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In/Commensurability in Chimerica

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In/Commensurability in Chimerica



Robert Delaney

Ryerson University

Master of Professional
Communication

MRP Presentation

September 8, 2011



Research Questions

- What are some of the key cultural defaults, or commonplaces, that the Chinese government uses to guide its rhetorical position in diplomatic conflicts?
- What are the cultural roots of these default positions?
- To what extent might we call them incommensurable with the U.S. cultural paradigm?

Theoretical Framework

理论框架

Incommensurability Theory

Thomas Kuhn. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, (1962).



“Habitus” Theory

- Pierre Bourdieu. *Language and Symbolic Power*, (1992).

Disjuncture Theory

- Arjun Appadurai. *Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy*, (1990).
- Daniel Bell. *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, (1976).

Key Literature: 3 Groups

I. The Debate over Thomas Kuhn's
Incommensurability Theory

2. Confucius vs. Aristotle

3. Other theoretical concepts

Group 1: The debate over incommensurability

- **Colin Wight, (University of Wales)**

Incommensurability and Cross-Paradigm Communication in International Relations Theory: 'What's the Frequency, Kenneth?', (1996)

- **Richard J. Bernstein**

The Specter Haunting Multiculturalism, (2010)

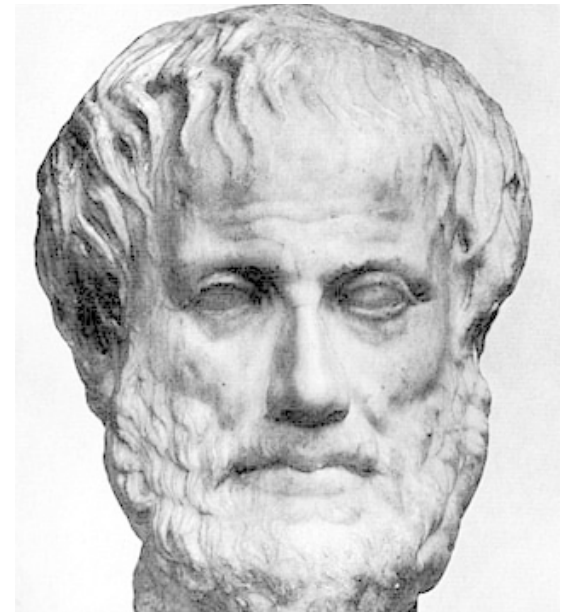
- **Amani Albedah**

A Gadamerian Critique of Kuhn's Linguistic Turn, (2006)

“Understanding is always open-ended and plural.”



Group 2: Confucius vs. Aristotle



G.E.R. Lloyd (Emeritus Professor of Ancient Philosophy and Science at the University of Cambridge)

- *Ancient Worlds, Modern Reflections: Philosophical Perspectives on Greek and Chinese Science and Culture, (2004)*
- *Cognitive Variations: Reflections on the Unity & Diversity of the Human Mind, (2007)*

Richard Nisbett (University of Michigan)

- *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently — and Why, (2003)*

Alasdair MacIntyre (Centre for Contemporary Aristotelian Studies in Ethics and Politics, London Metropolitan University)

- *Incommensurability, Truth, and the Conversation between Confucians and Aristotelians about the Virtues, (1991)*

Group 3: Other theoretical concepts

- Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, (1992)
- Arjun Appadurai, *Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy*, (1990)
- Daniel Bell, *The Disjunction of Culture and Social Structures*, (1976)

Data Collection

资料收集

Politics

Economics/Finance



(Global Times)



Col. Muammar Gaddafi



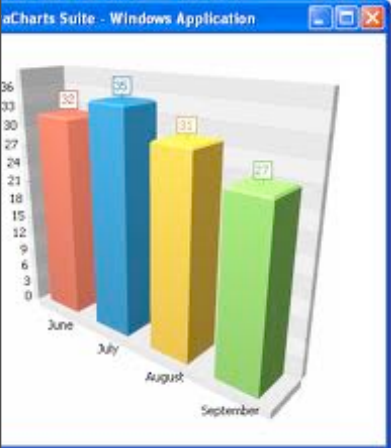
Pro-democracy advocate
Liu Xiaobo



(People's Daily)



Country	Code	Rate
CANADA	CAD	0.9512
CHINA	CNY	7.169
EURO	EUR	0.6644
JAPAN	JPY	109.00
SINGAPORE	SGD	1.3712
HONG KONG	HKD	7.0043
NEW ZEALAND	NZD	1.1646
MYANMAR	MYR	3.2536

[illegible]

Findings

结论

环球时报(Global Times)

- “The Middle East and North Africa are much more complex than what is described in the discourse of the West.”
 - “Western powers attempt to create a simple and attractive outcomes.”
 - “Western countries ... are rushing to fulfill the political expectation of Gaddafi’s removal ... especially in Paris, where it is treated like child’s play.”
 - “The direction of this military action is **not at all like the clear and accurate trajectory of a Tomahawk missile.**”
 - “Victory or defeat does not depend on the success or failure of military action itself.”
-

The New York Times

- “Didn’t **we arm the rebels** in Afghanistan in the ’80s? And didn’t many become **Taliban** and **end up turning our own weapons on us**? And didn’t one mujahadeen from Saudi Arabia, Osama bin Laden, go on to lead Al Qaeda?”
- Qaddafi is a terrible man, but I don’t think it’s the business of the **United States to overthrow** him. Those who want **America to support** democratic movements and insurrections by force if necessary wherever there’s a chance of them succeeding are committing the United States to endless wars of altruism.

Fox News

- Will **the allies accept** a “painful stalemate” hoping that other **UN sanctions will grind him down and cause more tribes to turn on him**? Will the resolution ultimately result in “regime change” or will **the coalition** that voted the no-fly zone and the **Libyan rebels** fighting on the ground, for that matter, **splinter over tactics and goals**?

人民日报(People's Daily)



What this award shows is some of the arrogance and prejudice of some Western people; their contempt and insults against **the Chinese people**. Their hailing of **Liu Xiaobo** as "hero" is a serious violation of the national spirit of the **Chinese people**. Any nation needs its own heroes, and any nation without them is weak and powerless. **Chinese people** have had their own distinctive concept of the hero. Lu Xun once said: "Since ancient times, we have **hard-working people**, who are not solicitous of praise. We also have heroes who are willing to strive for justice among **the people**. Even the history books written by the royal family could not overshadow **their** glory. **They** are the backbone of **China**." Wen Tianqiang, is one of this type of hero, who left a poem behind: "No one can survive death finally, but we need to leave a red heart shining for the history books." Yue Fei is another one, who is famous for the tattoo of "true heart to repay the nation. Lin Zexue is one, who burn the opium in Humen Gate in canton. These **heroes** represent the integrity of **the Chinese cultural spirit**; the pride and backbone of **the Chinese**. **Their** spirit spreads, encouraging **today's generation**. People like **Liu Xiaobo**, was not, is not, and will never be a Chinese hero.

The New York Times

The American Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of the Rights of **Man** and of **the Citizen** replaced the control of the autocrat with the sovereignty of the people as the source of national power and legitimacy.

Los Angeles Times

Liu has sacrificed his freedom in the fight for universal human rights, which are denied the **citizens of many countries** besides China.

★ Grade school primers (Bourdieu's "Habitus")

- Big brother takes care of little brother.
- Big brother loves little brother.
- Little brother loves big brother.
- See Dick run.
- See Dick play.
- See Dick run and play.

人民(renmin): people/folks

民族(minzu): ?

Minzu, (民族) = ?

Pocket Oxford Chinese Dictionary: nation/nationality

Chow Yiu-Fai, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*: “Denotes ‘the people’, with an emphasis on lineage, more than race, which, however, tends to conflate with ‘the nation’.

William Callahan, *Journal of Contemporary China*: “a blurring of scientific categories of culture and race.”

James Leibold, *The China Quarterly*: “...political elites merged Western notions of liberal pluralism with the Confucian discourse of cultural universalism.”
In other words, those who abide by Confucian rites.



People's Daily

Liu Xiaobo

Economy


“Renmin”: 9 references

“Minzu”: 8 references

“Renmin”: 7 references

“Minzu”: 2 references





Conclusions

- The Chinese government's rhetoric draws more from traditional, Confucian culture when the communication is in the political realm.
- China's rhetoric is more easily commensurable with the U.S. paradigm when communication takes place in the economic realm.



Questions

问答期间



Thank You
谢谢