Chapter 2

Sino-American Educational Interaction 
from the Microcosm of Fudan’s Early Years

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Introduction: Why the Focus on Fudan?

This chapter takes the early development of Fudan University as a case study in Chinese-American educational interaction. The president who shaped Fudan in its formative years, Li Denghui, was an overseas Chinese who had graduated from Yale in 1899. While other Chinese universities were strongly influenced by the American model, most of these were missionary institutions which were administratively linked to American organizations throughout much of their history. By contrast, Fudan was a patriotic institution founded by an influential Chinese Catholic scholar, Ma Xiangbo. In the particular microcosm that was Fudan University it is thus possible to see the interweaving of Chinese and American epistemological views and ideas on the social role of the university at quite a deep level.

To illustrate the choice of approaches to higher education in the complex political and social conditions of early republican China, Peking University under the leadership of Cai Yuanpei is taken as a contrastive model, exhibiting a close interconnection between Chinese and German approaches to epistemology and the social role of the university. Interestingly, both Cai
Yuanpei and Li Denghui were disciples of Ma Xiangbo, though their academic backgrounds and approaches to university leadership could hardly have been more different. Ma had been educated by French and Italian Jesuits in Shanghai during the 1870s, had traveled abroad a few times, yet had lived out his long career contributing to political, religious and academic causes in China.¹¹

The chapter begins with an overview of Ma’s early intentions in founding a new-style university for China in 1903, and suggests how Cai Yuanpei carried forward aspects of Ma’s vision in his shaping of Peking University as a highly influential national model. It then turns to the story of Li Denghui, his education at Yale University and his decision to accept Ma’s invitation and become Dean of Studies at Fudan University in 1905. Fudan’s development up to the end of the Second World War in 1945 provides a striking contrast to that of Peking University, with an ethos profoundly affected by American values of scholarship. This is seen in curricular decisions, in the role of students and faculty, and in its approach to intellectual freedom. A discussion of debates over the relative value of American and European patterns to Chinese higher education in the 1930s and 1940s then follows. The chapter concludes with some reflections on the synergies between Chinese and American approaches to epistemology that have been evident in the historical development of higher education in China, and that may well flower into new forms of collaboration in the present and future.

The sustained attention given to a historical case study of Chinese American educational cooperation in this chapter provides a background for reflecting on the development of Sino-American educational and scientific exchanges after the renewal of diplomatic relations in 1979, as recounted by Mary Brown Bullock in Chapter 3. It may also cast light on the reasons contemporary Chinese universities are modeling themselves after certain outstanding American
institutions in their pursuit of “world-class” standing, as described by Katherine Mohrman in Chapter 10. It further gives cause to reflect on creative possibilities for a Chinese contribution to global higher education, as the patterns of study abroad and return to China in the contemporary period are traced and analyzed in chapters by Cheng Li, Rosen and Zweig, and Shiping Zheng.

**Peking University and the European influence**

Ma Xiangbo founded Zhendan Academy in 1903 as “a new style university which would keep pace with western universities.” He set forth three aims for the new institution – to give priority to science, to emphasize liberal arts and to avoid any religious disputes. The curriculum which he designed reflected these aims, with a set of core courses for the arts, focusing on Latin and Greek, French and English, philosophy, logic, ethics, metaphysics and psychology. Related areas included history, geography, political science, sociology and law. There was a parallel set of core courses and related areas for the sciences. Ma had been deeply influenced by his own Jesuit education, yet he did not include theology or religious studies in the curriculum. Rather he emphasized intellectual formation in the basic disciplines of knowledge. He had a particular concern that young Chinese should master the classical languages of Europe in order to gain a fundamental understanding of the new knowledge that was flooding into China.

One of Ma’s early students was Cai Yuanpei, who was later to spend two extended periods in Germany and France, and to be profoundly influenced by both German and French university traditions. When Cai returned from his second stay in Europe in 1917 and became Chancellor of Peking University, his opening speech set forth his goals: the pursuit and advancement of pure scholarship as a collective activity, and the development of exemplary moral behavior to set an example for the nation. He was strongly committed to autonomy from the warlord government, and opposed any of the professors he appointed holding concurrent
positions in the government. The other core value which he introduced was academic freedom, a concept which he understood in relation to the traditions of the German university - a Kantian epistemology that advocated the separation of theoretical and practical studies, and the professor’s responsibility to advance a particular discipline of knowledge. Academic freedom was viewed in the context of free debates over theoretical questions in the various disciplines of knowledge, but not in relation to the direct involvement of professors or students in political or social activism.

Without a doubt, Peking University was the cradle of the May 4th movement and all the transformative initiatives it spawned. One could hardly conceive of the movement taking place apart from the conditions created by Cai’s leadership. By appointing a remarkable group of professors from many different backgrounds and political perspectives, and attracting excellent students, he had created a center of genuine intellectual dynamism. Yet, an aspect of the May 4th movement that has been given little attention is the deeply contradictory feelings and actions of Cai Yuanpei himself in face of the movement. When it erupted into direct political activity, with students and professors subject to arrest, he was deeply troubled. He did everything he could to rescue the students, yet resigned his chancellorship with a plea to them to refrain from political activism: “You have the opportunity of receiving education and the chance to take part in pure scientific research, so that you can lay the foundation for a new national culture for China and participate in world scholarly activities.”

Cai’s approach to shaping the curriculum at Peking University also revealed how deeply influenced he was by critical dualism in philosophy. Following the German model of the university, which maintained a focus on the pure disciplines of the arts and sciences and placed applied fields like engineering and commerce in separate Technische Hochschule, he arranged for Beida’s engineering school to be moved out and combined with Beiyang University in
Tianjin. He also tried, unsuccessfully, to remove Beida’s law school and have it established as an independent tertiary institution. It had been deeply compromised by China’s traditions of bureaucratically oriented scholarship, he felt, where the highest aim was for the scholar to become an official.

**Li Denghui and Yale University**

Li Denghui was invited by Ma Xiangbo to be Dean of Studies at the newly established Fudan public institute (Fudan gongxue) in 1905. Ma was clearly looking for someone with leadership potential and with a genuine commitment to developing a university ethos suited to China’s needs. Ma’s break with the Jesuits and the decision to leave Zhendan University and create Fudan as a new institution had arisen from conflicts in three main areas – the curriculum, with the Jesuits wishing to impose a French model, the style of administration, with the Jesuits insisting on top-down hierarchical control and Ma favouring student self-government, and the recruitment of students. Ma had welcomed mature students with considerable political experience, while the Jesuits wanted to recruit only young men who could be easily moulded. In spite of Ma’s Catholic faith and orientation towards European patterns of scholarship, he recognized in Li Denghui, a Protestant Christian educated in the United States, the right person to carry forward this initiative.

Li was born on the island of Java, to a prosperous Chinese businessman working in the clothing industry in 1872. In 1886, at the age of 14, he went to Singapore, where he studied in an English medium school. Five years later he proceeded to the United States and began his university studies at the Wesleyan University. Then in 1895 he moved to Yale, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in 1899.
Yale of that period has been described as “a University in law, with growing professional schools, but in sentiment still a great College with university appurtenances.”  

Under the leadership of Noah Porter (1871-1886) and Timothy Dwight (1886-1899), both ministers of the Christian Church, it had resisted the tendency to embrace university status as its primary identity, or to give graduate studies a leading position. Notable in this stance was its rejection of the elective system, and its continued embrace of a common course of instruction for all undergraduate students, ensuring they had a foundation in the Greek and Latin classics as well as mathematics. On this basis they were to build their studies in the sciences, social studies and the arts. The curriculum was gradually modified, but the elective system came only relatively late.

The atmosphere of the college was maintained through the class system, with very close relations among students of each year, and a strongly cohesive spirit built up by a faculty who were themselves Yale men for the most part. Also geographic isolation resulted in strong internal homogeneity. Both presidents Porter and Dwight involved themselves in undergraduate teaching in areas such as religion and moral philosophy. Porter was known for his course in “Evidences of Christianity,” which was only removed as a required subject for all students in the year of his death, 1892. University historian George Wilson Pierson begins his book on Yale College, 1871-1921, with the story of a visit from then Harvard lecturer in Philosophy, George Santayana, to the Yale campus in 1892. Santayana observed that “Yale had a religion” and thus “the solution of the greatest problems is not sought… it is regarded as already discovered.” By contrast Harvard was characterized by “faith in the enlightenment.”

Without going further into the distinctions between the ethos of the college and that of the university which are hinted at here, it is clear that the educational ethos to which Li Denghui was exposed at Yale in the 1890s was primarily that of the college, though the European model
of the university was beginning to transform American higher education elsewhere.

Characteristics of the college model include a strong interconnection between moral and intellectual knowledge, a sense of local responsibility, an ethos of service, and a resistance to specialization and professionalism in favour of integrated knowledge and a common curriculum. Knowledge is acquired less for its own sake than for the sake of nurturing responsible citizens. It is advanced more through an epistemology of pragmatism, than through the kinds of rationalism that characterized the higher learning in Europe.

Naturally, the environment in which Li was to work in China was profoundly different from that of the late 19th century United States, so that Li’s application of the college model to the development of a new private institution in Shanghai had a distinctive outcome. It is nevertheless interesting to see the Yale spirit at work in some aspects of his leadership. A devout Christian, Li placed a strong emphasis on the moral formation of his students, and was proud to contribute to Christian causes in a number of social arenas, including being a director of the Christian Education Association of China and sitting on the board of trustees of Soochow University. ¹⁹ He did not, however, make provision for the teaching of Christianity in the curriculum at Fudan. From the perspective of his colleagues and students, his strict demands as a teacher in formal classroom settings, and his informality and approachableness outside of the classroom, were regarded as evidence of his Christian commitment. ²⁰

We might ask how far he may have been influenced by the Yale president, Timothy Dwight, whose classes he must have taken as part of Yale’s famous “Course of Instruction.” During his long years as President of Fudan, he taught classes in ethics, philosophy, psychology, English and French. He was also known for the textbooks he had written for the teaching of English. While he had had no formal exposure to education in the Chinese language and literature, he understood its importance to his role in leading a Chinese university, and mastered
spoken Mandarin and Shanghainese, as well as learning enough written Chinese to vet all translated texts published in his name. He also developed a good calligraphic style for the writing of his name, which appears on Fudan’s weekly newspaper over a number of years. However, English was his preferred medium of communication in both teaching and administration.21

**Fudan University and the American Influence**

One wonders whether Ma Xiangbo was particularly impressed by Li’s knowledge of Greek and Latin, an aspect of his Yale heritage which Ma almost certainly valued, when he invited Li to Fudan in 1905. There is little evidence, however, that Li ever taught these languages at Fudan. Rather, the new institution developed along pragmatic lines, with the strong involvement of local government officials, who provided funding, and in some cases actually undertook teaching or other responsibilities. Ma’s vision for kinds of intellectual formation that would enable students to understand Chinese and Western culture at a deep level was replaced by a pragmatic interest in foreign languages and practical subjects that could enable students to find an entry into the Shanghai job market of the time.

The 1911 Revolution was a time of upheaval for Fudan, when it lost its campus in Wusong, and was finally re-established as a private institution in a campus in Xu Jia Hui given by the leadership of the brief republican government in Nanjing. Ma Xiangbo helped in securing this new campus, but was soon caught up in other responsibilities and moved to Beijing. Li Denghui was appointed president in 1913, and set his leadership stamp on the institution over the years that followed. Fudan’s constitution, drafted in 1913, the first year of Li’s presidency, set the aims of the institution as “to research scholarship and train specialized personnel”, conforming to government regulations for higher schools below the university level.22
detailed curriculum laid out in this document covered three years of secondary education and another three of university preparatory studies. The breadth and scope would bear interesting comparison with Yale’s course of study, with subjects ranging from mathematics and sciences to languages, literature, rhetoric, anthropology, geography, philosophy etc. While Chinese and English were the main languages, a choice between German and French was also provided, and Latin could be chosen in the last year of the preparatory course. There were electives in the final year of the university preparatory studies, to prepare for entry into specific fields, but it was otherwise a common curriculum. Again one wonders if this was part of the Yale influence.

By 1917, Li was able to raise the level of Fudan to a university, though it continued to enroll a large number of students in university preparatory studies. He also undertook extensive fund-raising in Southeast Asia in order to be able to purchase land for a new campus in Jiang Wan, and to initiate a vigorous building program for the new institution. In the China Yearbooks of the 1920s and 1930s Fudan is described as one of the best endowed of the private universities in terms of buildings and equipment, due to Li’s energetic efforts.

Li’s vision for this private university can be seen in the faculty appointments that he made, in the evolution of the curriculum, and most strikingly in his attitudes and policies regarding student and faculty participation in government service, political movements and social causes. There are clear contrasts in all of these three areas with the approach of Cai Yuanpei, and I would argue these result from that fact that Li was inspired by the American college model, while Cai’s vision drew on the European university model, with contrasting epistemologies of pragmatism and critical dualism underlying these two models.
The Evolution of Fudan’s Curriculum

Fudan’s curriculum evolved in important ways between 1913, when Li became president and 1928, when the university had to comply with standards and regulations set by the newly established Nationalist Government of the Guomindang. We have seen how the curriculum laid out in the 1913 constitution for secondary and preparatory studies was broad and comprehensive, with two main sections, arts and sciences. In 1917, a program in commerce was added, reflecting the employment market of Shanghai at the time, and Li managed to attracted a well known economist, Li Quanshi, who did a great deal to develop this area.\(^{25}\) A few years later, in 1922, a program in psychology was established, under the leadership of Guo Renyuan, a distinguished empirical psychologist who had already made quite a name in the United States.\(^{26}\) In 1922, the science program was expanded to include engineering, in response to insistent demands from students that greater emphasis be given to the applied sciences and engineering.\(^{27}\) Another area which was developed with some distinction in the 1920s was that of law, politics and city government. The distinguished Chinese legal figure, Wang Chonghui, also a Yale graduate, was vice president for a short time, and later Chairman of Fudan’s Board of Governors. Li was also able to attract figures such as the Columbia-educated legal scholar Zhang Zhirang and the Harvard-returned political scientist Sun Hanbing.\(^ {28}\)

In the arts, Fudan was one of the earliest universities in China to pioneer the field of journalism, with Chen Wangdao coming to Fudan from Zhejiang normal college as a result of the May 4 Movement, and such noted figures in the journalistic world as Shao Lizi being closely connected to Fudan. When the university became registered with the nationalist government in 1928, Journalism was one of six departments in the college of arts, including also education and sociology alongside the traditional departments of Chinese literature, foreign literature and history. Psychology was located in the department of biology, within the college of sciences,
along with chemistry and engineering. The college of law had departments of political science, economics and city government, while the college of commerce had banking, accounting, international commerce and business administration. It was quite an impressive range of curricular areas, with a strong emphasis on the practical and on the professional and business needs of the Shanghai community. The contrast with Cai Yuanpei’s Beida was striking – there engineering had been removed, law was looked on with suspicion, as nurturing unhealthy tendencies towards education for officialdom, and the focus was on basic scholarship in the pure arts and sciences.

*Faculty and Students*

Two sensitive areas, where one can see both similarities and striking differences between the policies of Li and Cai, were the appointment of teaching faculty, and the involvement of students and faculty in political activism. Under the rubric of academic freedom, Cai made a point of appointing outstanding scholars of highly divergent scholarly, social and political perspectives, and advocated full freedom for all to express their views, along the lines of the German concept of academic freedom. Given the status of Beida and its location in Beijing, it is not surprising that Cai attracted some of the best talents of the time, and we are all familiar with the intellectual and social ferment that resulted. However, one point on which he was adamant was that professors appointed to the university should not hold concurrent posts in government. He felt this would lead to the perpetuation of negative patterns of the Chinese tradition, with scholar bureaucrats seeking to manipulate the university to serve their own political interests. Cai’s battle to separate the university, and education more generally, from nationalist politics is a well known aspect of his leadership over the whole period up to the Sino-Japanese war.
As for students’ involvement in political activism, we have seen how deep was his ambivalence when a movement for cultural and literary enlightenment turned into an intense political battle with the warlord government. He cared for and supported the students, but strongly discouraged them from their chosen role in direct political struggle, resigning his chancellorship as a way of showing how important this principle of the university’s separation from politics was.

Li Denghui provides a fascinating contrast to Cai on both of these points. One of his most brilliant moves was to welcome to Fudan both students and professors who had been expelled from government or missionary universities as a punishment for their involvement in political activism. Zhang Yi, a later Fudan president, described how Li opened the door for him to enter Fudan in 1919, after he had been expelled from the secondary school attached to St. Johns University without the graduation certificate necessary for university entrance elsewhere – a number of other outstanding students came in the same way. On the side of faculty, two of the best known left-wing activists whom Li welcomed to Fudan at that time were the literary scholars, Liu Dabai, and Chen Wangdao, who had been expelled from the government controlled Zhejiang normal college. He also appointed many Guomindang worthies to the Fudan faculty, including Shao Lizi, Yu Youren, and Hu Hanmin, all of whom held senior posts in the Nationalist establishment. They gave occasional lectures and offered strong political support when it was needed. Others sat on the Board of Governors, and assisted with fund-raising.

The affiliation of well known political figures across a wide spectrum led to Fudan becoming a center for intense political struggle in the 1930s. During the anti-Japanese war, Beida was in Kunming, along with Tsinghua and Nankai, a considerable distance from the national capital, but Fudan was in Beipei, just down river from Chongqing, and so the political struggle on campus intensified. One of the projects which Fudan scholars were most proud of
was the journal *Wenzhai*, which introduced a wide range of political and social commentary from around the world in translation to Chinese readers, allowing them insight into many issues which neither Nationalist nor Communist publications would have provided.  

Li’s attitude towards political activism on the part of students and faculty was supportive from the beginning, as is evident in the strong support he gave to students at the time of the May 4th movement, in the famous incident when Shao Lizi brought the news of the movement to the Fudan campus early in the morning of May 6th. That day students fanned out to spearhead the movement for Shanghai, and subsequently took leadership in both the Shanghai and the national students’ association. Li had no ambivalence about this being an appropriate role for Fudan, and he actually managed to use it as a way of attracting excellent students and staff and building up Fudan’s reputation as a highly patriotic institution.

Social and political relevance was a key consideration in curricular developments at Fudan, and there was a strong sense of knowledge being developed through practice in response to local needs. An example of this can be found in the department of education, where there was great interest in educational experimentation, and close research links between the department and Fudan’s experimental secondary school, also the primary schools it established to serve local children. Another area where this spirit can be seen is that of economics. One of the well known Fudan professors from an early period was Xue Xianzhou, an advocate of the cooperative movement. Under his influence Fudan established a cooperative bank, store and other institutions where this approach to economic development could be tried out.

Fundamental to the contrasts in policy towards curriculum development and direct socio-political involvement of students and faculty was the contrasting epistemological orientation of Cai and Li. Cai had been deeply influenced by Kantian-based European rationalism, with its duality between facts and values and its emphasis on the advancement of pure theoretical
knowledge through logical testing and scientific experimentation. Both Cai and Li were deeply patriotic, and both had a strong commitment to moral education. However, Li’s epistemology was strongly influenced by American pragmatism, and had none of the dualism or theoretical rationalism that characterized Cai’s academic stance.

The following quotation from an article written by Li in 1926 suggests an epistemology rooted in a kind of Christian pragmatism, with a strong emphasis on ethics: “Knowledge is not an end in itself, nor is it a means of further the lower or material ambition of man… it is a means by which we may be guided into the path of truth, in order to avoid that which is wrong and hence detrimental to one’s real interests…. The supreme purpose of education is moral excellence and in this is measured the degree of true success which a person obtains….. The laws of nature are the laws of order and morals are the spiritual expression of these laws of order. None who breaks this law or becomes immoral can escape their punishment.”

*Academic freedom vs. Intellectual freedom*

Both Cai and Li were strong promoters of the ideal of free inquiry, and the university as a place where any question can be asked, any subject pursued, no matter how controversial. However the differences in their underlying epistemology suggests Cai’s version might be characterized as “academic freedom” rooted in the European ideal, Li’s as “intellectual freedom”, a concept that fitted better both with American pragmatism and Chinese traditional views of knowledge.

Cai explained his view of academic freedom in a celebrated article, in which he made two important points: “Regardless of what schools of academic thought there may be, if their words are reasonable and there is a cause for maintaining them, and they have not yet reached the fate of being eliminated by nature, then even though they disagree with each other, I would
let them develop in complete freedom.” He went on to say, “with regard to professors, their
knowledge is the main thing. When they give lectures in the university, the only limitation on
them is that they do not contradict the first policy” (reasonableness). Cai made it clear that the
academic freedom he advocated related to the right of professors to express any view, or raise
any point, related to their specialist field of knowledge. He went on to comment that their views
or actions on political matters were an entirely private matter, and not something for the
university to concern itself with, giving the example of a Beida professor who privately
supported the restoration of the Manchu emperors. It was this vision of academic freedom that
led Cai to emphasise the development of pure disciplines of knowledge in Beida’s curriculum,
and to request students and faculty to refrain from political activism and from bureaucratic
involvement, so that they could contribute to the advancement of knowledge over the long term.

Associated with this view of academic freedom at Beida was a concept of autonomy which was
expressed in Chinese in the phrase “professors ruling the university” [jiaoshou zhixiao]. The
university senate was its highest authority, and it was to take an independent stance from the
government, and guide the university in its mission of advancing scholarship and educating
young people. There was no external board of governors in Beida of the 1920s.

In all of the archival literature I read about the early years of Fudan while in Shanghai, I
never came across any serious discussion of the concept of academic freedom, which had been
such a core issue for Cai Yuanpei at Beida. Li Denghui had not hesitated to establish a board of
governors for Fudan University which drew senior political leaders from the GMD as well as
important Shanghai industrialists into support for the university. Many professors were
prominent members of the GMD Party, but there were also well known leftists on staff, such as
Chen Wangdao, Liu Dabai, Zhang Zhirang and Sun Hanbing. There was never any question of
the right of students and staff to involve themselves in political and social movements, and to
seek to gain the university’s backing for this. Political struggles were thus open and evident on
campus, and resulted in Li finally being forced into retirement in 1936, due to the determination
of the GMD establishment to bring Fudan firmly under its control. This did not prevent the
struggle from continuing in a lively way during the years of the Sino-Japanese war in Beipei, in
spite of the proximity of the Nationalist government.

Fudan’s university song, written by Liu Dabai in the 1930s, expressed the ethos of
intellectual freedom in the following way: “independent scholarship, freedom of thought, no
stranglehold of either religion or politics.” A debate in Fudan’s weekly paper in October of 1932 over the issue of an “academic
spirit” illustrates how little had the European ideal of academia touched the Fudan spirit. The
protagonist was attempting to persuade students that they should refrain from direct political
activism, in the aftermath of Fudan students’ success in leading the 1931 protests against the
Nanjing government over the Mukden incident, and the success of Fudan’s student army in
fighting off the Japanese attack in January 1932. He traced the term “academic” back to Plato’s
academy and criticized Chinese higher education for its lack of a true academic spirit, evident in
its proneness to political activism. Students saw this article as an apology for Nationalist
government repression under the guise of European academic values and a passionate response
came from two students in the following week’s issue. They defended student participation in
politics on the grounds that it was the only way to prevent the government from capitulating to
Japanese demands, and they pointed out that “Oxbridge ideals” might be appropriate to western
capitalist society but had no relation to China’s needs.

The point here is that Chinese scholars have always sought a broad-based intellectual
freedom, the right to raise any question in their area of expertise or beyond it, and a strong sense
of the scholar’s accountability with regard to social governance and the well being of society. It
was this concept which Fudan president Li Denghui upheld, and this was close to the American pragmatist spirit. Li’s education at Yale in the 1890s had prepared him for this role, providing a striking contrast to the ethos of scholarship which Cai Yuanpei had experienced at the universities of Berlin and Leipzig a few years later.

If academic freedom in the European model was a difficult and conflict-ridden concept in the Chinese environment of the early 20th century, it was also a concept that came late to American higher education. It emerged, in fact, in the age of the university rather than the age of the college. The American Association of University Professors first put forward the case for academic freedom in a 1915 declaration of principles, and it is interesting to note assumptions about the advancement of knowledge through problem-solving in that document, as well as an insistence the freedom to take part in social and political causes: “It is not desirable that scholars should be debarred from giving expression to their judgments upon controversial questions, or that their freedom of speech, outside the university, should be limited to questions falling within their own specialties. It is clearly not proper that they should be prohibited from lending their active support to organized movements which they believe to be in the public interest.”

It was on this point that the views of Li and Cai with regard to freedom of inquiry diverged.

Hofstadter and Metzger’s classic work, *The Development of Academic Freedom in the United States* explores the reasons why the European concept of academic freedom came late to American higher education, in spite of the context of political democracy. They note the dominant epistemology of pragmatism, and the persistence of the ethos of the college which was committed to the service of the local community and accountable to local boards peopled by church, political and business leaders. The value of scholarship was viewed more in service to the community than in the advancement of pure knowledge.
Fudan’s early years exemplify in fascinating ways the merging of this American college ethos, which had especially rich expression in the tradition of Yale college where Li had studied, with the development of the ethos of a modern Chinese university at Fudan in the troubled years of the early Chinese republic.

**American and European Influences on Higher Education Policy**

If we turn from the microcosm of Fudan under the influence of Li Denghui to the broader picture of higher education policy in the period between 1911 and the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, we see the same set of contrasting influences from Europe and America in national level policies for higher education. With Cai Yuanpei as the first Minister of Education of the new republic in 1911, national legislation was passed in 1912 laying out the following aims for universities: “teach high levels of scholarship and nurture men of wide learning and talent for the needs of the county.” Professional schools were given the aim of “teaching high levels of scholarship and training specialized manpower”, the exact phrase used in the Fudan constitution of 1913. Universities were to be governed by a senate made up of all full professors and to have a high degree of autonomy, while professional schools were to be administered directly by the bureau of technical and professional education.

It was left to Cai Yuanpei, on his return from Europe in 1917, to demonstrate this ideal for modern Chinese universities in his leadership of Peking University from 1917 to 1923. I have already noted earlier the ways in which he interpreted autonomy and academic freedom, and his commitment to a dual system of higher education with a small number of universities devoted to the advancement of pure arts and sciences, and a larger number of specialized professional institutions, along the lines of the German model.
Cai was deeply concerned about the separation of scholarship and education from politics, and the epistemological influences of his German education provided a rationale for what he saw as a new morality, based on reason and linked to aesthetics, which should rise above politics. When the Nationalist government was established in 1928, he attempted to set in place structures on a national basis that would protect universities and the education system from political manipulation. He was inspired by the French model in asking the government to set up a National Universities Council, which would have a high degree of autonomy in relation to government, and would preside over the university system and the schools as well, protecting them from political manipulation.\textsuperscript{45} He also tried to prevent the GMD from using national or local students associations for their political purposes.\textsuperscript{46} In the end, Cai failed to persuade the Nationalist government to go forward with the French inspired model of the National Universities Council and regional university systems. He thus retreated to the work of establishing the Academica Sinica, as an arbiter and guide of scholarship for modern China. This was influenced by the model of the Académie Française, and the work of his mentor, Ma Xiangbo, who had tried to establish a Chinese academy of sciences in 1913.\textsuperscript{47}

In the meantime, the national legislation passed for education in 1922 and 1924 under American influence continued to have an impact. The distinction between universities and professional schools had been played down, and all higher institutions were to have courses lasting four to six years, and to be called universities.\textsuperscript{48} There was a pragmatic concern for the service of local economic and social needs, which came across in the standards which were to guide educational development (in place of formally established aims): “adapt to the evolution of society, give play to the spirit of education for the common person, seek the development of individuality, take into consideration the strength of the national economy… and be flexible in giving space for local initiative.”\textsuperscript{49}
The number of higher institutions which styled themselves universities had grown from 8 in 1917 to 35 in 1923, indicating how quickly this broader and more eclectic model of the university took hold in the Chinese context. Two other reforms which came out of this new legislation were the use of the elective system for curricular organization, and the recommendation that all universities establish a Board of Managers responsible for the budget and broad development issues. We have already seen that this was a feature of Fudan’s organization from an early period, and it later became a convenient mechanism for ensuring Chinese control over the Christian missionary universities after 1928. It was less commonly found in national public universities.

The debate over whether American or European patterns of education were more suited to China’s educational development needs reached a new juncture under the Nationalist government after 1928. New legislation relating to higher education was passed in April of 1929, and revised in July of the same year. The aims for higher education set in April went as follows: “Universities and professional schools must emphasise the applied sciences, enrich the scientific content of their courses, nurture people with specialized knowledge and skills and mould healthy character for the service of nation and society.” In July the distinction between universities’ responsibility for “researching high levels of scholarship” and professional schools’ responsibility for “training technical manpower” was re-instated. However the importance of breadth in the university curriculum, and the integration of applied and professional fields with basic arts and sciences was clearly recognized. To take the title of university, a higher institution had to have at least three colleges, one of which should be in the pure or applied sciences. A main emphasis of the new government was the pragmatic concern for fostering practical forms of knowledge suited to the urgent economic development needs.
In many ways and for many reasons, one would have expected this new government to be strongly influenced by American higher educational patterns. A large number of its leading members as well as many university leaders and professors were American returned, and relations between the Nationalist government and the United States were strong. Nevertheless in 1931, a group of four leading European scholars were invited to China, under the auspices of the League of Nations’ Institute of Intellectual Cooperation, to study the Chinese education system, from primary schools to universities over a three month period, and give recommendations for reform. Their concern about American influences was expressed in the following way: “It is necessary to lay particular stress on the remarkable, not to say alarming consequences of the excessive influence of the American model on Chinese education ……. the objective of these remarks is solely to warn Chinese educators against superficial Americanisation. Let them rather borrow that spirit of originality with which Americans have succeeded in adapting the culture of Europe to American conditions.”  

They went on to say that “the cultural conditions of Europe are more suitable than American conditions for adaptation to the Chinese requirements because, precisely, American civilization has developed in spite of total absence of local traditions, whereas European, like Chinese civilization, must always take count of local traditions dating back thousands of years.”

For higher education administration, they recommended the establishment of a universities council which should advise the government on the geographical rationalization of higher education, as well as shape the curriculum for different types of institution in ways suited to national and regional development. For universities, they recommended a strengthening of the basic disciplines of knowledge and the establishment of a chair system similar to that in Europe. They also recommended a unified entry examination to ensure consistent standards across the nation and the use of final examinations before graduation to ensure students had reached the
required standard in their specialist field. They felt the accumulation of credits under the American-influenced credit system led to a fragmentation of knowledge.

Some of their recommendations were adopted, but there is little evidence that this was based on a genuine understanding of European views of scholarship and education such as was so evident in the thought and action of Cai Yuanpei. Rather the European model suggested by League members lent itself to the forms of centralization and top down control which the Nationalist government used in its struggle to extend its political legitimacy in the face of impending civil war. While many aspects of these reforms did improve the standards of university education, and assist in the strengthening of applied sciences needed for national development, they were also a useful tool for the repression of intellectual and political dissent. One member of the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation who commented on this report was the Spanish scholar Jose Castillego. His prescience about this possibility is evident in the following quotation: “The Chinese government should be warned against the dangers to the progress of education and the cause of peace which might be the consequence of the adoption of a premature and exaggerated system of rigid and uniform centralization, tending to place the education of the country in the hands of an improvised bureaucracy.”

An American response to the report can be found in a critique written by Stephen Duggan, then Head of the Institute of International Education: “It is a question whether the analogy of Chinese to European traditional civilization is of much value to the Chinese in enabling them to determine national objectives. Not only are the remnants of feudalistic institutions found everything in Europe forming obstacles to reform and progress, but many European traditions are impregnated with a feudalistic spirit sadly at variance with the spirit needed in the twentieth century…if China is to survive in the twentieth century she must of necessity modify her institutions and her traditions in such a manner as will enable her to meet
the demands which a fluid and dynamic civilization founded on scientific concepts and technical equipment places upon all nations today…..”

The Nationalist government carried out an extensive review of the higher education curriculum over the period from 1938 to 1940, with committees established for all the major fields of knowledge and standards set out for required courses. New textbooks gave greater emphasis to Chinese history and Chinese content in areas such as sociology, economics and political science. Also standards were established for teaching faculty and an elaborate process for the evaluation of faculty was established. These initiatives had a limited impact on the actual higher education development over the war-time period, however, given the chaos and devastation which the government had to deal with, and the fluid situation of major universities, as they moved further and further inland to escape the Japanese invasion. New models of higher education emerged in the regions under Communist control, and established institutions struggled to adapt to the rapidly changing environment. The degree of autonomy they enjoyed was often relative to their distance from the war-time capital of Chongqing.

As universities struggled to adapt their curricula to war-time needs, and support students and faculty under extremely difficult conditions, there was considerable diversity and an increasing emphasis on forms of research and teaching closely related to China’s own social and industrial environment, in contrast to the heavy reliance on curricular materials from Europe and America in an earlier period. Probably the most admired of all institutions was the famous Southwest United University, a merger of Tsinghua, Peking and Nankai universities in the southwestern city of Kunming. John Israel’s recent book, Lianda: A Chinese University in War and Revolution provides a comprehensive and in-depth picture of this institution, with its colleges of arts, social sciences, natural sciences, engineering and teacher education, and an
illustrious faculty whose scholarly renown in the sciences, history, literature and such fields as anthropology and sociology remains a source of pride for China.\textsuperscript{61}

I have argued elsewhere that one can see in this institution core values of intellectual freedom and social responsibility that represent a blend of values from China’s traditional shuyuan and from American influences on Tsinghua and to a lesser degree Nankai in their early development.\textsuperscript{62} Of course features of the European heritage were also integrated within this creative institution, but they were less prominent. Even Peking University, which had been so strongly influenced by European academic values under Cai Yuanpei, developed a curriculum closer to the American model under the presidency of Hu Shi after the war.

Ironically, it was only after the Communist Revolution that the European model was to be implemented with a remarkable thoroughness and consistency, under the guise of the Soviet higher education model, which shaped the reorganization of departments and faculties that took place in 1952. A highly centralized system was established, with a small number of comprehensive universities having only arts and sciences (close to Cai’s early vision for Peking University), some leading polytechnical universities, such as Tsinghua and Zhejiang Universities, and a large number of highly specialized institutions under the control of specific national ministries. This separation of theoretical and applied subjects and the orientation to a high degree of specialization went strongly against Marxist epistemology and Chinese traditional patterns of knowledge, which had tended to favour an integrated curriculum. The rejection of Soviet patterns in the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution was thus no surprise from a cultural perspective. It may well have been related to a fundamental epistemological dissonance between China and Europe, as well as the more obvious political conflicts between China and the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{63}
With the reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1978, higher education immediately benefited from a wide range of international exchanges and forms of collaboration. There was also a considerable investment of World Bank loans in different sectors. There was an eclectic set of external influences in this period, including those of European countries, Japan, Canada and Australia as well as the United States. However, there can be little doubt that American patterns had the greatest influence, both directly, and as a result of the ways in which American higher education had influenced Japan in the 1950s, Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, and become the most influential global model. The dichotomy between European and American models that was sharply defined in the 1920s, when we examined the distinctive approaches of Cai Yuanpei and Li Denghui to leading a modern university, was by now greatly reduced. Thus the 25 years of educational interaction between China and the United States, which are the main focus of this volume, have benefited from an underlying epistemological harmony between American pragmatism and Chinese philosophical tendencies which was evident already in the 1920s and 1930s.

**Conclusion: China, U.S. and the Dialogue among Civilizations**

In the period since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and the end of the Cold War, the idea of a dialogue among civilizations has emerged, with the hope that Western universities, rooted in the achievements and values of the Enlightenment, might open up to new ideas inspired by such Eastern civilizations as the Chinese and the Indian, with their own longstanding traditions of higher learning. This dialogue is not intended to denigrate the richness of the European heritage, but rather to suggest that new philosophical inputs may be needed to guide us into a global future. In spite of Fukuyama’s provocative arguments for the
ultimate superiority of Enlightenment liberalism, we have not reached the end of history. Rather we stand at the beginning of a whole new phase of global development.

In Chapter One, Professor Cheng Li has given a thoughtful overview of recent developments in international relations theory, noting how both neo-realism and neo-liberalism continue to neglect the dimension of culture and knowledge as a significant impetus for change in the global community. By contrast, the newly emerging paradigm of constructivism focuses on the socially constructed nature of international politics, and gives considerable importance to the impact of cultural practices, norms of behaviour and social values on political life.

Throughout this volume, the educational and cultural dimensions of Sino-U.S. relations over the past twenty five years are explored, and there is considerable evidence of the ways in which China is changing, as it has opened up to American educational influences. Less is said about how Chinese culture and Chinese epistemological traditions are beginning to have an impact on American thought, and indeed to contribute more broadly to global debates about the future of the human community. In concluding this chapter I will therefore consider an emerging literature which suggests that American pragmatist philosophy may well constitute a kind of bridge between China and Europe in the dialogue of civilizations. The synergies which have been noted in the historical case of Fudan University’s development, and the contrasts drawn with conflicts that arose in Sino-European interaction, may well help us to anticipate possibilities for the future.

One of the most active participants in the dialogue of civilizations, Tu Weiming, has managed to elaborate a Confucian response to a range of problems and issues facing Western societies with increasing subtlety and persuasiveness. Following his lead several American philosophers have taken up this theme, elaborating some of the fundamental differences between traditional Chinese views of humanity, knowledge and society and those of the European
heritage, and suggesting American pragmatism as a kind of channel through which
Confucianism might flow into the mainstream of Western social thought. These ideas suggest
the possibility of a deep level foundation for creative thinking about our global future which
brings together aspects of the Chinese and American philosophical heritages. This is an approach
strikingly different from that of the neo-realism of Samuel Huntington, whose thesis about the
“Clash of Civilizations” continues to reverberate, and who has called upon Western universities
to study and understand Eastern civilizations seriously, in order to serve the interests of Western
security.  

Tu Weiming provides the following succinct summary of the process and relationships of
learning within Confucianism:

The Confucian way is a way of learning to be human. Learning to be
human in the Confucian spirit is to engage oneself in a ceaseless, unending
process of creative self-transformation.....The purpose of learning is
always understood as being for the sake of the self, but the self is never an
isolated individual (an island); rather it is a center of relationships (a
flowing stream). The self as a center of relationships is a dynamic open
system rather than a closed static structure. Therefore, mutuality between
self and community, harmony between human species and nature, and
continuous communication with Heaven are defining characteristics and
supreme values of the human project.  

Tu sets out this picture of learning in the Confucian way as a kind of anti-dote to such values as
instrumental rationality, individual liberty, calculated self-interest, material progress and rights
consciousness. In Tu’s view, these enlightenment values have made possible remarkable
prosperity yet also led to disturbing social and environmental problems. The intentions of his
work are not to deny the continuing importance of this heritage, rather to suggest it is not the
final point in human historical development, but may be extended and carried forward by the
conscious appropriation of values from the Confucian heritage which would overcome its genetic constraints.

Roger Ames and David Hall elaborate ways in which this might take place, suggesting that there are “resources within the Confucian tradition for constructing a coherent model of viable and humane democracy that remains true to the communitarian sensibilities of traditional China while avoiding many of the defects of rights-based liberalism.” They suggest a crisis in Western thought resulting from the “mutual incoherence of its cultural constructions” - the different selves that are rooted in the Kantian separation of the spheres of science, morality, aesthetics and religion. Their anti-dote is what they describe as the communitarian counterdiscourse of American pragmatism, which they set against the modernizing impulse associated with Anglo-European economic and political individualism.

John Dewey’s educational theory is based on two significant assumptions, they suggest: “The first entails a denial of any disconnect between mind and body. Education involves the entire person. The second characterizes the individual as embodied in a transactional community. All education is moral in the sense that it seeks to realize the common goods.” They go on to note the parallels between Dewey’s vision of a democratic society and traditional Chinese understanding of social organization. “Against the solitary cognito of Enlightenment rationality, both pragmatism and Confucianism see individuals as constituted by relationships that are realized and maintained through effective communication.” On this philosophical basis, which has a quite different approach to human persons and knowledge from that of Enlightenment thought, they suggest an approach to democratic development distinct from that of rights-based liberalism. They effectively set forth ideas on how a more inclusive approach to democracy might be developed for our global future.
The work of the theologian and philosopher, Robert Neville, looks into harmonies between the neo-pragmatism of scholars such as Richard Rorty and Confucian thought. He notes that “interpretations are appreciative of the value, worth and appeal of things, as well as their dignity and place. These value elements are all part of the reality of things, and pragmatism does not have to accept any fact-value distinction that associates objects with form or structure and value with mental projections. …… Thus the pragmatic theory resonates with the sense of continuity, spontaneity and aesthetic experience….of Confucian sensibilities.”

In his discussion of the Confucian concept of ritual that Neville goes farthest in suggesting ways in which Confucian thought may contribute to future global dialogue. “A contemporary Confucian theory of ritual … has at its disposal the extremely rich pragmatic theory of semiotics, and through that, connections with the entire Western tradition of philosophy as well as with the analyses of sign-shaped behaviour by the contemporary social sciences. …… On the other side it must be admitted that Western semiotics and the social sciences are sometimes lame and stumbling over normative matters, deeply confused by positivist claims to value neutrality. If we affiliate them with a contemporary Confucian theory of ritual, however, they have at their disposal a profound Confucian tradition of more than two millennia that reflects on the differences between civilized and barbaric rituals, between better norms for personal and social life and worse ones….. Odd as it might seem, Confucianism might well become the salvation of the social sciences.”

The work of these contemporary American philosophers opens up hope for genuine and profound forms of understanding and cooperation that embrace the spiritual, cultural, intellectual and scientific aspects of knowledge and human life. They could enable us to move beyond the concepts of deterrence and the balance of powers in neo-realism, and the over-riding emphasis on a free market in neo-liberalism, into a dialogue over how to create a better world that is open
to cultural and epistemological inputs from diverse regions and civilizations. Li Denghui would certainly have been comfortable about entering into such a dialogue, and the history of Sino-American educational cooperation gives an indication of the rich potential that exists for such collaboration.

There are real obstacles to such a dialogue, of course. On the Chinese side, it will take time to rebuild an understanding of the broad philosophical heritage of Confucianism, so often attacked and negated from the May Fourth movement onwards. This will be indispensable for an in-depth understanding of China’s achievements over recent decades. This heritage also constitutes a rich vein of practical wisdom to be widely shared. On the American side, a reassessment of the moral and spiritual responsibility of the university as a knowledge institution is needed and there are indications it is already underway. This can be seen in recent works such as *The Moral Collapse of the University* and *Exiles from Eden: Religion and the Academic Life in America,*77 as well as in the works of philosophers such as Neville, Ames and Hall cited above.

Many of the chapters in this volume give insight into ways in which American and Chinese scholars and students have learned from each other and have cooperated in common tasks over the last twenty five years. The bridging of minds across the Pacific thus rests on philosophical traditions on both sides that have a surprising degree of consonance, as this case study of Fudan’s early years demonstrates.

Notes:


7 Cai, Cai Yuanpei xuanji, 291.


10 Xiao Chaoren et al, Beijing daxue xiaoshi, 32.


14 Pierson, Yale College, 72-94.

15 Pierson, Yale College, 87. Dwight was reported to have commented that the class system was “one of the great educating forces of college life.”

16 Pierson, Yale College, 85.

17 Pierson, Yale College, 8.

18 Pierson, Yale College.

19 In 1919, Li was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Letters by the Christian St. Johns University. Who’s Who in China (Shanghai: The China Weekly Review, April, 1931), 247.

20 Zhang Yi, ”Li Denghui,” p. 24.
21 Zhang Yi, “Li Denghui;” Personal letter from Wu Tao Chen, secretary to Li Denghui over many years, September 23, 1982.

22 Fudan daxue zhi, Vol. 1 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 1985), 93.


26 Guo Renyuan, Xinlixue yu Yichuan [Psychology and Heredity] (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1929). This book lists Guo’s contributions to such American journals as The Psychological Review and the Journal of Comparative Psychology.

27 Fudan Zhoukan, 7 (Nov. 3) 1926, 2.

28 Zhang was a graduate of Fudan, who pursued further studies at Columbia University in law, and returned to become professor and later dean of Fudan’s College of Law, in addition to practicing law. For details on his remarkable career, see Who’s Who in Communist China (Hong Kong: Union Research Institute, 1966), 13-14. Sun Hanbing was head of the Political Science department and became famous as editor-in-chief of the Digest [Wenzhai], a widely read progressive publication during the Sino-Japanese war. He was killed in a Japanese bombing incident in the summer of 1939.

29 Fudan daxue zhi, 304 to 370, provides a detailed account of curricular development drawing upon a lot of original documents.

30 Xiao Chaoren et al, Beijing daxue xiaoshi, 41


32 Interview with Zhang Yi, Shandong Normal University, Jinan, Shandong, March, 1982.

33 Wu Taochen, Personal Communication, 1982, described its stance as anti-fascist and for world peace, and mentioned that it first published Edgar Snow’s Biography of Mao in Chinese translation.

34 The Fuhtan Banner, Vol. II, 1920, was dedicated to Xue Xianzhou and gives a detailed account of these projects.

35 The Fuhtan Banner, Vol VIII, July 1926, 12. One might imagine Timothy Dwight making such a speech at Yale of the 1890s.

2-32

37 The last issue of the Fudan daxue xiaokan to have Li’s signature writ large on the front page was No. 230, June 8, 1936. In the first autumn issue, September 28, 1936, his retirement is announced. Wu Taochen gave me the following explanation in his personal communication with the author (1982): “As Fudan was almost the centre of the student movement in Shanghai and became an eyesore to the reactionary government, they first wanted to buy him over by making him a member of the Legilsative Yuan, but they failed. Then they forced him to resign, which he did in 1936.

38 Wu Taochen, secretary to Li Denghui for many years, described the situation in the following way in a personal communication to the author in 1982: “To understand Fudan, one has to look at it from the stand of the two-class struggle… The two forces were hard at work in Fudan in pre-Liberation days.”

39 Fudan daxue xiaokan, No. 116, Nov. 5, 1931.


44 Shu Xincheng, Zhongguo jindai jiaoyu ziliao, Vol. II (Beijing: Renmin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1979, 646-647.


46 Israel, Student Nationalism in China, 23-24.


49 Zhou, Zhongguo jiaoyu shi, 31.
50 Zhou, Zhongguo jiaoyu shi, 223- 225.


53 Zhongguo jiaoyu nianjian (Shanghai: Kaiming shudian, 1934), Part A, 16.

54 Jiaoyu faling (Shanghai: Zhongguo shuju, 1947), 141,144.


64 Ruth Hayhoe, China’s Universities and the Open Door (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1989), Chapter 7.


71 Hall and Ames, The Democracy of the Dead, 77.


73 Hall and Ames, The Democracy of the Dead, 137.

74 Hall and Ames, The Democracy of the Dead, 152.


76 Neville, Boston Confucianism, 95.