

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Principles of China's Behavior: International Relations Determined by Domestic Trends*

MASUO, Chisako, Tokyo: Chuokoron-Shinsha, 2019\*

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China is one of the most important countries to analyze in the present international relations context, yet it is also one of the most problematic countries in terms of understanding its external behavior. The determinants of its foreign policy are opaque and arcane. From the outside, China's external behavior is often puzzling. However, the importance of understanding China's external behavior and the principles behind it has never been greater. Misjudging China's actions and the intentions behind them can have serious consequences for international relations.

In *Principles of China's Behavior: International Relations Determined by Domestic Trends*, Chisako Masuo makes a bold attempt to explain China's external behavior with a coherent logic. We tend to regard China as a mysterious entity because of the "inexplicability" of its behavior. However, even China is run by human beings, and, of course, Chinese, Japanese, and Americans are all human beings whose DNA does not have any significant differences. Therefore, the author claims that if China's external behavior is puzzling, the reason should be rooted in the social system that drives the Chinese people, not in individual Chinese people.

In an attempt to unravel the social system that drives the Chinese people, in Chapter 1 the author first introduces the Chinese worldview and the Chinese way of thinking. According to Masuo, the Chinese believe that other countries will voluntarily follow China because of China's virtuousness and cultural power. In addition, "China expects the construction of a superficially calm and harmonious world, like a communal family, in its own neighborhood, in which it would like to position itself as an authoritative patriarch. And that is what they believe is the historical 'ideal' of China" (p. 30).

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the traditional Chinese family values that define the Chinese view and behavior. The author believes that the "rules of the game" in Chinese society are based on traditional Chinese family values. According to Emmanuel Todd's typology of family systems, China is described as an exogamous community. In an exogamous community, the father has strong authority, and his sons are treated equally. The sons live with their parents after marriage until the father dies, forming a community. The author insists that the Chinese are influenced by ideas specific

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to the society of exogamous community even when working in organizations. In other words, while the authority of the boss (patriarch) is strong, there is a one-to-one relationship between the boss and subordinates (sons). Subordinates are equal to each other and are in competition to be recognized by the boss. People in the organization try to maximize their own interests by improving their relationship with the boss.

The author argues that we can understand the behavior of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members better by applying this organizational principle to the CCP. More specifically, we should view the party leadership, or the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee in the narrow sense, as “patriarchs,” and senior party members as the “sons” competing with each other for those patriarchs’ favor. The author attempts to explain the behavior of Chinese people within Chinese society, organizations, and the Chinese Communist Party with a coherent logic that is rooted in Chinese family values. In short, it is the author's position that both the worldview of the Chinese and the behavior of Chinese people within their organizations can be better understood from the perspective of the patriarch-son relationship.

Chapter 3 explains China’s external behavior from its founding to the death of Mao Zedong, and Chapter 4 explains China’s external behavior during the period from Deng Xiaoping to Xi Jinping, based on the behavioral logic presented in the previous chapters. At first glance, China’s external behavior often appears to lack coherence. The author explains such incoherence by analyzing the leaders’ (patriarchs’) approach to domestic politics and their ability to govern. When the patriarchs’ ability to govern is too weak, the “sons” pursue their own interests. Conversely, when power is concentrated in the hands of the patriarch, as in the case of Xi Jinping, the “sons” compete to satisfy the patriarch. These varying scenarios lead to inconsistency in China’s external behavior.

Chapter 5 looks at the external economic activities of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region as a case study of local government initiative, and Chapter 6 looks at the rise and fall of the State Oceanic Administration as a case study of the influence of a single state agency on external behaviors. Here, too, the behavior of the local government and state agency is analyzed from the perspective of the patriarch-son relationship. Thus, the greatest feature and uniqueness of this book is that it explains China's incoherent external behavior from its founding to the present using consistent logic based on the patriarch-son relationship that is specific to traditional Chinese family values.

This book certainly offers a novel perspective for understanding China’s external behavior. However, it is not certain that this perspective will continue to help us understand China’s external behavior in the future. China’s family structure has been changing rapidly in recent years. The so-called one-child policy, which was in place from 1979 to 2014, resulted in a rapidly declining birthrate. In urban areas, the traditional family relationship is rapidly disappearing, as evidenced by the so-called “1-2-4 system,” in which one child is cared for by two parents and four grandparents. Of course, once a social system is constructed based on traditional family values, changes in the family structure in China do not necessarily lead to immediate changes in the social system. However, the greater the difference between the reality of family relationships and the family relationships on which the social system is based, the greater the resistance to following such a social system will be. The principles that have governed China’s external behavior from its founding to the present day are likely to shift as China’s family relations undergo major changes. Understanding this point may be important for understanding international relations in the 21st century.