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Foreign experts in the People's Republic of China: an historical review from the perspectives of modernization and globalization (1949-1966)

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ABSTRACT

In the history of the People's Republic of China we see two waves of foreign experts who contributed to China's becoming a self-reliant, modern industrialized country. The first wave took place in the 1950s when experts from the Soviet Union and other Eastern Europe countries were dispatched to China. The second wave, beginning in the 1960s, was mainly driven by experts, workers and technicians from the Western capitalist countries. In the early days of the P. R. C, the arrival of a large number of Soviet experts precipitated the systems established by the CCP Central Committee and the State Council in order to manage issues related to the foreign experts. Under the leadership of a bureau within the State Council that was responsible for these issues, the system incorporated government organizations both at the central and local levels, including those established by Central ministries and commissions. Under the principle of "equal treatment," the Chinese government made policies concerning payment and benefits for experts from capitalist countries, using as reference the standards observed in the Soviet Union and other East European countries in the mid-1950s. From the time when Soviet and East European experts departed China to 1966, the Chinese government still adhered to the principles of "seeking common ground" and "different approaches towards internal and external issues," respectively. The approach of the Chinese government was largely cost efficient.

KEYWORDS

Foreign experts;
modernization; economic
rationality

Globalization became ever faster since the Age of Exploration and the Industrial Revolution. China, the so-called enigmatic land of the East, became a magnet for many Westerners. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the Jesuits and other Western missionaries arrived, bringing science, technologies, and new religions. Some even became officials and royal advisors in China. Much later, during the Republic Period, advisors from Germany, the Soviet Union, the U.S.A, and Japan introduced modern military technologies, the spirit of science and new state-management ideas. During the great Chinese revolution, some "red international friends" shuttled between Yan'an and the West, broadcasting the Chinese revolution to the outside world. Between the founding of the P.R.C. in 1949 and July 8, 1983, when Deng Xiaoping

made the speech known as “Use the Intellectual Resources of Other Countries and Open Wider to the Outside World” (also called “the Eighth of July Speech”, or “Qiba tanhua”), China witnessed two waves of foreigners, who worked as advisors, experts, and teachers. The first wave took place in the 1950s when the Soviet Union and other East European countries dispatched their nationals to China to fulfill their commitments to China, especially certain aid projects.¹ The second wave came after the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s. Most foreigners arriving in China subsequently came from Western capitalist countries. They worked either as technicians or language experts. They were few in number, partly due to the “iron curtain” of the Cold War, but they still helped maintain links between China and the outside world. At a time when China largely stayed outside of the intensifying phenomenon of globalization, these foreigners in China, coming from different cultural backgrounds and social systems and having different faiths, became the precursors of large-scale trans-border movements of people into China after the Reform and Opening-up.

Transnational history centers on transnational flows of technology, people, capital and ideas and their influences on politics, economy, society and culture of a given country. From an analytical perspective, studies of the global network of those transnational factors, their trans-regional flows and dissemination, as well as their interactions, tend to challenge and even negate such concepts as “civilization,” “nation,” and “state” as usually encountered in traditional historiography. Therefore, historians began to shift attention to the flow, dissemination, and networking of these transnational factors, but this risked neglecting local factors, in which state, government, and political parties play important roles.² Historians questioned teleology, progressiveness, and modernity; they were critical of the modernization paradigm that imposes a dominant discourse on history. The end was to throw out the baby with the bathwater by unintentionally jettisoning modernization as an objective historical process – a process replete with arguments and struggles experienced by numerous historical actors. Such a tendency compelled Georg G. Iggers to make the following appeal: although the modernization paradigm may be problematic in non-Western societies, all societies adopted some aspects of the modernity of the West. They did not choose westernization wholesale, but incorporated some elements of Western modernity into their own culture.³ State and such state-related concepts as institutions, organizations, mechanisms, and information are not only historical terms, but are objective things to be found in the world.

But how do they actually influence trans-national processes? To interrogate this question is crucial both to examining the “localization” question in trans-national history studies and in reconstructing an objective global history. It is also conducive to knowing how the above-mentioned political forces and institutions have exploited and reshaped trans-national phenomena in pursuit of “modernization.”⁴

¹On the history of experts from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, see Shen Zhijia, *Sulian zhuanjia zai Zhongguo (1948–1960)*; and Zhang Baichun, Yao Fang, Zhang Jiuchun, and Jiang Long, *Sulian jishu xiang Zhongguo de zhuanji (1949–1966)*.

²Such “localization” became well studied in the global turn in the history of science; see Fan, “The Global Turn in the History of Science,” 251–256.

³Iggers, *Ershi shiji de lishixue*, 205–206. As for the application of modernization paradigm in Chinese historiography, see Luo Rongqu, *Xiandaihua xinlun*, 127–128; Black, *Xiandaihua de dongli*; and Rozman, *Zhongguo de xiandaihua*.

⁴In the field of political science, Francis Fukuyama examined state building and international order in his book in 2004, which brought such issues like state identity, power and institution back into the discussions of political science and American foreign policy analysis. See Fukuyama, *Guojia jiangou*.

Accepted research on China's management of foreign experts between 1949 and early 1980s largely fall within the history of Sino-Soviet relations or are narratives of Soviet aid to China. Specifically, they have concentrated on the works and lives of Soviet experts in China, but they usually fall short of describing the situation of foreign experts from capitalist countries in the 1960s and 1970s; also they have not sorted out the China's organizational structures and systems of management.⁵ Chinese representatives within that system have paid relatively more attention to institution building and policy implementation with regard to attracting foreign talent *after* Deng's July Eighth Speech; their research into the management of foreign experts before Reform and Opening leave much to be desired. In fact, readers of this historiography may believe that the post-Reform Chinese government adopted an approach from scratch.⁶ Yet we should be asking, What drove the two waves of foreign experts to China before the Reform and Opening? What were their origins, expertise, and numbers? What kind of organizational structure, institutions, and mechanisms were created by the new People's Republic of China to manage them? What were the Chinese salaries and benefits for them – experts who came from different social systems? This article attempts to find answers.

The arrival of two waves of westerners to China

As early as the New Democratic Revolution, the Chinese Communist Party publicly announced that the primary objective of economic development after the victory of the Chinese Revolution was to realize industrialization. In the 1954 report to the CCP's Seventh National Congress Mao Zedong declared that "When the political system of New Democracy is won, the Chinese people and their government will have to adopt practical measures in order to build heavy and light industry step by step over a number of years and transform China from an agricultural into an industrial country The task of the Chinese working class is to struggle not only for the establishment of a new democratic state but also for China's industrialization and the modernization of her agriculture".⁷ In 1953, the CCP identified "socialist industrialization" as one of the important objectives for the transitional period. Nevertheless, the Party soon changed its development strategy. On September 23, 1954, Zhou Enlai delivered the "Report on the Work of the Government" to the First Session of the First National People's Congress. In it, he urged that China should establish strong and modernized industry, agriculture, transportation, and national defense ("Four Modernizations" for short). In his view, this was an imperative to eradicate backwardness and poverty in China and realizing the ultimate objective of the revolution.⁸ Zhou's "Four Modernizations" marks

⁵There are two different approaches when it comes to periodizing the history of the management of foreign experts in China. One is based on the development and evolution of Sino-Soviet relations in the 1950s and the other concentrates on the important stages in China's political and economic development. See Shen Zihua, *Sulian zhuanjia zai Zhongguo (1948–1960)*; Zhang Haixing, *Xin Zhongguo zaihua waiguo zhuanjia guanli gongzuoshi yanjiu (1949–1966)*. Solid studies on the evolution of those organizations responsible for foreign experts-related issues and relevant institutional building are rare in China.

⁶Zhongguo guoji rencai jiaoliu yu kaifa yanjiuhui, *Yinjin guowai zhili yanjiu lunwen xuanbian (2007–2009)*; Chen Huabei and Liang Boshu, *Xinshiqi yinzhi shijian yu lilun chuangxin*; Zhongguo guoji rencai jiaoliu yu kaifa yanjiuhui, *Quanmian guanche san'ge daibiao zhongyao sixiang kaichuang yinjin guowai zhili gongzuo xinjunian*.

⁷Mao Zedong, "Lun lianhe zhengfu" (Apr. 24, 1945), 1081.

⁸Zhou Enlai, "Zai quanguo renda yijie yici huiyi shang de zhengfu gongzuo baogao," vol. 11, 302–303.

a watershed in the CCP's evolving understanding on the modernization question. It readjusted the scope and content of "modernization" only later on. The most important change was the identification of "science and culture" as objectives. In January 1956, the CCP Central Committee put forward the slogan of "Making Scientific Advancement" in a meeting concerning the role and duties of intellectuals. Top CCP leaders including Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai viewed science and technology as the crux of "building socialism with more output, higher speed, better quality and less cost" and safeguarding national security as well.⁹ On March 12, 1957, Mao Zedong announced that "we will definitely build a socialist country with modern industry, agriculture and science and culture."¹⁰ After the economic disasters resulting from the "Great Leap Forward" and "People's Commune" in late 1959 and early 1960, Mao reiterated that "building a socialist country used to refer to the modernization of industry, agriculture and science, and culture. Now, we should add the modernization of national defense." He discussed a timetable for the completion of socialist modernization, warning that for "countries like China, to complete the task of building socialism is bound to be an uphill battle. We should fight the urge to set an early timetable for the completion of building socialism."¹¹ Building on that, Zhou Enlai made the following announcement in his "Report on the Work of the Government" for the First Plenary of the Third National People's Congress in December 1964: Our primary economic objective is to "completely realize the modernization of agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology, and to make China one of the economic front-runners in the world."¹²

To realize industrialization and modernization, "learning from abroad" became an imperative, due to China's poverty and technological outdatedness. A logical way to "learn from abroad" was to simply hire foreign experts to work in China. The concept "foreign experts" has both institutional and historical implications. Institutionally, it refers to those professionals employed by Chinese entities who are, or used to be, foreign citizens; they would become part of China's socialist economic development efforts and thus managed by responsible Chinese agencies directly or indirectly.

Historically, the scope of the "foreign expert" category varied according to country origin, types of work, professions, administrative ranks, and the specific institutional channels for entry into China. The arrival of the first wave took place in the 1950s, when China began receiving technology, learning, and products from the Soviet Union – its "socialist big brother." This marked the first influx of foreign learning in the history of the P.R.C. As a result, China employed 12,155 and 821 experts from the Soviet Union and German Democratic Republic, respectively, by June 1960. Broadly speaking, foreign experts in China at the time were largely concentrated in the fields of economy, culture, education, and military. They were ranked differently, that is, as "general advisor," "advisor," and "expert." Generally speaking, they came through three channels. First, according to the "Agreement on the Working Condition of Soviet Experts in China (Guanyu Sulian zhuanjia zai Zhongguo zhi gongzuo tiaojian de xieding)," signed by

⁹Zhang Jing, "Xin Zhongguo xuexi waiguo keji de zhuanxiang 1956–1966," 29–30.

¹⁰Mao Zedong, "Zai Zhongguo gongchandang quanguo xuanchuan gongzuo huiyi shang de jianghua," 379.

¹¹Mao Zedong, "Du Sulian zhengzhi jingjixue jiaokeshu de tanhua (jiexuan)," 116.

¹²Zhou Enlai, "Fazhan guomin jingji de zhuyao renwu," 439.

China and the Soviet Union on March 27, 1950, the Expert Work Office of the State Council suggested the formation of a “Soviet Advisory Group (Sulian guwenzu zhuanjia)” (SAG) led by a Soviet General Advisor. Employed by China’s Foreign Ministry, the members of SAG included advisors (those Soviet experts working for the Central Commission for Political and Legal Affairs, Central Commission for Finance and Economy and Central Commission for Culture and Education), experts (those working as technical tutors in factories and companies or as general designers or designers at relevant government departments) and professors and doctors (teachers in China’s higher education institutions and doctors in hospitals). Second, according to various technical assistance pacts that the Soviet Union signed with China, the Soviet Office of Commercial Representative in China organized “Soviet Technical Assistance Groups (Sulian jishu yuanzhuzu zhuanjia)” (STAG). Their members were recommended by China’s Technical Cooperation Bureau of the Economic Planning Commission and employed by the Ministry of Foreign Trade. Third, some Soviet experts were dispatched to China on an ad hoc basis in order to help China address specific problems like pestilence, insect plagues, and surveying using forest aerial photometry. Based on the suggestion of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, Soviet experts working in China were not called “advisors” after October 1958. Instead, they were addressed simply as “experts.” Correspondingly, the title of “general advisor” was replaced by “leading expert” or “leader of Soviet Expert Group.”

At the beginning of China’s modernization drive, the Soviet Union was China’s major source for technologies. Soviet experts played a great role, if not a decisive one, in improving China’s management system and promoting economic growth. However, the number of Soviet experts and those from East European countries dwindled after the Sino-Soviet split, beginning in 1956. There were only 418 Soviet experts in China by the end of 1960. The number of foreign experts from socialist countries in China further dropped to 8 by about 1962.¹³

After the Sino-Soviet split and the exodus of Soviet experts, the number of joint scientific projects between China and East European countries also plummeted. Ongoing projects in industry and science, including important military projects for nuclear weaponry, missiles, and nuclear-armed submarines, also had to be shelved. Under such circumstances, China had to change its “leaning towards the Soviets” policy in technological cooperation in the early 1960s. Top CCP leaders including Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Liu Shaoqi endorsed a policy that promoted “strengthening scientific exchange and cooperation with Western countries on the basis of independence.” Though China had only established diplomatic relations with eight Western countries before the start of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, it established civilian-level science-exchanges with 15 of them.¹⁴ With the improvement of China’s relations with Western countries, China started to import more equipment from them than from the Soviet Union during the Second Five-Year Plan period. In particular, China imported 84 urgently needed sets of equipment and technologies from ten western countries (Japan, the U.K., France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Sweden, Italy, Switzerland,

¹³Zhang Jing, “Xin Zhongguo xuexi waiguo keji de zhuanxiang 1956–1966,” 31, 35.

¹⁴Zhang Jing, “Zhongmei minjian keji jiaoliu de yuanki shijian yu xushi 1971–1978,” 129–130.

Holland, Belgium, and Austria), covering such areas as petroleum, chemistry, metallurgy, mining, electronics, and sophisticated machines.¹⁵

With the arrival of a large number of Western professionals and increased exchanges in science, trade, and culture between China and its western counterparts, China realized it had too few Chinese trained in Western languages, particularly English and French. This became a hurdle to be overcome. After the founding of the People's Republic, China chose to diplomatically lean towards the socialist camp led by the Soviet Union. Consequently, teaching of English and French was sidelined. During the restructuring of universities and colleges in 1952, most academic English departments were closed or merged with other departments. In addition, no foreign language courses were taught in primary or middle schools, and hours of English class were heavily cut short in senior high schools. After the mid-1950s, China thus faced a serious shortage of new teachers for languages such as English, while Russian instruction was at the same time rapidly expanding. As Liao Chengzhi put it, "our self-imposed restrictions were a waste of time, putting us at a very disadvantage position."¹⁶ After the meeting on intellectuals in 1956, Zhou Enlai proposed that "to make scientific advances we must improve the teaching of foreign languages and ramp up efforts to translate important foreign books."¹⁷ Thereafter, the trend of prioritizing Russian at the cost of European languages started to be reversed. To further strengthen foreign exchanges and facilitate importation of technical equipment, Zhou Enlai and Chen Yi urged that "more efforts should be devoted to the training of cadres with foreign language background." In October 1964, the CCP Central Committee and the State Council endorsed the 'Seven-Year Guideline on Foreign Language Education (Waiyu jiaoyu qi'nian guihua gangyao)," which was drafted jointly by the Ministry of Education and the Foreign Affairs Office of the State Council. According to the Guideline, English was identified as the first foreign language for Chinese students. In addition, the Guideline also stipulated that the ratio of Chinese students learning English to those learning Russian should reach 1: 1 before 1970 and gradually reach 2: 1 after 1970.¹⁸

To address the problem of foreign-language deficiency, the Foreign Affairs Committee of China Cultural Council (FACCCC, Duiwai wenhua lianluo weiyuanhui) started to employ foreign experts in the fields of culture and education to work as foreign language teachers, translators, and experts on international communication in 1961, thanks to the assistance of foreign progressive organizations, sympathetic cultural associations, and certain influential persons friendly to China. China employed 45 foreign nationals from capitalist countries in 1961, involving 19 foreign languages. The numbers increased to 84 and 21, respectively, in 1962. Said employees worked at the Broadcasting Bureau, Xinhua News Agency, Beijing Foreign Languages College, Foreign Trade College, Peking University, Foreign Languages Press, University of International Relations, and China Construction News Press, and other organizations.

¹⁵Niu Jianli, "Ershi shiji liushi niandai qianqi Zhongguo cong xifang guojia yinjin chengtao jishu shebei de yanjiu," 46–47, 50, 53–54.

¹⁶Li Liangyou, Zhang Risheng, and Liu Li, *Zhongguo yingyu jiaoxue shi*, 325–328, 335, 407–408.

¹⁷Zhou Enlai, "Guanyu zhishi fenzi wenti de baogao" (Jan. 14, 1956), 46.

¹⁸Fu Ke, *Zhongguo waiyu jiaoyu shi*, 7–73, 84, 105–106, 111–112, 157–158; and Li Liangyou, Zhang Risheng, and Liu Li, *Zhongguo yingyu jiaoxue shi*, 331–347, 408, 410.

After the Soviet Union and East European countries recalled their experts from China in the 1960s, the Chinese government paid more attention to the issue of inviting foreign experts to work in China. An increasing number of nationals of Western countries came to China to build factories and provide technical services, triggering the second wave of Westerners arriving in China since the founding of the P.R.C. Some neutral countries in the capitalist camp, like Japan, also became important sources for China.

At the time, foreign employees in China included specific experts and general professionals. Such ordinary foreign professionals referred to junior- and medium-grade professionals who may have possessed a certain level of expertise but fell short of the higher standard the government set for senior professionals.¹⁹ The International Department of the CCP Central Committee used to be the major body in China responsible for hiring foreign experts from Western countries. But its role in this regard started to diminish in 1961. Instead, the FACCCC became the major organizer related to hiring foreign employees. Its work was facilitated by foreign, progressive organizations, sympathetic cultural associations and individuals friendly to China; and it gained assistance from Chinese embassies to those countries. Chinese employers could also recommend and screen foreign candidates on their own (with the assistance of individuals of foreign countries), but they had to submit their final candidates to the FACCCC for approval. The State Bureau of Foreign Experts Affairs (SBFEA, *Waiguo zhuanjiaju*) was responsible for receiving employees from Western countries. Apart from the requirement that a foreign employee should be “politically progressive and reliable, friendly to China, and willing to work in China,” the Chinese government did not have any other ideological or party affiliation requirements for potential foreign employees.

Compared with various regulations from the 1950s on employing foreign experts, such regulations in the 1960s broadened the scope. They did not just focus on foreign experts as in 1950s, but also covered junior- and medium-grade foreign professionals as well as technicians. In addition, relevant regulations on foreign employees in 1960s did not categorize foreign countries as “capitalist”, “socialist” or “Asian New Democratic” as in the 1950s. In practice, most of the foreign employees employed by China in the 1960s came from Western countries. For the most part, foreign nationals employed by FACCCC were involved in language-related work.

Foreign engineers and technicians back then were categorized as ordinary professionals; they were either technical instructors or advisers in factory construction. The Foreign Trade Ministry played a prominent role in employing ordinary foreign professionals in the 1960s, including negotiating and signing contracts with these technicians, tackling logistics, ensuring the implementation of the contracts, and coordinating with departments and local authorities concerning basic data, such as their numbers and durations.

During the period between the departure of the Soviet experts and June 1966, China hosted 2,679 foreign experts altogether, in which 1,858 were economic experts and 821 were involved with culture and education. Most came from Western countries and developing countries; those from Europe, North America, and Oceania accounted for

¹⁹Liu Xuezhong, *Waiguo zhuanjia duiwu jianshe*, 2.

87 percent of the total. During the Economic Adjustment Period (1963–1965), China imported some state-of-the-art technologies and equipment, which laid the foundation for such emerging industries in China as chemical fertilizer, fiber, plastics, synthetic detergents, and electronics.²⁰

Work related to foreign experts in China: organizations, institutions, and mechanisms

After the founding of the People's Republic, foreign affairs became extremely important to China's new CCP-led central government. The CCP and the Chinese government did much to bring in transnational factors – the talent, technologies, and equipment. However, the government also had to manage and regulate it. To examine the mechanisms created to do so has become critical to any understanding of the localization of transnational factors in the history of the P.R.C.

The first organization to be responsible after 1949 was the Expert Reception Office (ERO, Zhuanjia zhaodaichu), established in January 1950 under the Government Administration Council (the predecessor of the State Council). In August 1953, ERO was reorganized as the Group for Expert-related Work (GEW, Zhuanjia gongzuo zu). In April 1954, the GEW was further reorganized as the Bureau for Expert-related Work (BEW, Zhuanjia gongzuo ju), which was put under the direct supervision of the State Council in November of the same year. BEW was renamed as State Bureau of Foreign-Expert Affairs (SBFEA, Guowuyuan waiguo zhuanjiaju) in May 1956. Organizations responsible for issues related to foreign experts were established within both the various commissions and ministries of the State Council and the local governments across China in the mid-1950s. An organizational framework on managing issues related to foreign experts emerged as a result; in it the SBFEA was responsible for guiding organizations responsible for foreign expert-related affairs within the various commissions and ministries of the State Council and local governments. Under the principle of “centralized management and shared responsibilities,” the SBFEA was responsible for ensuring the implementation of directives from the CCP Central Committee, State Council, and top leaders like Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai on foreign expert-related issues, drafting regulations on and facilitating intra-government communications on those matters. After the establishment of the Central Foreign Affairs Group (CFAG, Zhongyang waishi xiaozu) in June 1958, the Party's leadership on managing issues related to foreign experts was institutionalized. CFAG became the supreme decision-maker regarding issues related to foreign experts, and the Foreign Affairs Office and the Secretariat of the State Council jointly supervised the SBFEA. Regulations on the hiring of and allowance for foreign experts and other foreign employees had to be endorsed by CFAG before they could be implemented. SBFEA needed to report important issues in its work to the Secretariat and Foreign Affairs Office of the State Council for guidance and approval. Correspondingly, local Foreign Affairs Offices were responsible for managing the issues related to foreign experts at the local level.

Thereafter, institutions and mechanisms for this overall task of management experienced gradual improvement. The aim of relevant institution-building had been to

²⁰Tian Songnian, “1963–1965 nian guomin jingji jixu tiaozheng juece de xingcheng ji shishi,” 27.

improve management efficiency. The primary objective of establishing the BEW, according to Zhou Enlai, was to institutionalize said management. As he put it, “we must put a set of institutions in place with regards to hiring foreign experts, arranging their work and study, and the storing of technical materials, etc. . . . When it comes to managing the issues related to foreign experts, we will only settle for the best results. We must create institutions that will ensure responsibilities.” Under the leadership of the Government Administration Council, the BEW introduced a list of institutions, including those on meetings, planning, and work summaries, asking for permission beforehand and reporting afterwards, inspections, and communications with the Soviet experts. Thanks to these efforts, foreign expert-related work became further routinized, standardized, and institutionalized. After the establishment of the CFAG in 1958, a monolithic decision-making pattern, under which the boundary between the Party and the government largely disappeared, became the order of the day. As an important part of foreign affairs, issues related to foreign experts were put under direct CFAG jurisdiction. In this way, institutions became more than a set of procedures for the operation of their organizations. They also became the vehicle through which the will of the Party was translated into administrative policies.²¹

During the period between the arrival of the Soviet experts and their withdrawal, the Chinese government spared no effort to improve the organizational framework for management and to establish communication mechanisms with the Soviet experts, although provisions for the Soviet experts were not always timely or sufficient. The Chinese side communicated with the Soviet side through a variety of channels, including regular meetings, face-to-face reporting, and translating Chinese policy documents into Russian, etc. For their parts, Soviet advisors and experts shared Soviet experiences with, and proposed advice and suggestions to, the Chinese through face-to-face communication or official letters. On the occasion of holidays, leaders of commissions and ministries of the State Council and top local leaders either visited the leader of the Soviet Expert Group or SEG representatives or received them at a banquet. Increasing these personal communications with Soviet experts turned out to be effective. In 1956, the SBFEA issued a notice, detailing how its Chinese clerks should regularly visit the Soviet experts, including expense guidelines for gifts to be presented to the Soviet experts and their children. Such communications strengthened the bond between the Chinese and the Soviets. For example, Ji Tingxie, former Chief of Staff of the Chinese Naval Air Force, recalled that he was very close to particular Soviet experts. He often visited them, and they paid him visits in return. Expenses occurred from having the experts for dinner were covered by the Chinese government, but the Soviet experts used their own wages to treat Ji in return.²² Such courtesy visits were not only conducive to improving understanding and strengthening friendships between the Chinese and the Soviets, but it was also an important to deliberate on policies and to garner opinions from both sides.²³ Nevertheless, in the second half of 1950s such communications

²¹Jing Yuejin, Chen Mingming, and Xiao Bin, *Dangdai Zhongguo zhengfu yu zhengzhi*, 23; “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu chengli caijing zhengfa waishi kexue wenjiao gexiaozu de tongzhi” (June 10, 1958), 150–151.

²²The memoirs of Ji Tingxie, refer to Shen Zhihua’s *Sulian zhuanjia zai Zhongguo (1948–1960)*, 193.

²³Yang Jianfeng, “Sulian zhuanjia zai Zhongguo,” 11; and Shen Zhihua, “Dui zaihua Sulian zhuanjia wenti de lishi kaocha,” 29.

started being dominated by ideological, political, and policy contents instead of professional work.

China's management became increasingly routinized and institutionalized, a development congruent with the overall state-building process at the time. In keeping with the emergence of a highly centralized governance dominated by the CCP, the CCP central committee increasingly shaped the evolution of organizations, institutions, and mechanisms having to do with the foreign experts. Such a development was indicative of the Party's efforts to translate its will into policies, but it did not imply that the Party would ignore practical and economic realities. The Party became the ultimate authority to decide the pace and trajectory of developments concerning foreign experts and at the same time was the decision maker that regulated organizational changes in relevant departments. Meanwhile, the Party led the relevant organizations through instructions and directives, which were inherently intrusive. Efforts to foster a charismatic authority within the Party naturally heavily impacted in the work of the foreign experts. Chinese employees of the overseeing organizations, and later the foreign experts themselves, became targets of political indoctrination and participants of mass movements. Such a development, as believed by some people at the time, was necessary for foreign experts to better serve China's state-building efforts.²⁴ This mindset did change by the mid-1960s, however. Organizations responsible for managing the relevant issues did what they could to shield foreign experts from the numerous mass movements, but their efforts brought only limited success.²⁵

Employee benefits and political life of foreign experts in China

In the early days of the People's Republic, apart from some employed Soviet experts, there were also several dozens of Westerners working for the Central Government. They mostly worked as experts, researchers, or journalists. Some were internationalists sympathetic to the Chinese Revolution and started to follow the CCP as early as the Yan'an period of the late 1930s and 40s. Their number did not change noticeably after the founding of the P.R.C. In contrast, the number of experts from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe surged after China started to implement its first Five-Year Plan in 1953. Due to the absence of a unified management system before 1955, these Westerners scattered among various Chinese ministries. Responsible agencies categorized these foreign experts according to the nature of their home governments. Specifically, they were: experts from the Soviet Union (China's "big brother"), experts from "brethren socialist countries" in Eastern Europe, experts from "people's democratic countries" of Asia, and experts from the capitalist countries.²⁶ The latter were not treated as an independent category. Instead, they and "experts from Asian people's democratic countries" were lumped together as a different category from the first category just listed, who accounted for 90 percent of all foreign experts in China at the time. By June 1955, there were about 39 experts from the capitalist and Asian New

²⁴Zhou Xueguang, *Zhongguo guojia zhili de zhidu luoji*, 71.

²⁵He Shu, " 'Wenge' zhong de waiguo zhuanjia zaofanpai," 28–40.

²⁶Bi Lianggan, "Xi Zhongxun yu jianguo chuqi de waiguo zhuanjia gongzuo," 13–17. For name changes of Eastern European countries, see Ouyang Xiang, "Lengzhan shiqi Zhongguo dui dong'ou guojia chengwei de yanbian," 236–253.

Democratic countries in China, including the U.K., the U.S., Japan, Canada, North Korea, Vietnam, India, Indonesia and Spain. They were recommended to work in China by the foreign ministries or by sympathetic political parties in their respective countries. Some did, however, apply for work opportunities in China on their own. Some were CCP members and some were progressives. They went on to shoulder different tasks in various departments of the Chinese government.

Since experts from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were the bulk of foreign experts in China, the Chinese government did not have a unified standard for the sort of benefits provided to experts from the capitalist countries and Asian New Democratic countries. In practice, those experts enjoyed somewhat lower employee benefits from those received by the Soviet experts. In June 1955, the CCP International Department submitted a proposal to the CCP Central Committee to address the problem. Shortly afterward, the relevant Chinese agencies raised the wages for the experts from capitalist countries and Asian New Democratic countries under the guidance that “they should earn more than their Chinese counterparts doing the same work, while earning a little bit less than the Soviet experts doing the same work.” The Chinese side also consistently improved the living standards for experts from the capitalist countries and Asian countries. The Chinese government did not specify the original countries of foreign experts in official notices on issues related to foreign experts (e.g. their employee benefits) after the end of 1958. Instead, they were all indiscriminately called “foreign experts.”

Thanks to the efforts of the SBFEA, the Chinese government established a system of benefits for foreign experts for their contributions to China. This system was consistently improved, and its scope expanded. The Chinese government awarded experts from East European countries and those Soviet experts who left China before September 1955, when the “Regulation on Awarding the Soviet Experts” was issued. In addition, experts from capitalist countries employed by the Chinese government were also awarded. According to the statistics by the SBFEA, the Chinese government sent the Soviet experts 123 and 1,484 letters of thanks, respectively, in the name of Zhou Enlai (then the Chinese premier) and various Chinese ministers by September 1960. In addition, 11,725 “Sino-Soviet Friendship” medals were awarded to the Soviet experts. After the normalization of Sino-Soviet Relations in late 1980s, many Soviet experts went back to China as “guests of the Chinese government.” They wore the medals, which marked an important stage in their careers.²⁷ According to a directive of the Chinese premier in November 1959, the Chinese government-employed experts from the capitalist countries and the CCP International Department-employed experts from “fraternal parties” in the capitalist countries, after three months of work in China, were entitled to be awarded similar friendship medals like those enjoyed by experts from Eastern Europe and Asian socialist countries. Such medals could also be awarded to some experts from the capitalist countries who came to China via cultural channels. Experts from the capitalist countries who had left China should also be awarded, as were the experts from Socialist countries.

²⁷Diao Beihua, “Wushinian de Zhongguo qingyuan,” 15; Ouyang Fan, and Hu Yang, “Qian Sulian Yuanhua zhuanjia zuzhang a’erxibofu,” 10.

After the Soviet Union recalled its experts from China, the Chinese government still ensured that clerks and technicians from the capitalist countries would receive equal treatment and benefits in China like those from the socialist countries. They were entitled to enjoy the same benefits as experts from “fraternal parties” of capitalist countries, including settling-in allowance, service pay, expenses related to bringing families, round-trip travel, accommodations, health care, field trips, and vacations and entertainment, as stipulated by the “Regulation on the Life Standards of Experts from Fraternal Parties of the Capitalist Countries” issued in 1958. They were also entitled to enjoy the same standard of salary as enjoyed by the experts from capitalist countries and Asian People’s Democratic countries in 1956. Clerks from capitalist countries were also honored the same way as foreign experts. Generally speaking, they would be awarded “the friendship medals” in the name of Premier Zhou Enlai after their assignments in China were over. Salaries for engineers and technicians from capitalist countries were generally stipulated in the equipment importation contracts made with those countries. However, the SBFEA was still responsible to ensure equal treatments apart from salaries. It put in place a list of regulations concerning protocol, publicity, courtesy visits, security, medical care, clothing, housing, furniture and souvenirs, covering the whole period between preparations to go to China and their departures back home.

The political atmosphere in China became extremely radicalized beginning in the mid-1950s. Regarding outstanding issues concerning foreign experts in China, the SBFEA had to fine-tune its relations with the foreign workers during a time of political movements and deal with the roles foreign experts might play in the various “great democracy” uprisings. During the “Great Leap Forward,” the SBFEA regularly briefed Soviet experts on such political developments as the “Great Leap Forward,” the “Cultural Revolution,” and the “People’s Communes,” aiming to ensure that “the Soviet experts correctly understood the guidelines and policies of the Party in order to devote themselves to support of our work by upholding the Party’s general line.” The CCP Central Committee issued a directive that the movement that was against waste and conservative ideas (the Shuangfan Movement, Shuangfan yundong) should be swiftly carried out through open grievances from the mobilized masses, painting big-character posters, engaging in genuine debates, holding on-site meetings and exhibitions, etc. To implement this, however, SBFEA had to walk a tightrope. On the one hand, according to a memo from the State Council, the SBFEA was expected to brief in a “timely” fashion the foreign experts concerning the objectives of the Shuangfan Movement and allow them to read the big-character posters and exhibitions and take pictures. On the other hand, however, the SBFEA should not organize the foreign experts to have them attend seminars and debates held by the masses and should discourage them from proposing suggestions of their own. In practice, however, involvement of foreign experts in “great democracy” outbursts and the scope and the extent of any involvements that occurred varied in different parts of China.

In the 1960s, the SBFEA strengthened internal political indoctrination in a bid to “revolutionize the work and thought” of its Chinese employees. Meanwhile, it ratcheted up efforts in regard to the political education of the foreign experts. Some measures to soften the approach were adopted. For example, the SBFEA was instructed to observe the principles of “voluntarism” and “seeking common ground” in the political

education of foreign clerks and technicians, thus continuing to observe the boundary between internal political education and movements, on the one hand, and service and management work related to foreign experts, on the other. In the struggle against “revisionism,” SBFEA still favored the criterion of competence in hiring foreign experts. Consequently, it renewed the employment contracts with certain foreign experts who were labeled as “revisionists” or were alleged to “have serious revisionist tendencies.” Both “The Five Anti’s Movement (Wufan yundong)” and the “Fight to Foster Proletarian Ideology and Eliminate Bourgeois Ideology (Xingwu miezi douzheng)” between 1963 and 1964 did not embroil experts and technicians from capitalist countries. Their average wages and other benefits actually increased during this period.

On the eve of the Cultural Revolution, however, all such measures were jettisoned. Political orientation rather than competence became the primary criterion used by the Chinese in their review of new contracts with foreign experts. Some experts from capitalist countries voluntarily asked the Chinese side to lower their salaries either out of a sense of guilt for receiving higher salaries than their Chinese counterparts or as a tactic to deflect any attacks upon their identities and religious faiths. Some even participated in the mass movements.²⁸ Foreign experts left China in droves as the Cultural Revolution moved forward. There were 304 foreign experts in China in 1967, including 242 experts on culture and education and 62 economic experts. In contrast, foreign economic experts used to outnumber foreign experts on cultural and educational issues in China. However, large number of foreign experts on cultural and educational issues left China in 1968. Issues related to foreign experts were disrupted and ultimately left in disarray.²⁹

Conclusion

Let us return to the problem of modernization theory. As a paradigm, it has lost its edge in historical studies. However, Chinese narratives and imagination gained by pursuing “modernity” and “modernization” in the last century should never have been erased. Such ideas in fact emerged under different contexts. They profoundly changed Chinese history and China’s path towards “modernization.” The industrialization and modernization objectives that Mao Zedong and his colleagues proposed during the Chinese Revolution and the development drive of the early People’s Republic were a continuation of the narratives and imaginations involving “modernity” and “modernization” that were offered ever since the modern age. Born in the international system, which was dominated by the confrontation between the two superpowers during the Cold War, the People’s Republic did not isolate itself from international science, technology, knowledge, and people. As a late comer striving for modernization, China was not immune from the “developmentalism” found in hegemonic ideologies at the time. As Dirlik has put it, developmentalism was more than a result of modern European capitalism; it also shaped the responses of socialism to capitalism.³⁰ The People’s Republic of China has always cherished the principles of “independence” and

²⁸Some experts voluntarily asked for lowering their salaries out of their sense of guilt for enjoying special treatment, Lebreton, *Ai shi buhui diaoxie de*, 113, 157, 166–167, 212–213.

²⁹Zhang Jianguo, “Woguo yinzhì jigou de lishi yan’ge he bianhua tedian,” 33–34.

³⁰Dirlik, *Hou geming shidai de Zhongguo*, 32–33.

“self-reliance” in both its development and its external relations. However, this fact did not imply that China would isolate itself, and not take advantage of transnational flows of science, technology, and people. As it turned out, China embraced these transnational flows even when radicalized politics became the order of the day.

The period between the founding of the P.R.C and the mid-1960s witnessed the arrival of two waves of Westerners in China. Employed by the Chinese government as foreign advisors, experts, technicians, and teachers, those Westerners, just like their Chinese counterparts, played roles in the CCP-led state building and modernization efforts. Thus, managing the foreign experts bore both internal and external political significance. The organizational structure, institutions and mechanisms created for such management took shape over the background of the Party’s dominance over the state and its governmental structure.³¹ The sprawling and overarching organizational system that resulted was not designed to be part of the process of China’s foreign relations or the CCP’s relations with foreign parties. Instead, it was created to serve foreigners coming to, living in China, to be employed by the Chinese government, factories, and schools. Yet, China’s efforts to manage all issues related to them does shed an indirect light on the history of China’s foreign relations since the founding of the P.R.C.

Early on, the Chinese government spared no effort to ensure that all foreign experts in China enjoyed equal treatment. In 1956, the Chinese government put in place regulations on the benefits enjoyed by experts from capitalist countries and Asian “New Democratic Countries,” with reference to the benefits received by experts from the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries. The Chinese government also consistently improved the foreigners’ living standards. With the large-scale importation of complete sets of equipment from the Western, developed countries in the early 1960s, the Chinese agencies that managed foreign experts started to prioritize clerks, engineers, and technicians who had come from capitalist countries. Under the principle of “equal treatment,” the SBFEA ultimately put in place a unified standard for the treatment of various foreign experts and technicians in China. As a result, experts from capitalist countries, just as with those from socialist countries, were entitled to “friendship medals,” which were issued by the Chinese government before their departure from China.

After the Soviet Union recalled their experts from China, and in a time of political upheaval in China, the relevant Chinese agencies decided to ideologically indoctrinate foreign experts. Nevertheless, such agencies delicately isolated internal political education and political movements from the mundane issues related to foreign experts’ lives and conditions. They did what they could to soften the ideological blows, so that these experts might endure different, softer, political requirements in comparison with those of Chinese employees. It helped them to avoid political movements.

In a nutshell, in keeping with the emergence of a highly centralized governance system, one that was dominated by the CCP, the Party increasingly shaped the evolution of organizations, institutions, and mechanisms with regard to the management of all issues related to foreign experts living and working in China. Such a development was indicative of the Party’s efforts to translate its will into

³¹On the structure of the party-state in contemporary Chinese governance, see Wang Puqu, and Tang Bin, “Dangdai Zhongguo zhili de dangzheng jigou yu gongneng jizhi fenxi,” 4–24.

government policies and shows that the Party was aware of practical and economic rationality in the process.³²

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Glossary

Chen Yi	陈毅
Deng Xiaoping	邓小平
Duiwai wenhua lianluo weiyuanhui	对外文化联络委员会
Guanyu Sulian zhuanjia zai Zhongguo zhi gongzuo tiaojian de xieding	关于苏联专家在中国之工作条件的协定
Guowuyuan waiguo zhuanjiaju	国务院外国专家局
Ji Tingxie	纪亭榭
Liao Chengzhi	廖承志
Liu Shaoqi	刘少奇
Qiba tanhua	七八谈话
Shuangfan yundong	双反运动
Sulian guwenzu zhuanjia	苏联顾问组专家
Sulian jishu yuanzhuzhu zhuanjia	苏联技术援助组专家
Waiguo zhuanjiaju	外国专家局
Waiyu jiaoyu qi'nian guihua gangyao	外语教育七年规划纲要
Wufan yundong	五反运动
Xingwu miezi douzheng	兴无灭资斗争
Yan'an	延安
Zhang Jishun	张济顺
Zhongyang waishi xiaozu	中央外事小组

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Zhou Enlai
Zhuanjia gongzuo ju
Zhuanjia gongzuo zu
Zhuanjia zhaodaichu

周恩来
专家工作局
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专家招待处

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