

The topsy-turvy environment of 1970s Beijing may seem like a strange place to develop a life-long love of international affairs and the social sciences. China at that time offered precious little to learn about other countries, and all I was taught in grade school were party propaganda. However, my father had worked as an overseas correspondent for the official Chinese news agency for many years, and I grew up listening to his stories about the outside world. He and my mother immersed me in foreign literature and history, sparking a fascination I carried with me through an engineering degree and a career in Information Technology.

When I first applied to college in China, it never occurred to me there was a future in studying international relations. I knew all too well how my father had to work in the confine of rigid Communism dogma. So I chose instead to pursue a future in science and engineering.

After three years in a Chinese college, I transferred to University of Maryland. My college years in the U.S. were full of stress, yet I always saved enough time to read on current affairs, history and other social science subjects. Today, my regular reading list includes *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, the *New Yorker*, the *Economist*, and *Foreign Affairs*. I often cut out my favorite articles or chapters from magazines and books and save them like a collector. Over the years, the pile has grown into a 30-pounder and has followed me wherever I moved.

In addition to my constant reading, two traumatic events contributed to my decision to pursue a new career: the failed 1989 student movement in China, and the 2001 terrorist attacks in United States. I actively participated in the former, and witnessed the latter unfolding live on TV. In both events, I saw the darkest side of humanity: the brutal force of destruction committed in the name of ideology. After each event, I buried myself in books, trying to find some closure by making sense of what had just happened. Although I never did (or ever will) find the ultimate answer, the intellectual exercise was stimulating and really opened my eyes to a wider landscape. Moreover, these experiences led to a deeper self-examination: Who am I? What do I really want?

I have no doubt that my passion and my strength is in humanity and social science. My years in the IT industry had exposed me to the dynamics of International business. What is more, my immigrant experience gives me a unique perspective: While I am a naturalized citizen and consider the United States my intellectual home, I still have roots in China and care deeply about the future of my people. This duality does not always reconcile itself easily.

In the end, I decided to apply to International Studies Program at University of Washington, and am planning to choose International Trade and Technology Transfer as field of study. I believe by doing so, I will have an opportunity to indulge my own intellectual curiosity, and to serve the people of both countries.