

The thought of community with a shared future for mankind and the construction of China's international political economy

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Abstract

Purpose – Central to this paper, Western international political economy cannot well explain China's peaceful development and its political and economic ties with the outside world, and it is even more difficult to reflect the characteristics of the times that the great changes unseen in a century and socialism with Chinese characteristics have entered into a new era, which are synchronously intertwined and mutually agitated. Constructing China's international political economy not only emphasizes the Chinese perspective, Chinese discourse and Chinese narrative but also examines the development trend and major problems facing the world from the height of world history and applies the position, viewpoints and methods of Marxist historical materialism to observe the times, interpret the times and lead the times.

Design/methodology/approach – Looking back at the development of China's international political economy, from introducing Western international political economy to increasingly emphasizing the Chinese perspective, Chinese discourse and Chinese narrative, we analyze the distinctive features of China's international political economy from Western international political economy.

Findings – The thought of community with a shared future for mankind is the latest development and concentrated embodiment of Marxist thought on world history in the 21st century, which gives China's international political economy a distinctive epochal, scientific and practical character, stipulates the research stance and fundamental purpose, establishes the research theme and main line and expands the research space for the construction of Chinese international political economy.

Originality/value – The construction of China's international political economy is not only to create a "Chinese school" of international relations but more importantly to construct a discourse and academic system of China's international political economy that can understand and grasp the changes in the world, the times and history, providing academic support for in-depth thinking and answering the question of "What is wrong with the world? What should we do?" and contributing Chinese wisdom.

Keywords Community with a shared future for mankind, International political economy, Autonomous knowledge system

Paper type Translated paper

Constructing China's own knowledge system is the hope and request of General Secretary Xi Jinping to philosophical and social science workers. Since the reform and opening up, the development of China's international political economy has started from the introduction and digestion of the theoretical achievements of Western international political economy, and has gradually grown from nothing to something, from small to large in the process of the deep integration and development between China and the world. However, Western international



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political economy is more concerned with the political and economic relations between Western countries and the outside world, and its research has a relatively obvious tendency of Western-centrism, which cannot well explain China's peaceful development and its political and economic relations with the outside world. It is even more difficult to reflect the characteristics of the times that the great changes unseen in a century and socialism with Chinese characteristics have entered into a new era, which are synchronously intertwined and mutually agitated. Only by constructing China's international political economy based on the actual changes in contemporary China and the world can it reflect the profound changes in the course of world history and more clearly demonstrate China's understanding and propositions on correctly understanding and handling relations with the outside world from the general trend of human development, the general pattern of changes in the world and the general history of China's development.

1. Distinctive features of China's international political economy distinguishing from western international political economy

The world today is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century. The deepening of world multipolarity, economic globalization, social informatization and cultural diversity have brought profound changes to the international political and economic landscape formed after Second World War. As we enter the twenty-first century, changes in the global governance system and international order are accelerating. In particular, under the impact of the global financial crisis in 2008 and the COVID-19 epidemic in 2020, the instability and uncertainty of great changes have become increasingly prominent, and the internationalization of international politics and the politicization of international economy have made the relationship between politics and economy closer than ever before. Whether it is ignoring the changes in political factors and exploring economic efficiency only within the established international power structure and political framework, or ignoring the role of economic factors and studying the international system only from the perspective of politics and power struggles, both have become increasingly remote from reality. Only through an in-depth understanding of the mechanism of interaction between politics and economics at the international level can we accurately grasp the contradictory movements of the international situation and the evolutionary trends of world history, and promote peace, stability and prosperous development in the world.

In the 1970s, international political economy, which is dedicated to breaking down the disciplinary boundaries between political science and economics in order to explore the correlation between politics (the state) and economics (the market) in international relations, began to emerge in Western academia. In the course of more than 50 years of development so far, the western international political economy has gone through three major changes. 1970s and 1980s, around the decline of U.S. hegemony and the transformation of the world economy, the "first generation" of scholars strive to seek the correlation between politics (state) and economy (market) in international relations. The interdependence theory focuses on the cooperation and mutual constraints between countries in the international economy; the hegemonic stability theory focuses on the influence of hegemonic countries on the stability of the international political and economic system and its distribution of power; the dependency theory and the world-system theory focus on the inequality of the international political and economic system; and the international mechanism theory focuses on the role of interstate coordinating mechanisms such as international organizations. In the 1990s, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union pushed forward the process of economic globalization, and the "second generation" of scholars focused their research on the connection between domestic politics and the international political economy system. If the "first generation" scholars put more emphasis on the "depth of thought", then the "second generation" scholars put more emphasis on the "normalization of methods". They began to borrow the theories and quantitative research methods of neoclassical economics, and

integrated comparative political economy and international political economy into a unified analytical framework to construct “Open Economic Politics” (OEP). After the 2008 world financial crisis, the “third generation” of scholars began to diverge in their reflections on the crisis and the transformation in the world political economy, with differences in their understanding of “whether international political economy is political science, economics, or political economy” and “whether international political economy is American, British, or global” (Wang, 2009, 2021).

In general, Western international political economy has gradually developed in the process of answering new problems brought about by international monetary reform, international trade and investment activities led by the United States and other Western countries since the 1970s, so it is more about discussing the political and economic relations between Western countries and the outside world. Its research has a relatively obvious tendency of Western-centrism and lacks sufficient attention to the non-Western world. Under the new situation that emerging market countries and developing countries have become the main contributors to global economic growth, and in the context of increasingly multipolar world politics and diversified world economy, it has become increasingly difficult to reflect the rich connotation, the characteristics of The Times and the historical trend of the great changes that have not been seen in a century. Many scholars are concerned about the phenomenon of “China’s absence” in the study of Western international political economy (Wang, 2006; Cha, 2006; Song, 2011; Xu, 2020). Keohane (2009), one of the representative figures of Western international political economy research, has also said that without the study of the China issue, international political economy will become a Hamlet without the prince.

More importantly, the development of Western international political economy more and more clearly regards state autonomy as the logical starting point for analysis. They believe that the state is an actor that can make decisions independently of the economy and society, but they have not given a satisfactory answer to the question of where the autonomy of the state comes from and how to improve it [1] (Acemoglu *et al.*, 2005). This reflects one of the fundamental defects of the Western state theory, that is, it can only see the antagonism between the state and the society, and therefore only studies the contradictory conflict between the state and the market in the sense of the antagonism between politics and economy. In fact, politics, as a superstructure, is ultimately determined by the economic foundation, and there are often more profound economic roots hidden behind political activities. According to Marxist historical materialism, the state does not always exist, but appears after society has been divided into different classes, arising out of society but claiming to be above it and increasingly alienated from it (Marx and Engels, 2009a). This means that the nature and behavior of the state should be understood not only in terms of the antagonism between the state and society, that is, the state is dynamic and can use all kinds of policies and coercive power to influence economic and social life, but also in terms of the unity between the state and society, that is, the state, as a superstructure, represents the interests of the ruling class and embodies the will of the ruling class. The position of the ruling class in social production determines the economic base of the state. Therefore, the study of the correlation between politics (state) and economy (market) should not only see the antagonistic side of the two, that is, the counteraction of political activities to the economic base, but also the unifying side of the two, that is, the determining role of the economic base on political activities, so as to understand the mechanism of the interaction of politics and economy at the international level in the sense that the state and the market are both antagonistic and unifying.

Entering into the 21st century, it has increasingly become a consensus among scholars to promote the construction of China’s international political economy with Chinese perspectives, Chinese discourse and Chinese narratives. However, many studies still base their perceptions of the nature, dynamics and developmental evolution of the international political economy system on Western international political economy theories. General Secretary Xi Jinping clearly pointed out that “although the era in which we live has undergone tremendous and profound changes compared with the era in which Marx lived, we are still in

the historical era indicated by Marxism from the perspective of the 500 years of world socialism” (Xi, 2017a, b). In this regard, Marxist world history thought not only profoundly reveals the formation, characteristics, essence and development trend of world history, but also links the future destiny of human society with the historical mission of the proletariat, and provides scientific guidance for people to grasp the general trend of history while exerting their initiative to seize the historical opportunity to win the historical initiative. Therefore, China’s international political economy should utilize the position, viewpoints and methods of the Marxist concept of material history to observe, interpret and lead the times. Based on China’s practice but with a global outlook, it should systematically summarize China’s original theories and successful experiences that have profoundly changed the course of world history while promoting the innovative development of Marxism, so as to deepen its understanding of the laws and regulations governing the profound and complex changes in capitalism and international political and economic relations. It will scientifically grasp the new characteristics and trends of the development of the present era and provide academic support for the correct understanding and handling of China’s relations with the outside world.

Specifically, the distinctive features of China’s international political economy that distinguish it from Western international political economy are mainly reflected in the following: First, the development of the productive forces is regarded as the ultimate decisive force determining the formation of world history and the progress of human society, and it is emphasized that world history is formed in the process of the establishment and development of the capitalist mode of production, but that the further development of world history does not belong to capitalism. China’s international political economy should examine the changing trend of contemporary capitalism and its impact on the international political pattern, international economic pattern and the change of the international system from the contradictory movement of the productive forces and the relations of production, and the economic base and the superstructure, and understand the essence, behavior and impact of the state from the perspective of the state and the society being both antagonistic and unified. Second, from the development of The Times to grasp the long-term coexistence and competition between socialism and capitalism of the historical process and power comparison situation. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized that “we are still in the historical era indicated by Marxism”, that is, the era of transition from capitalism to socialism. Although the overall pattern of “strong capital and weak society” has not changed, the historical evolution of the two ideologies and social systems of socialism and capitalism, as well as their rivalry, has undergone a major shift in favor of socialism. China is leading and shaping socialism in the twenty-first century, and is pushing for a shift from capitalist-led globalization to socialist-led globalization. China’s international political economy should elucidate major issues such as where China has come from and where it is going, what kind of world China is promoting, and how a developing China can get along with the world from the dialectical unity of the essence and characteristics of the times. Third, it should focus on the dynamic nature of world interaction. With different countries and nations form universal ties through world interaction, the adaptation of relations of production to the requirements of the level of development of productive forces does not necessarily take the form of a direct correspondence within an isolated country or nation, but rather may take the form of a dynamic choice through interaction, so that the productive forces (or relations of production) of one country and nation correspond to those of another. Therefore, the development of each country and nation depends not only on its own historical characteristics, but is also influenced and constrained by the world development trend. China’s international political economy should start from the intrinsic consistency between China’s development and the world’s development trend, and clarify that firm historical self-confidence and enhanced historical initiative are the success codes for the Communist Party of China to dare to struggle and be good at struggling, and to keep moving from victory to new victory.

2. The thought of a community with a shared future for mankind is the latest development of Marxist world history thought

Marxist world history thought is a powerful theoretical weapon for revealing the essence of the times, grasping the characteristics of the times, and leading the trend of the times. In his speech at the conference commemorating the 200th anniversary of Marx's birth, General Secretary Xi Jinping, while emphasizing the vastness and depth of Marxist thought and theory, outlined in nine aspects the thought and theory that should be key to the study and practice of Marxism, one of which is the Marxist thought on world history (Xi, 2018).

Historically, although interactions between different peoples and countries began with long-distance trade in the 10th century A.D., this trade was based on the feudal mode of production and merely complemented and regulated the self-sufficient economy. It was not until the discovery of geography at the end of the 15th century that formerly isolated countries or societies were truly linked together by capitalist colonial expansion, thus forming the international system [2] (Marx and Engels, 2009b). Marx and Engels founded the historical materialism, which for the first-time placed capitalism in the course of human history to examine the nature, characteristics and historical trends of the capitalist era, and revealed the general laws of human social development and the special laws of movement of capitalist society, thus scientifically clarifying that world history did not always exist. It is the result of the universal association of formerly isolated nations and states formed by the capitalist mode of production in the process of its worldwide expansion. The exploitation, oppression and enslavement of colonial countries by master countries are the main contents and characteristics of the international political and economic system in the capitalist era. The contradiction between the socialization of production inherent in capitalism and the capitalist private possession of the means of production determines the law of historical development and the general trend that capitalism will inevitably be replaced by socialism, and points out the road to freedom and liberation for all mankind.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, capitalism gradually moved towards monopoly in the process of concentration of production and capital, and the struggle for colonies among capitalist countries became increasingly intense. Lenin saw not only the exploitation and plunder of the colonized countries by the sovereign states, but also the competition, conflict and confrontation between the sovereign states in order to redivide the colonies and redraw their spheres of influence, thus pointing out that "the bourgeoisie has been transformed from an ascending, advanced class into a descending, declining, intrinsically dead, reactionary class" (Lenin, 2009). The unevenness of capitalism's development determines that socialism cannot triumph in all countries at once, but will "first triumph in a few or even in a single capitalist country" (Lenin, 2012). This was Lenin's original contribution to the Marxist idea of world history, which promoted the great leap from theory to practice of socialism. After the October Revolution, world history entered the era of transition from capitalism to socialism. Since then, the Soviet Union and China have each established the world's first socialist country and the world's largest socialist country, which not only changed the face of the socialist countries and the destiny of their people, but also led to the national liberation movement of the world's oppressed peoples against imperialism and colonialism. Accordingly, the long-term coexistence, competition and cooperation between the two social systems have become the basic features of the transition from capitalism to socialism, profoundly influencing the structure, pattern, contradictions and conflicts, as well as the development and evolution of the international political and economic system in many political, economic, cultural and social aspects, and determining the future destiny of human society.

China's revolution, construction and reform have profoundly influenced the course of world history, and have also made important contributions to the innovation and development of Marxist thinking on world history. As General Secretary Xi Jinping said: "Marxism has profoundly changed China, and China has greatly enriched and developed Marxism" (Xi, 2022). To summarize, the original contribution of the Communist Party of China to Marxist world history thought in the 20th century mainly include three theoretical achievements: First,

the understanding of the situation of the world revolution and the direction of world history after the October Revolution led to the formation of the idea that “the Chinese revolution is part of the world revolution”. It was made clear that the historical process of the Chinese revolution should be divided into two steps: the new democratic revolution and the socialist revolution, thus answering a series of interrelated questions about the relationship between the socialist revolution and the world revolution, the nature and tasks of the Chinese revolution, and the world significance of the Chinese revolution, and opening up the road of innovation and development of Marxism by combining its basic principles with the concrete realities of China. Secondly, the idea of the “middle ground” and the “division of the world into three worlds” has been formed out of an understanding of the evolution of the world pattern after the victory in the Second World War, the re-establishment of the international order, and China’s position and role in the world’s politics and economy. It has firmly opposed hegemonism, colonialism and racism, and has taken a path of independence and autonomy that does not involve dependence on others, does not involve plundering others, and will never be a hegemon. Thirdly, with an understanding of the characteristics of The Times and the trend of development after the world entered a multi-tiered pattern after the Cold War, the idea of “peace and development” became the theme of The Times, thus giving full play to the advantages of the socialist system, absorbing the fine achievements of all human civilizations, including capitalism, and forging a socialist path with Chinese characteristics that guides China’s prosperity and development. To make socialism full of strong vitality and vitality, and in the process of coexistence and struggle with capitalism continue to develop and grow.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, although the overall pattern of “strong capital and weak society” has not changed, the rapid progress of capitalism has come to an abrupt end after the 2008 world financial crisis, and the great changes in the world that have not been seen in a century have accelerated, and the changes in the world, the changes in The Times, and the changes in history are unfolding in an unprecedented way. General Secretary Xi Jinping has formed the idea of building the community with a shared future for mankind on the basis of integrating the great changes unseen in a century and overall strategy for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, contributing Chinese wisdom and Chinese power to lead the world’s interactions in the 21st century.

First, the thought of the community with a shared future for mankind advocates adapting to and guiding economic globalization in a way that bases development on mutual benefit and win-win situations rather than on exploitation and plunder. Historically, economic globalization was formed in the course of the establishment and development of the capitalist mode of production, and the imbalance of capitalist development has determined that economic globalization has both positive and negative effects on developed capitalist countries and developing countries. By engaging in protectionism and avoiding globalization, we seem to be avoiding the negative effects of economic globalization, but we are also giving up the positive effects of economic globalization. The only correct choice is to face it positively, adapt to and guide economic globalization, and eliminate its negative effects. The economic globalization, as advocated by the idea of a community with a shared future for mankind, is based on mutual respect and equal consultation, with the fundamental purpose of win-win cooperation and shared construction, expanding international cooperation by finding points of convergence between the interests of all countries, and tapping into the kinetic energy of development by means of innovative development methods. The inclusiveness of development should be enhanced so that economic globalization can better benefit every country and every nation.

Secondly, the thought of the community with a shared future for mankind upholds the concept of global governance featuring extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, respects cultural diversity, promotes and maintains multipolarity in the world, and resolutely opposes hegemonism and power politics. The essence of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, put forward by China in the 1950s, is sovereign equality, opposition to imperialism, hegemony and colonialism, and the promotion of the establishment of just and

reasonable international relations. While the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence focus on creating a favorable external environment for national independent development in the context of the cold war, the idea of a community with a shared future for mankind focuses on the common destiny of humankind and emphasizes the building of a new type of international relations in order to solve the global problems faced by humankind in common. It not only emphasizes sovereign equality and promotes the democratization of international relations, but also aims to make the global governance system better reflect the changes in the international landscape and more balanced in reflecting the will and interests of the majority of countries, especially emerging market countries and developing countries. A new type of international relations should be forged with win-win cooperation at its core and promote common development through extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits.

Thirdly, the thought of community with a shared future for mankind attaches importance to the leading role of innovation in development, conforms to the requirements of social informatization with open innovation, and advocates sustainable development. "Development is the master key to solving all problems" (Xi, 2017a, b), although many international conflicts can be attributed to geopolitical, power, religion, ethnic and other factors at the international political level, the resolution of international conflicts ultimately depends on development. At present, a new round of scientific and technological revolution and industrial change is reconstructing the global innovation map, reshaping the global economic structure, bringing radical changes to global development and human production and life. Innovation is the first driving force, and a country that can master the autonomy of innovation is bound to grasp the initiative of development. General Secretary Xi Jinping attaches great importance to independent innovation, but he especially emphasized that "Independent innovation should be pursued in an open environment, rather than behind closed doors. We should gather energy and strength from every part of the world" (Xi, 2020a). Only by building a win-win partnership under the thought of community with a shared future for mankind can we break down the barriers to the flow of knowledge, technology, talents and other innovation factors, respond to the requirements of the further development of social informatization, and jointly deal with the common challenges of mankind, such as future development, food security, energy security, human health, climate change, etc., so as to make science and technology work for the people of the world, and bring a new impetus to the global development. Only by actively carrying out exchanges and cooperation in the field of ecological civilization under the conditions of openness and innovation, coordinating the relationship between mankind's own development and the development of nature through the advancement of information science and technology and green science and technology, and promoting the sharing of fruits can we ultimately solve the problem of mankind's sustainable development. As General Secretary Xi Jinping said: "Development is meaningful only when it is inclusive and sustainable" (Xi, 2020b).

3. The thought of the community with a shared future for mankind opens up a new realm of China's international political economy

The great changes unseen in a century are not only an era of worldwide exchanges of ideas and cultures, but also an era of brilliant ideas and great theories. The construction of China's international political economy is not only to create a "Chinese school" of international relations, but more importantly to be able to examine the development trend and major issues facing the world today from the height of world history, so as to stand on the right side of history. It constructs the discourse system and academic system of China's international political economy to understand and grasp the changes of the world, The Times and the history. It will provide academic support and contribute Chinese wisdom to the in-depth reflection and answer to the question of the times: What's the world coming to, and what should we do about it?

Insisting on promoting the building of a community with a shared future for mankind is an important element of Xi Jinping's foreign affairs thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, and an important part of Xi Jinping's thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, which embodies China's global vision, world-mindedness and great-power commitment to unify its own development with that of the world. The thought of the community with a shared future for mankind has given Chinese international political economy a distinctive epochal, scientific and practical character, which is not only an important achievement of observing, interpreting and leading the times with Marxism, but also a concrete embodiment of promoting the innovation and development of Marxism with Chinese practice, and opens up a new realm for the construction of Chinese international political economy.

First, the thought of the community with a shared future for mankind is the latest development and centralized manifestation of Marxist world history thought in the twenty-first century. Historically, the capitalist mode of production, while promoting a greater degree of universal interaction in the world, has also given rise to many new global problems in the political, economic, cultural and ecological spheres, making the international community of the twenty-first century face deficits in governance, trust, peace and development. Today, when the interconnectedness and interdependence of all countries in the world have deepened to an unprecedented extent, these problems can no longer be effectively analyzed and solved in the original Western-centered international order, but rather, we have to uphold the worldview and methodology of dialectical and historical materialism, and recognize and understand the wholeness and coherence of the world's interactions in the contradictory movements of the economic base and the superstructure. The development of Marxism in the 19th and 20th centuries has led to an in-depth critical study of international relations under the dominance and control of the capitalist mode of production, deepening our understanding of the contradictory movements of the international system and their socio-economic consequences. As the latest development and concentrated embodiment of Marxist world history thought in the 21st century, the thought of a community with a shared future for mankind further follows and applies Marxist world history view to constructively explain the great changes unseen in a century. To create new opportunities in the midst of crises and open new situations in the midst of changes, we will provide ideas and programs for solving the global problems common to mankind and constructing a more reasonable international political and economic order. This provides the research position and fundamental purpose for the construction of China's international political economy, and provides the fundamental adherence to the world outlook and methodology.

Secondly, the thought of a community with a shared future for mankind is based on the actual changes in China's relations with the world, reflecting the characteristics of The Times that have not been seen in a century. Socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, which is not only a new historical juncture in China's development, but also a new chapter in the world socialist movement. In the process of increasingly stepping into the center of the world stage, China has transformed itself from a passive recipient of the international political and economic order in the past to an active participant, proactive builder and outstanding contributor. The profound changes in China's relationship with the world are fundamentally reconfiguring the space and pattern of coexistence between socialism and capitalism, and the coexistence and competition between the two systems is the key to influencing the direction of the great change that has not been seen in a century. The topic of The Times is the driving force of theoretical innovation. The thought of the community with a shared future for mankind focuses not only on realizing the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, but also on continuously revitalizing the vitality of socialism so as to make Chinese contributions to world peace and development. This lays a realistic foundation for the construction of China's international political economy and establishes a more distinctive research theme and main line.

Thirdly, the thought of a community with a shared future for mankind upholds the concept of global governance featuring extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, and aims to make the global governance system more just and equitable. It responds to the common aspiration of people around the world for peace, development, cooperation and win-win results, and is committed to building an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world that enjoys lasting peace, universal security and common prosperity. In terms of research vision, it greatly exceeds the international distribution of wealth and power concerned by the Western international political economy, reflects the common value pursuit of human society, and conforms to the fundamental interests of people all over the world. In order to cope with the global problems commonly faced by human society, it is necessary to rethink a series of major theoretical and practical issues, such as globalization and anti-globalization, globalization and nationalization, globalization and civilization evolution, globalization and capitalism, globalization and socialism, globalization and hegemony, globalization and financial crisis, globalization and the development of underdeveloped countries, etc., guided by the thought of a community with a shared future for mankind. This has broadened the research space, deepened the theoretical connotation and enriched the content of research for the construction of China's international political economy.

Notes

1. Acemoglu *et al.* (2005) attempts to explore the sources of state capacity in terms of games between different interest groups under democratic politics, but the author also recognizes that his theory cannot answer how members of society have solved collective action problems and thus formed interest groups.
2. Marx said: "If in the sixteenth century, and partly until the seventeenth century, the sudden expansion of commerce and the formation of a new world market had an overwhelming effect on the decline of the old mode of production and the rise of the capitalist mode of production, this in turn occurred on the basis of the capitalist mode of production already in place."

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