DISCOURSES OF ‘CHINA’ IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

A Study in Western Theory as (IR) Practice

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I hereby certify that this thesis is wholly my own work and that all sources have been properly cited and acknowledged.

Chengxin Pan
For My Mother and
In Memory of My Father (1921-2004)

献给我的母亲, 并以此缅怀父亲
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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with both the dangers and opportunities of China’s relations with the contemporary world and with the U.S.-led West in particular. It takes an unconventional approach to these issues in critically examining mainstream Western studies of Chinese foreign policy as a particular kind of discourse. The thesis focuses, more specifically, on the two dominant Western perspectives on China, (neo)realism and (neo)-liberalism. In doing so, it engages the questions of how Western discursive practice has come to shape and dominate the ways we think of and deal with ‘China’ in international relations, and how, as a result, China has often come to formulate its foreign policy in line with the prescribed meaning given to it by Western-based China scholars. In this context, the thesis argues that to deconstruct the processes by which China is given particular ‘meanings’ by Western discourses—and by which those meanings are transformed into both Western and Chinese foreign policy—is the key to a more profound understanding of Sino-Western relations and, perhaps, a first step towards ameliorating its problems and realising its potential for long-term peace and mutual prosperity.
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