unreliable, notwithstanding the correctness of the methodology matrix or the objectivity/subjectivity of the arguments cited. Therein possibly lies the reason for the dearth of complex research in analyzing the rise of China vis-à-vis Russian national and state interests as compared to international research that has already analyzed this problem in regard to Europe and America. This type of research did not begin to appear in Russia until 2013–14. Among this new wave should be mentioned another book by Vladimir Portiakov,\textsuperscript{46} which combines historical and economic analyses of China’s development during the last ten years in view of China’s evolving possibilities to act as a responsible global power, and also two books edited by Alexei Voskressenski that place China’s recent development and rise in an international methodological framework of controlled focused comparisons and give it a global and regional context.\textsuperscript{47} However, the influence of this new wave of interdisciplinary and integral literature on the post-Soviet Russian research community as well as on its diplomatic and political practitioners is still to come.
Notes


2. Vassili Alexeev, *Nauka o Vostoke* (Science of the Orient) (Moscow: Nauka, 1982), p. 120.


14. *Ideologicheskiy Kurs KPK na Sovremennom Etape Provedeniya Reform* (The Ideological Course of the CCP on the Modern Stage of Reforms) (Moscow: Institut Dal’nego Vostoka, 2000); Leonard Perelomov, *Konfutsianstvo i Sovremennii Strategicheskii Kurs KNR* (Confucianism and the Modern Strategic Line of the PRC) (Moscow: School of World Politics, Moscow State University, 2007).
22. Yuri Galenovich, *Novoye Litso Kitaya* (The New Face of China) (Moscow:


25. Petr Ivanov, Ocherki Istorii Taiwania. Sovremennii Taiwan (Sketches of Taiwan’s History: Modern Taiwan) (Irkutsk: Irkutskoye Izdatel’stvo, 1994); Leonid Gudoshnikov and Konstantin Kokarev, Politicheskaya Sistema Taiwania (Taiwan’s Political System) (Moscow: Komarm, 1999).

26. Yevgeni Batchaev, Pravovoe Regulirovaniye Deyatel’nosti Politicheskikh Partii na Taiwane (Juridical Regulation of the Activities of the Political Parties on Taiwan) (Moscow: Institut Gosudarstva i Prava RAN, 2003); Leonid Gudoshnikov, comp. and ed., Mnogopartiinost’ na Taiwane (Taiwan’s Multiparty System) (Moscow: Institut Dal’nego Vostoka, 1999).

27. Alexander Larin, Dva Prezidenta, ili Put’ Taiwania k Demokratii (Two Presidents, or Taiwan’s Way to Democracy) (Moscow: Academia, 2000); Andrei Ostrovskii, Taiwan Nakanune 21 Veka (Taiwan on the Eve of the Twenty-first Century) (Moscow: Vostochnaya literatura, 1999).


29. Problemy Modernizatsii Taiwania (Taiwan’s Modernization Problems) (Moscow: Institut Dal’nego Vostoka, 2001); Sovremennii Taiwan (Modern Taiwan) (Moscow: Institut Dal’nego Vostoka, 2005–2012).

30. Kak Upravliayetsia Kitai: Evolutsiya Vlast’nikh Struktur v Kontse XX–Nachale XXI Veka (How China is Governed: Evolution of Power Structures at the End of the Twentieth Century and the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century) (Moscow: Pamiatniki Istoricheskoi Misli, 2004); Konstantin Kokarev, Politicheskii Rezhim i Modernizatsiya Kitaya (Political Regime and China’s Modernization) (Moscow: Institut Dal’nego Vostoka, 2004);
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40. Alexei Voskressenski, ed., *Kitai v Morovoi Politike* (China in World


44. Ibid., ch. 2.


THE METAMORPHOSIS OF TIANXIAN PEI
Local Opera Under the Revolution (1949–1956)

WILT L. IDEMA

A regional theater of the countryside of the Anqing area, Huangmei Opera became popular all over China along with the great success of the play and the movie Tianxian Pei天仙配 (Married to a Heavenly Immortal) in the 1950s.

Through the case of Married to a Heavenly Immortal, Idema illustrates the complicated process of rewriting and revising the play/movie in the context of a rapidly changing cultural and ideological climate during the Communist theater reform movement. As a result, the traditional theme of filial piety was turned into class struggle and the pursuit of free love. The book is enriched by a full translation of a traditional version of the play and a revised one in the 1950s, as well as selected articles by scriptwriters, directors, performers, and critics. These primary sources allow readers to gain access to inside views of the contemporaries and their political and artistic concerns.

This book contributes substantially to the current scholarship on traditional Chinese opera, as well as studies on Chinese theater and operatic movies in the early years of the People's Republic of China.

Wilt L. Idema is a pioneering scholar and translator of Chinese literature, especially noncanonical texts of drama, fiction, poetry, and prose. He is Research Professor of Chinese Literature at Harvard University.
Michel Bonnin · Translated by Krystyna Horko

A comprehensive, distinctive exploration of the rustication movement in China, which had left indelible marks in a generation and the modern Chinese history as a whole. The book provides a comprehensive account of the critical movement during which seventeen million young “educated” city-dwellers were supposed to transform themselves into peasants, potentially for life. Bonnin closely examines the Chinese leadership’s motivations and the methods that they used over time to implement their objectives, as well as the everyday lives of those young people in the countryside, their difficulties, their doubts, their resistance and, ultimately, their revolt.

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