

## The Center for China's Cold War Studies

### The ECNU Center for Cold War International History Studies

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Ever since the so-called "New Cold War History" became a rising scholarly trend in international historiography on the second half of the 20th century, similar academic processes also started to emerge among China's leading historians and international relations specialists. This community became a harbinger of new research trends that envisaged multi-archival research, global and realist perspectives of analysis, intensive international scholarly dialogue, as well as academic results of the highest order. If there is one research institution in China that could not only easily fit into these demanding academic parameters, but also represents an obvious leader in the field of China's Cold War policies, this front-runner is East China Normal University's ["Center for Cold War International History Studies"](#). As once noted by U.S. based Chinese scholar Yafeng Xia, the ECNU Center has ultimately become one of the four leading institutions of its kind in the world (others being similar centers at Harvard University, George Washington University, and the London School of Economics).

ECNU's "Center for Cold War International History Studies" was founded by Professor Chen Jian, a famous U.S. based China scholar, in 2001.



Already after three years it started to rapidly expand by accepting into its ranks famous Chinese scholars dealing with different aspects of Cold War history: Shen Zihua, Yang Kuisong, Li Danhui, Dai Chaowu, Zhang Baijia, Zhang Shuguang, Liu Xiaoyuan, Xia Yafeng and many others. These scholars and their research not only brought together a distinctive Chinese perspective on China's Cold War involvement, but they also introduced a new course of study of many different aspects of international Cold War history. Setting up such a Center with so many outstanding scholars ultimately enabled the Chinese academic community to promote and intensify an intense dialogue with their fellow Cold War historians from all around the world. Today, under the directorship of Professor Shen Zihua, the Center hosts 20 scholars, many of them receiving domestic and international acclaim for their outstanding academic work.

Between 2004 and 2012, the Center dealt with a number of general research topics, like the relationship between great powers during the Cold War (U.S.-Soviet, Sino-Soviet, Sino-U.S. relations), inter-bloc relations (Soviet-East European, Sino-East European, U.S.-West European, U.S.-Japanese, Sino-North Korean, U.S.-South Korean, Sino-Vietnamese relations), as well as the history of major Cold War crises (Korean War, Vietnam War, Taiwan Crisis and others). From 2013 onwards, the Center focused most of its attention on the study of China's relationship with its immediate neighborhood, i.e. with countries in Central, North, Northeast, Southeast and South Asia, but it also continued its previous work. Significant results in all these fields made the Center eligible to receive substantial state and municipal funding for



the study of China's relations with Eastern Europe, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the evolution of U.S. foreign policy, and especially for studies on China's role vis-a-vis surrounding countries. Thus the Center became a key academic institution promoting new research trends and insights.

When it comes to academic outlet, many of the Center's scholars publish their work in leading Chinese and Western peer-reviewed journals (World History, Historical Research, Cold War History, Journal of Cold War Studies, Diplomatic History), in edited volumes, and as monographs in renowned presses like Social Sciences Press, World Knowledge, Routledge, Lexington Books, Stanford University Press. In addition, the Center publishes its own journal "Cold War International History Studies" which has already received wide acclaim by both Chinese and foreign scholars, with many leading international Cold War historians serving on its editorial board (Odd Arne Westad, Melvyn Leffler, William Kirby among others). In 2016, the Center came forth with its journal "Borderland and Border Issue Studies" dealing with the history of China's borders. This journal also serves as a platform for dialogue between different government bodies and China's leading scholars.

In a sense, the Center has become a role model and a base for future research in Chinese Cold War Studies. Under the auspices of the Center and its Director, similar centers started to emerge all around China: Sun Zhongshan University, Jinan University, South China Normal University, Northeast Normal University, Xinjiang Normal University, Shandong University, Xiamen University, Guangxi Normal University and Dalian



University of Foreign Studies. Besides, many eminent Chinese and foreign scholars and diplomats attended as visiting researchers or gave lectures at the Center. In the field of international cooperation, since 2011 the Center has maintained very close interactions with the Woodrow Wilson Center's ["Cold War International History Project"](#), thus enabling a number of young Chinese scholars to spend time at American universities or archives. This kind of exchange also resulted in the Center's hosting of a number of international conferences on the Cold War in Asia, Sino-Soviet relations, China's Third World policies or Chinese historiography.

The "Center for Cold War International History Studies" has also achieved considerable results in the sphere of collecting and publishing archival materials from China and the world. Most of this work was done by Professor Shen Zhihua who initiated the whole endeavor with volumes of Soviet archival records on Soviet history, on the Korean War and Sino-Soviet relations. Material from American, British, East European, Japanese, South Korean, Mongolian, Myanmar, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Thai, Malaysian, Indonesian and Indian archives was soon to follow. In order to make all these versatile documents available to both Chinese and foreign scholars, in 2014 a specialized Documentation Center with multifold international exchanges was established. It already has become the biggest center of its kind in China.

ECNU's "Center for Cold War International History Studies" stands as a clear reminder of the enormous work invested over the past sixteen years to position China's Cold War studies right at the center of similar



international efforts. Significant academic results produced by the Center have already become a point of reference for any scholar doing serious research on China's foreign policy and the global Cold War. In the future we can expect even more important studies from this institution and its members.

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