

Exploring the Realistic Dilemmas and Strategic Pathways for Constructing an Independent Knowledge System in Ideological and Political Education in the Era of Globalization

Yijie Fu

*School of Marxism, Yan'an University, Yan'an, China
2939466755@qq.com*

Abstract: The process of globalization has posed complex challenges to the construction of an independent knowledge system in the discipline of ideological and political education in Chinese universities. Western academic discourse systems have permeated this field through information dissemination, covert ideological export, and the diversified knowledge backgrounds of educators. These influences have led to dilemmas such as the transplantation of foundational theoretical frameworks, shifts in students' value orientations, and the absence or weakening of indigenous academic discourse. In response, the discipline must accelerate the realization of "independence," focus on solidifying "knowledge" construction, and expedite the building of a systematic disciplinary "framework" to achieve an organic unity between knowledge transmission and value guidance.

Keywords: Ideological and Political Education, Globalization, Independent Knowledge System, Realistic Dilemmas, Coping Strategies

1. Introduction

On April 25, 2022, General Secretary Xi Jinping, during an inspection visit to Renmin University of China, stated: "Accelerating the construction of a philosophy and social sciences system with Chinese characteristics ultimately hinges on building an independent knowledge system for China" [1]. This important assertion outlines the fundamental path for developing a Chinese-style philosophy and social sciences framework and points the way forward for constructing an independent knowledge system in the discipline of ideological and political education. Amidst profound global changes unseen in a century, the globalization process has reshaped the underlying logic of knowledge production and dissemination. As the front line of ideological work, Chinese universities are now facing the severe challenge of the "soft infiltration" of Western academic discourse, which has brought substantial difficulties and challenges to the construction of an independent knowledge system for ideological and political education [2]. General Secretary Xi has consistently emphasized upholding the guiding role of Marxism in the ideological domain and has issued numerous directives and instructions regarding ideological work, particularly within higher education institutions. In line with this, China's educational authorities have rigorously implemented policies to standardize the teaching arrangements and content of Marxist theory and ideological-political courses in universities nationwide, yielding significant results thus far. Therefore, this paper focuses on the field of

ideological and political education within Chinese higher education. It aims to deepen the understanding of the development patterns of Marxist theory and pedagogical practices, and to address the issue of strengthening the ideological stronghold of Marxism in university education and teaching.

2. Characteristics of the globalization era and its mechanisms of influence on the discipline of ideological and political education

2.1. Rapid information dissemination challenges discourse dominance

Informationization is a defining feature of the globalization era. According to Wallerstein's "world-systems" theory, countries or regions occupy different positions in the global hierarchy—classified as "core," "semi-periphery," and "periphery"—based on their economic status. Similarly, the global knowledge production system exhibits a "center–semi-periphery–periphery" structure. Western bourgeois philosophy and social sciences have formed a relatively complete theoretical system since the Enlightenment and have been developing steadily for over two centuries. In the context of globalization, information spreads rapidly through MOOC platforms, international academic journal databases, and cross-cultural exchange programs, facilitating the global dissemination of Western academic disciplines infused with bourgeois worldviews, outlooks on life, and value systems. Due to the inherently ideological nature of philosophy and social sciences, these disciplines have become central battlegrounds for ideological contestation. This influx of knowledge leads to a "center–periphery" structure in academic discourse, undermining the dominance of national mainstream ideology. At present, the discursive hegemony established by Western countries in the global humanities and social sciences remains largely unchallenged, continuing to erode the discursive authority of ideological and political education in China.

2.2. Implicit value penetration in academic discourse systems

Western social sciences carry out ideological export under the guise of "value neutrality." Though presented as objective, neutral, and universal, the Western disciplinary system is inherently ideological. The notions of "value neutrality" and "universality" are themselves ideologically charged, and deceptively so—they serve to legitimize capitalism as an eternal and unquestionable system. For instance, Western economics appears to be primarily concerned with mathematically rigorous "value-neutral" analysis, yet such supposedly impartial research has long embedded a presupposed stance: the defense of the capitalist system. Assumptions such as the "rational economic man" and doctrines of "market fundamentalism" weaken the collective values central to Chinese ideological education. In the realm of philosophy, theories like "universal values" and "the end of history" challenge the Marxist view of historical development. Western bourgeois disciplines—including philosophy, economics, political science, sociology, and history—ultimately belong to the realm of bourgeois ideology. Blindly adopting them without critical engagement could have serious consequences.

2.3. Diversified knowledge backgrounds exacerbate cognitive deviation

Within China's educational system, many university faculty members have studied abroad, particularly in Western countries, and have become deeply embedded in Western knowledge systems. As a result, their academic training is heavily influenced by Western discourses and theoretical frameworks, leading to the formation of ingrained cognitive habits. These are often passed down through academic mentorship, creating a generational transmission effect. In the past, due to a shortage of qualified ideological and political education instructors, some universities assigned the teaching of public ideological and political courses—such as "Fundamentals of Marxism"—to

professors who either lacked systematic training in Marxist theory or even exhibited anti-Marxist tendencies. This inevitably led to the vulgarization of Marxism. Some teachers, with only superficial knowledge of both Marxism and Western bourgeois philosophy and social sciences, claim to be “drawing on the useful elements” of Western theories but end up distorting them into a form of shallow “pragmatism” under the banner of “inclusiveness and diversity.” Such individuals are adept at tailoring their discourse to suit different audiences, sometimes advocating Marxism, at other times speaking on Keynes, and elsewhere quoting Hayek. For them, there are no academic boundaries or taboos. The version of Marxism they promote is not grounded in a rigorous theoretical system but is instead a distorted and arbitrarily reinterpreted version shaped by their own inclinations.

3. Practical dilemmas in constructing an independent knowledge system for ideological and political education in the era of globalization

3.1. The dilemma of transplanted foundational theories

Western knowledge and discourse systems have exerted a profound impact on the field of philosophy and social sciences, influencing not only ideological and political education but also economics. First, neoliberalism has significantly challenged Marxist economics. For instance, some scholars have attacked the “labor theory of value,” attempting to replace it with “price theory” as the analytical standard. Narratives of privatization efficiency have undermined the dominant position of public ownership. Neoclassical economics, by adopting the “rational economic man” hypothesis as its meta-theory, dilutes the institutional characteristics of socialist public ownership and ignores Chinese practices such as the “Ansteel Constitution.” This analytical approach has entrenched a mindset of “market omnipotence,” to the extent that some neoliberal scholars advocate for comprehensive privatization of state-owned enterprises in the name of reform. Second, the worship of mathematical models has led to the depoliticization of economic analysis. In econometrics education, excessive emphasis is placed on technical tools while value judgment, the theoretical core, is neglected. The analytical frameworks often disregard their applicable preconditions and the unique structure of China’s economy. This “decontextualized” analysis has resulted in significant distortions in theoretical interpretations.

The foundational theories of ideological and political education as a discipline also face serious issues. As an interdisciplinary field, ideological and political education comprises both the “intrinsic knowledge of ideological and political education”—referring to mainstream ideological instruction—and the “knowledge used for ideological and political education,” which draws from disciplines such as philosophy, ethics, psychology, sociology, political science, and pedagogy. The rational core of these disciplines serves the practice of ideological and political education. Each of these fields has its own research objects, fundamental questions, and paradigms. Although ideological and political education also has its own research objects and core issues and strives to reinterpret the auxiliary disciplinary knowledge as intrinsic to its own framework [3], it remains evident that the discipline has not yet freed itself from the practice of “transplanting theories” from other fields. A comprehensive paradigm based on its own internal laws has yet to be established.

3.2. The shift in core disciplinary values

The tendency toward Westernization in philosophy and social sciences has led to the erosion of mainstream values, with some students no longer identifying with Marxism. First, there is a cognitive distortion of historical narratives. Western political philosophy courses often explain the origin of the state through “contract theory,” simplifying Chinese dynastic changes as cycles of violence, while ignoring the governance wisdom inherent in ideas such as “people-oriented thinking” and the “Great Harmony ideal.” This narrative framework has led some students to believe that “China has never

produced a genuine political philosophy.” Second, there is a misalignment in the stance of cultural criticism. Postmodernist courses tend to overemphasize the deconstruction of authority without engaging with Chinese experiences, such as the COVID-19 response, to explore the dialectics of “responsible freedom.” This mode of critique undermines identification with mainstream values and diminishes students’ sense of collectivism.

It has become a consensus that Western bourgeois humanities and social sciences can serve as a reference. However, such reference must be critical in nature. The issue lies in the fact that university students have not yet developed strong political discernment and lack sufficient life experience to engage in critical thinking and ideological struggle. In scientific fields, absorbing the scientifically rational components of a theory must be closely linked with high-level and rigorous research. As part of the ideological superstructure, philosophy and social sciences inherently reflect and serve the material interests and ideological needs of particular classes, possessing clear class attributes and ideological orientation. Without a comprehensive and accurate grasp of Marxism, one can easily fall into the logical traps constructed by Western discourse systems. Thus, entrusting the serious task of absorbing and assimilating the beneficial elements of Western bourgeois social sciences to university students—whose worldview and methodology are not yet fully developed—is clearly an impractical and irresponsible approach.

3.3. The absence and marginalization of the disciplinary discourse system

General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out during the National Symposium on Philosophy and Social Sciences that in actual practice, Marxism is marginalized, rendered vague, or reduced to mere labels in some fields. In some disciplines, it has become “voiceless” in discourse, “absent” in textbooks, and “silent” in forums. This situation demands serious attention.

There are systemic biases in disciplinary development and academic evaluation. At present, aside from some Marxist theory and ideological-political courses, Chinese universities have introduced a number of “Marxist Project” textbooks, discontinuing the use of original or translated Western capitalist textbooks—this is a significant advancement. However, in the public ideological and political courses offered nationwide, only two chapters in the “Fundamentals of Marxism” course cover political economy, and they are usually presented in a general overview by instructors from philosophy or other unrelated disciplines. Even within schools of Marxism, instruction in Marxist political economy and Capital has not received the attention it deserves. For instance, at a university in Northwest China, “Microeconomics” is designated a compulsory course, while “Selected Readings from Capital” is only an elective. In terms of teaching hours, “Western Economics” spans two semesters with a total of 90 class hours for micro- and macroeconomics, whereas “Marxist Political Economy” and “Selected Readings from Capital” combined also receive 90 hours. Yet, Capital is the culmination of Marx’s lifelong scholarly work, and it is unrealistic to expect teachers to adequately convey such profound content within such limited time.

The current academic evaluation system tends to prioritize SCI/SSCI publications, with some universities directly linking career advancement to the publication of papers in Western journals. This incentive mechanism has led certain scholars to avoid analyzing China’s institutional advantages, instead adopting Western-centric frameworks such as “transition dilemmas” or “authoritarian resilience” to align with the preferences of foreign reviewers.

4. Exploring the path to constructing an independent knowledge system for ideological and political education in the era of globalization

4.1. Accelerating the realization of disciplinary autonomy

4.1.1. Explicitly refuting misguided ideologies

Research into ideological and political education (IPE) across different regions of the world is instrumental in countering both international and domestic criticisms of this field. Some educators harbor a mistaken notion that IPE is unique to China or socialist countries and that it does not exist in Western nations. According to this view, ideological and political content in the West is embedded in other courses such as literature, history, and philosophy, and is presented merely as "civic education" or "moral education"—ostensibly apolitical content related to civic virtues and legal knowledge. The implication is that socialist states should "depoliticize" ideological and political education, focusing instead on moral education, legal literacy, and psychological counseling. In essence, this view aims to dilute ideology, erase the class-based nature of IPE, and weaken or even eliminate its core political content. This denigration or outright rejection of political education has led to the widespread trend of "educationalization," "psychologization," and "ethicalization" in theoretical studies on IPE.

However, a comparative analysis of IPE across capitalist countries reveals that there is no such phenomenon as "political depoliticization." Firstly, major capitalist countries have long offered independent moral education curricula that effectively function as vehicles for ideological and political instruction. For instance, the United States has "social studies"; the United Kingdom offers "citizenship" and "history" courses, often supplemented by religious and moral education; Japan teaches "social studies"; Singapore uses the Good Citizen textbook; France provides "civic and moral education"; and Germany emphasizes "political formation."

Secondly, the content of these courses goes far beyond cultivating basic moral qualities or facilitating individual socialization. They strongly promote national historical and cultural identity, patriotism, and national consciousness, with the transmission of dominant ideologies deeply embedded in their curricula. Although the Cold War has ended and globalization has fostered a trend toward ideological pluralism, the bourgeois class in major capitalist nations remains acutely aware of the temporary nature of the capitalist political-economic system and the possibility of its replacement by socialism. Consequently, they are unwavering in their efforts to propagate and instill bourgeois ideologies.

Among all aspects of IPE, political orientation remains one of its essential characteristics. In every country, the ruling party focuses most intently on political education rather than moral education, and the outcomes of political education are also the most pronounced. All governments explicitly promote their dominant ideologies. The United States, despite championing "freedom," "democracy," and "pluralism," excels in politically charged educational content. Its educational strategies unambiguously emphasize the superiority of capitalism, anti-communism, civic responsibilities and rights, and national ethos. It aggressively promotes the U.S. political system of checks and balances, values such as liberty and equality, and the "myth of democracy." Through the dissemination and defense of the dominant bourgeois ideology, the ruling party shapes political orientation and value systems via government institutions and mass media.

Clearly, ideological and political education must not be conflated with moral education. If capitalist nations have never relaxed their ideological indoctrination efforts, it is only natural—and imperative—for socialist countries to strengthen their own ideological education. General Secretary Xi Jinping has emphasized that "ideological and political work is the lifeline of all endeavors" and

has called for an explicit commitment to political principles. These statements underscore the urgency of resisting Western efforts at peaceful evolution and reinforcing the political character of IPE.

4.1.2. Constructing a sinicized curriculum and knowledge system

Guided by Marxism, it is essential to reinforce academic discourse sovereignty in Marxist scholarship. Establishing the autonomy of a Chinese knowledge system does not imply isolationism or intellectual self-seclusion. Rather, it calls for resistance to blindly following Western theories and uncritically accepting them as universal scientific standards [3]. The key lies in critically examining Western discourses and adopting a dialectical approach of “sublation”—inheriting what is rational while discarding what is unsuitable. Our objective is not merely to enhance China’s discursive power and influence in the field of philosophy and social sciences in defense of national interests and ideological security, but more importantly, to explore new frontiers of knowledge and contribute uniquely to global intellectual advancement [4]. This is not only a historical responsibility for the Chinese people but also a mission of our times. Academic autonomy should not be misconstrued as intellectual isolation or cultural protectionism. Instead, it embodies a proactive spirit of exploration and innovation. Such self-conscious independence reflects both respect for and the revitalization of our cultural traditions, while simultaneously contributing to the shared progress of human civilization. We must confidently engage with and inherit our own cultural legacy, balance general academic knowledge with value-oriented guidance, and continuously seek new avenues for knowledge creation. In doing so, we will pave new paths for the development of global scholarship and fulfill our role in advancing human understanding.

4.2. Striving for robust “knowledge” construction

4.2.1. Upholding the doctrine of “ideological inoculation” and confidently delivering high-quality ideological and political theory courses

General Secretary Xi Jinping has emphasized: “Ideological and political theory courses are the key to fulfilling the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education. To develop education with Chinese socialist characteristics, we must confidently and effectively deliver ideological and political theory courses.” At its core, ideological and political education (IPE) insists on the leadership and inculcation of mainstream ideology—a principle that originates from Lenin’s theory of “ideological inoculation.” Lenin proposed this theory based on several key observations: First, workers cannot spontaneously develop scientific socialist consciousness; such consciousness must be instilled into the working masses. Second, the creation and dissemination of the scientific socialist ideological system is a sacred mission of revolutionary intellectuals. Third, without revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement. Fourth, failing to actively promote scientific socialism amounts to passively accepting bourgeois ideology. Fifth, the political awareness of the working class must be cultivated through sustained ideological and political education. Lenin thus emphasized the necessity for the working class and laboring masses to study and master the theory of scientific socialism. His theory of ideological inoculation remains a foundational concept in the discipline of IPE and is far from outdated in the contemporary era.

4.2.2. Integrating explicit and implicit approaches: advancing both “courses on ideological and political theory” and the “infusion of ideological and political education into all courses”

As previously discussed, the Western bourgeoisie excels in conducting subtle, pervasive ideological and political education throughout both school curricula and social life—an approach from which China can draw valuable lessons. In response, the Opinions of the CPC Central Committee and the

State Council on Strengthening and Improving Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities under the New Circumstances proposed a “Three-All Education” framework: all staff, all processes, and all aspects of education must be involved. Among the “Eight Integrations” outlined by General Secretary Xi Jinping during the March 18th Symposium on ideological and political theory courses, one principle stands out: “the integration of explicit and implicit education.” This involves fully exploring the ideological and political educational resources embedded within various courses and teaching methods, thereby achieving the goal of educating students through all people, all processes, and all aspects.

4.2.3. Transforming knowledge into practice

The transformation of knowledge into practice follows a dual pathway: bottom-up and top-down. From the bottom up, we must refine our innovative practical experiences into coherent knowledge systems. On one hand, these experiences need to be systematically summarized to distill their key principles and underlying laws. On the other hand, these principles must be academically articulated to form scientific bodies of knowledge. From the top down, the Party’s accumulated wisdom in governance and policy-making must be translated into more fundamental and universally applicable forms of knowledge. Knowledge must, in turn, be applied in practice in order to be more fully understood and utilized. As Mao Zedong stated in *On Practice*: “Practice, cognition, re-practice, re-cognition—this form repeats itself in endless cycles, and with each cycle the content of practice and cognition rises to a higher level.”[5] The practical experiences of China’s economic development and reforms in the socialist market economy must be promptly transformed into systematic theories. Simultaneously, the theoretical framework of Chinese socialist economics should be translated into real-world practices that advance the common prosperity of the entire population. These efforts should, in turn, be continuously refined through practice, further enriching the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

4.3. Accelerating the construction of a disciplinary “system”

4.3.1. Building an independent evaluation system

First and foremost, it is essential to enhance textbook and curriculum development. It is recommended that public ideological and political theory courses in higher education institutions be redesigned according to the following logical sequence: Marxist Philosophy → Marxist Political Economy → Scientific Socialism → Mao Zedong Thought → Theoretical System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics → Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. This would enable an integrated and systematic teaching of Marxism. It is further recommended that schools of Marxism at universities offer a course on “The History of Chinese Economic Thought,” extend the “Selected Readings from *Das Kapital*” course to two semesters, and establish a thematic course comparing Marxist political economy with Western economics. For instance, *Das Kapital*, often referred to as the “Bible of the Working Class,” could be juxtaposed with *The Wealth of Nations*, regarded as the “Bible of the Bourgeoisie”[6]. Secondly, it is necessary to establish independent evaluation indicators and a quantifiable assessment system, including the creation of a Chinese-led academic journal classification catalogue.

Finally, efforts must be made to accelerate the transformation of theoretical achievements into practical outcomes. The rate of practical application of theoretical research should be included as an important criterion in the academic title evaluation system.

4.3.2. Constructing an independent discourse system: enhancing international academic discourse power and promoting the global influence of Chinese theory

The construction of an independent academic discourse system should be realized through the framework of the “Two Integrations.” This involves, for example, putting forward Chinese proposals such as the “Community with a Shared Future for Mankind” and embedding them into the theoretical framework of global governance.

The “Second Integration” refers to the creative integration of Marxism with China’s fine traditional culture. The concept of a “Community with a Shared Future for Mankind” is a product of this synthesis. It embodies the global vision of “Great Unity under Heaven” rooted in Chinese traditional thought, while simultaneously adhering to the internationalist principles of Marxism. It also echoes the aspirations of many developing countries to establish a fair and just international political and economic order.

References

- [1] *People’s Daily*. (2022). Xi Jinping emphasizes during his visit to Renmin University of China: Uphold the Party’s leadership, inherit the red gene, take root in China, and blaze a new path toward building world-class universities with Chinese characteristics.
- [2] Liu, J. (2023). On constructing an independent knowledge system in the discipline of ideological and political education. *Ideological and Theoretical Education*, (10), 4–9.
- [3] Zhong, Q. (2024). The content of constructing an independent knowledge system in the discipline of ideological and political education. *Ideological Education Research*, (03), 51–58.
- [4] Liu, J., & Zhang, D. (2024). The scientific connotation and basic requirements for building an independent knowledge system in China. *Journal of Shanghai Institute of Socialism*, (02), 15–27.
- [5] Mao, Z. (1991). *Selected Works of Mao Zedong (Vol. 1)* (pp. 296–297). People’s Publishing House.
- [6] Chen, S. (2018). *Comparative ideological and political education* (p. 31). Renmin University of China Press.